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TITLE: The Case of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council

Introduction

This case explores the economic development activities of the nine First Nations of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) over the ten-year period 1986 to 1996. Both nationally and internationally, the MLTC has been recognized for its economic development activities. For example, nationally the Tribal Council received the Economic Developer of the Year Award from the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO). While, internationally, a variety of Indigenous groups including the Mosquito Indians of Nicaragua and the Maori of New Zealand have looked to the MLTC for advice. This recognition makes the MLTC's activities worthy of study by those interested in economic development among Aboriginal people in Canada and Indigenous people around the world.

This case is divided into two parts. The first part covers the period from 1986 to mid 1993. The second part begins in mid 1993 and describes events and activities from then until 1997. The reason for break between the two parts in mid-1993 will become apparent to students as they study the case.

This case is both descriptive and analytical. From a descriptive perspective, the case describes the approach to economic development that has emerged among the First Nations in Canada. Then as an example of this approach in action, it

1. provides an overview the economic development activities of the MLTC,
2. examines the outcomes of the Tribal Council's activities, and
3. describes the reaction of the people of the Meadow Lake First Nations to these outcomes.

As students read the case, they can be asked to examine issues such as (i) the role of control over traditional lands and resources in economic development, (ii) the role of economic development in the control of activities on traditional lands, (iii) the value of alliances among First Nations, and between First Nations and non-Aboriginal companies, and (iv) place of traditional values and practices in economic development.

At the same time, the case can be used to foster analysis and decision-making in a complex economic development environment. This is so because Part A ends with decision-makers at the Tribal Council facing a dilemma. How can they conduct their economic development activities in a manner that satisfy two critical tests, one imposed by the global economy and the other by the people of the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs)?

To satisfy the first test, the MLTC's economic development activities must be economically viable. To satisfy the second, the Tribal Council's development activities must be consistent with the needs and values of the people of the MLFNs. This two-horned dilemma is not unique to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. Aboriginal people elsewhere in Canada and Indigenous people around the world face the same twin demands as they seek to reassert control over their traditional lands and improve their socioeconomic circumstances.

In this context, students can analyze the activities of the MLTC in an effort to determine why its seemingly successful activities gave rise to the crisis in 1993. They can also consider what the Tribal Council might have done differently in the period leading up to the crisis. Students can also be encouraged to develop their own response to the dilemma faced by the decision makers of the Tribal Council in 1993 before they go on to discover in Part B how the Tribal Council leaders actually responded, and the people's reaction to that response. Finally, students can evaluate the effectiveness of the response of the MLTC described in Part B and consider its implications for the future.

The Case of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council

Part A

The Economic Development Activities of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council

The people of the First Nations in Canada are expanding their economic development activities. Through the creation of business ventures competing regionally, nationally and internationally, they are struggling to find a place in the new global economy that will allow them to achieve their objectives. These objectives include (i) greater control of activities on their traditional lands, (ii) self-determination and an end to dependency through economic self-sufficiency, and (iii) the preservation and strengthening of traditional values and their application in economic development and business activities[1].

The process that has emerged among First Nations as they pursue these objectives involves

1. Creating and operating businesses to exercise the control over the economic development process in general, and particularly as it impacts traditional lands and resources.
2. Creating and operating businesses that can compete profitably over the long run in the global economy, in order to build the economy necessary to support self-government and improve socioeconomic conditions.
3. Forming alliances and joint ventures among themselves and with non-Aboriginal partners to create businesses that can compete profitably in the global economy.
4. Building capacity for economic development through (i) education, training and institution building, and (ii) the realization of the treaty and Aboriginal rights to land and resources.

The economic development activities of the nine First Nations of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council provide an excellent example of this First Nations approach to development 'in action'.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council

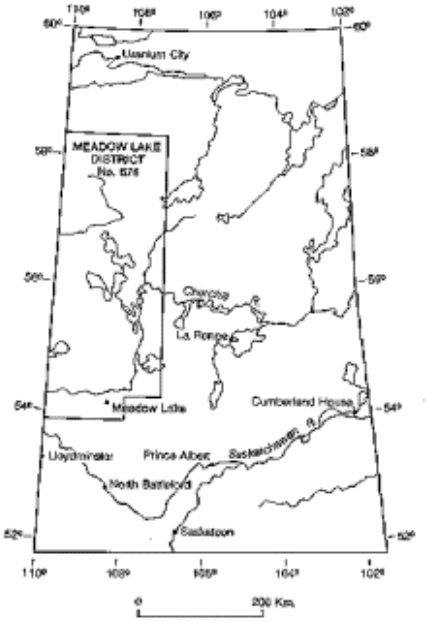
"The Meadow Lake Tribal Council is the political, service and corporate organization of the nine Meadow Lake First Nations" (MLTC 1993, 4). It was formed in 1986 as the result of the reorganization and expansion of Meadow Lake District Chiefs Joint Venture that had been formed in 1981. The people of its member First Nations delegate responsibilities to the Tribal Council and grant it the authority necessary to carry out those responsibilities.

The Tribal Council is governed by the nine First Nation Chiefs who are elected by the eligible membership of each First Nation. The Chiefs set policy and direction for the Tribal Council, bringing forward the issues and concerns from their First Nation members (MLTC 1995b, iii).

Ultimately, sovereignty lies with the First Nations.

The nine Meadow Lake First Nations are located in the Churchill River Basin in Northwestern Saskatchewan (Figure 1). The southern part of the MLTC territory is drained by the Beaver River and its tributaries (in particular the Waterhen and Meadow Rivers), into Lac Ile-a-La-Crosse. The northern section is drained by a number of rivers into La Loche, Turnor, Peter Pond and Churchill Lakes that in turn drain into Lac Ile-a-La-Crosse and the Churchill River proper.

