



Lheidli T'enneh

Wheni Lheidli T'enneh ts'inli

NEWS RELEASE

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION LEADERSHIP TABLE (IELT) FORMED TO WORK TOWARDS PROGRESS ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REFORMS IN SD57

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation (LTFN) and McLeod Lake Indian Band (MLIB) today announced formation of the Indigenous Education Leadership Table (IELT). For years, LTFN and MLIB have shared their concerns of systemic racism, the lack of accountability, and proof that targeted funding is being spent on what it is intended for. These concerns, along with several issues, including policy and practice concerns are what will be addressed at the IELT. In June 2021, some of these concerns have been confirmed by the Special Advisors Report. The Special Advisors made over 40 recommendations to improve the education experience for indigenous students in SD57 and to repair the relationship with MLIB, LTFN and other indigenous organizations.

MLIB Deputy Chief Jayde Chingee states "I think this an opportunity to stand-up and build respect for Indigenous laws and our ways of knowing. The foundation of this new table will be Indigenous values and protocols. This will be a great example of an Indigenous-led solution. We have formed the Indigenous Education Leadership Table to act on behalf of both our community and LTFN to implement the recommendations outlined in the Special Advisors Report. The IELT will represent our two communities at the same level as the SD57 Board of Education and it will work cooperatively and collaboratively with senior administration to implement the recommendations of the Special Advisors. One of the challenges our communities has faced in past years was that we participated on several SD57 advisory committees that operated internally and made recommendations to senior staff and occasionally to the Board of Education. The findings of the Special Advisors have clearly demonstrated that this model of participation in the public education system in SD57 is not working to benefit indigenous students. The IELT will work directly with the Board of Education at their level and by association work with senior administration to implement the recommendations of the Special Advisors and in doing so, achieve progress towards improved graduation rates for indigenous students, improve the K-12 educational experience for indigenous students and in turn, improve student success for all students. MLIB and LTFN are the 'Rights & Title Holders' of our territories in which SD57 operates. We have a responsibility to ensure indigenous students have equal opportunity to achieve educational success. We are confident the IELT is the mechanism to achieve this."

LTFN Councillor Joshua Seymour added "Our two communities have worked collaboratively and cooperatively on education matters for the past several years through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) approved by our Chiefs and Councils. We have operated in the past as the Joint Education Team (JET) and today we are taking a step forward and upward through formation of the IELT."

Councillor Seymour continued “For too long the conversations about the educational success of indigenous students in SD57 have taken place within the SD57 administrative structure and behind closed doors in committees and other consultative processes. Our role in the past has been ‘advisory’ in nature. Moving forward our role through the IELT we will develop a new relationship with the SD57 Board of Education and by association, with the senior administration in the district. We are the ‘Rights and Title Holders’ of our territories and we will use the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ACT here in BC (DRIPA) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) ‘Calls to Action’ to guide us in development of our leadership role in SD57. If the current K-12 education system is to improve, it will require leadership of First Nations. The Special Advisors Report clearly states that for indigenous students the current model in SD57 is not working. MLIB and LTFN are declaring today through formation of the IELT that our preference is to work with SD57 to repair the relationship with our communities and other indigenous organizations and to work tirelessly to improve graduation rates for indigenous students and improve their educational experience in SD57. We are announcing today that we are ready to roll up our sleeves and work with the Board of Education and senior administration to reform and transform the current K-12 system in SD57 and create one that provides equal opportunity for indigenous and non-indigenous students to pursue their dreams and achieve their educational goals.”

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