

First Nations leading the way in protection of water

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by Lucie Roy

Across Canada First Nations are taking steps in the protection of water.

The pursuit of First Nations is for a better tomorrow for future generations and protection of land and water.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, June 25 and 26, First Nations, dignitaries and guests from Alberta and Saskatchewan attended a meeting held on Alexander First Nation in Treaty No.6.

More than 30 Chiefs, Council members, Headwoman, Headman, from Alexander First Nation, Fishing Lake First Nation, Ochapowace First Nation, Piapot First Nation and Town of Morinville Mayor Barry Turner were invited.

A draft of the Memorandum of Unity and Understanding (MOU) was presented with an opportunity for the Leaders and all in attendance to speak to and provide recommendations, suggestions and amendments, as required, before finalization.

From this agreement will evolve the work plan.

The MOU is the beginning of the pieces, purpose and vision for Tuesday's signing, which will bring all Nations under a unity agreement for water and wastewater.

The framework is starting to unfold, an indication of the willingness to move forward on issues of waster/water and capital infrastructure.

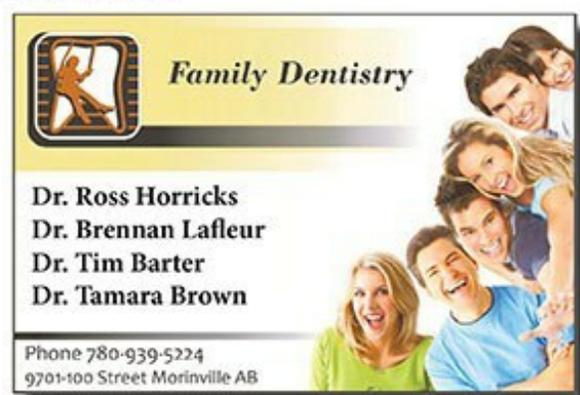
This is not one Nation specific, it is many across Canada.

A mock Historic Charter/Declaration signing ceremony took place with representation from three First Nations members present at the meeting.

The signing on Tuesday included Chris Arcand and Cheryl Savoie, both Council members of Alexander First Nation, Willard Young, Council member Fishing Lake First Nation, Chief Derek Sunshine, Fishing Lake First Nation, Chief Kurt Burnstick, Alexander First Nation, Headwoman Shelley A. Bear, Ochapowace First Nation, Headman A. John Bear Ochapowace First Nation and Council members Joe Kootenay and Sheldon Arcand of Alexander First Nation.

Absent from photo Council members Marcel Paul and Anita Arcand.

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Piapot First Nation members were to attend on Wednesday.

The theme throughout the day was working together and moving forward and the protection of lands, rights and water.

One point of view from an Elder was to keep the water local, clean it and re-use it. On Tuesday guest speaker Jason Tratch said the actions taking place were very timely because the issues are all around us.

Water is a dominant and global issue. Water is a sacred gift.

It is the new Oil and two barrels of water to one barrel of oil is where the money is. The new revolution is not about anger, defense or building a wall but about compassion and unity.

The world is now about re-evaluation and unity.



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Tratch spoke of a verbal correspondence with Robert Stanford of Canadian Water of United Nations during his presentation.

He said similar work like what is happening here at Alexander, has over the last few years across the country, been lead by First Nations and numbered Treaty organizations, which are getting together and doing the same thing.

Speaking on the MOU for the collective Nations to work together for the protection of water and advanced water management, Tratch said that the memorandum would evolve because there are other nations doing the same, backed by United Nations Canada.

They [First Nations] have the potential to reset how water is managed.

Also discussed was the 3E-S; Environment, Education, Economic and Social Health.

Discussions on how to launch a First Nations-led water and wastewater utility that empowers delivery of advanced water management and balancing of the 3E-S was followed by the strengths of unity and collaboration, project management, expertise in advance water and management models.

Priorities were discussed along with a listing of ten Key Programs.

The highlights of discussion included educating youth, environmental concerns of the pollution of water, fish abnormalities, Rainbow Darter fish crisis, losing species of birds and animals to extinction, fish being soft and not edible, dumping of sewage in water and more.

Indigenous Peoples are land stewards and many participants voiced concerns of climate crisis occurring and how they're going to preserve land, water, air and all living things for those yet unborn.