Figure 1: The Meadow Lake Tribal Council District



Source: Anderson and Bone 1995, 126

Four of the nine First Nations are Dene and five are Cree (see Figure 2). At the end of 1993, the total population of these First Nations was about eight thousand "with 3,907 living on their own reserve, 466 living on another reserve, and 3275 living off reserve" (MLTC 1995b, iii). Two features of this population are particularly significant from an economic development perspective -the population growth and the employment rate.

Figure 2: MLTC First Nations

Cree First Nations	Dene First Nations
Canoe Lake	Birch Narrows
Flying Dust	Buffalo River
Island Lake	Clearwater River
Makwa Sahgaiehcan	English River
Waterhen Lake	

First population growth. Between 1981 and 1986 the population of the nine First Nations of the Tribal Council grew by 14.7% (more than three times the provincial rate). This rate of growth continues. The difference in the growth rates between First Nation and non-Aboriginal people is reflected in the age distributions of their respective populations. In

1986, 44% of the people of the region's First Nations were less than 15 years old. The figure for the province as a whole was only 25%.

New employment.

In 1986, only 38% of the people of the First Nations participated in the labour force compared to 67% of the people of the province as a whole. The difference in employment pattern between First Nation and the province as whole extends beyond participation rates to the unemployment rates. According to the 1986 census, the unemployment rate among the people of the MLFNs was 33%, whereas the rate for the province was only 9%. Taken together these participation rates and unemployment rates tell a graphic tale. In 1986, 61% of the potential provincial labour force (age > 15) were employed, whereas only 26% of the potential labour force of MLFNs were.

This highly unsatisfactory employment situation has the potential to deteriorate further given the high rate of population growth and the related large and growing pool of First Nation young people who will be entering the labour force in the next decade and beyond. The implications are obvious. There is a desperate need to create employment opportunities for the people of the MLFNs.

In recognition of this need, economic development for its member Nations and their people has been one of the primary objectives of the Tribal Council since its inception in 1986. According to its 1990-91 Annual Report, the MLTC had been operating a business development program for the previous six years. The objective of this program was to "stimulate economic growth for First Nations and to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among our people" (MLTC 1991, 26). That same annual report states that 106 business projects were undertaken during the six years ending in 1991. Of this total, 65% were still operating at the time of the preparation of the 1990-91 Annual Report.

A comparison of selected socioeconomic measures from the 1985 and 1991 censuses provides an indication of the impact of the MLTC's development efforts during this five-year period[2]. Two things of interest emerge. First, the average full-time employment income increased by 16%. Second, full-time employment among the people of the First Nations increased by 23%. These results compare favourably with those experienced by the other Aboriginal people of the region, the Metis of the Northern villages and hamlets. In fact, over the same 5-year period full-time employment among the Metis declined by 20% and average employment income increased by only 9%. This raises the question -- Why was the employment and income performance of the First Nations over the period 1986-1991 superior to that of northern villages and hamlets?

Part of the answer can be found in the respective economic development activities of the two groups. Between 1986 and 1991, the two Aboriginal groups differed in their approach to development. The MLFNs through the MLTC had a much more collective and planned approach to the process and that approach seems to have borne fruit. The leaders among the people of the northern hamlets and villages appear to have agreed with this conclusion. In the early 1990s, through an association of northern municipalities,

they began to develop a common economic development strategy. In March of 1990, the 14 members of the Northwest Saskatchewan Municipalities Association formed Keewatin Dahze Developers Inc. "as their formal body to address economic development initiatives" (K. D. Developers 1993, viii). One of the projects undertaken by K. D. Developers was the creation of Northwest Logging and Reforestation. The objective was to create "a commercially viable woodland contracting operation" (K. D. Developers 1993, viii) providing the people of the member communities with an "opportunity to participate at an unprecedented level in the forest industry in Saskatchewan's northwest" (K. D. Developers 1993, x).

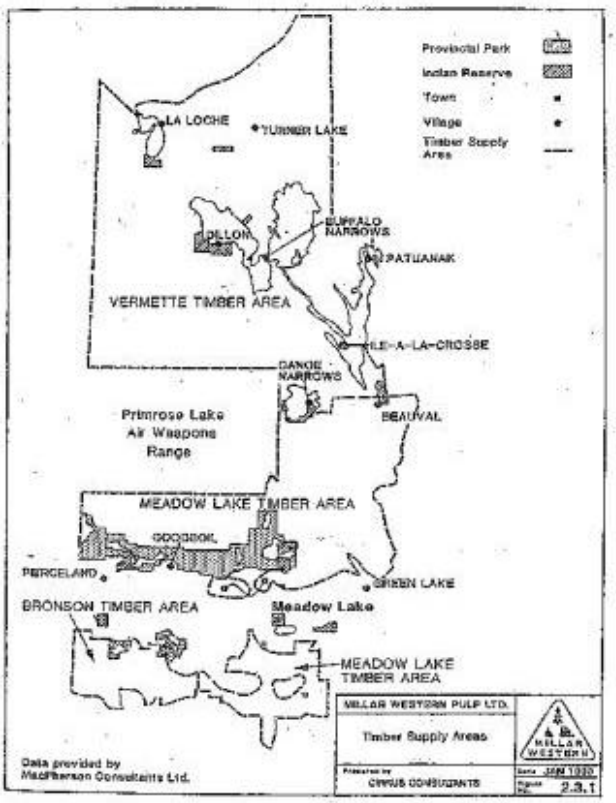
Building on the modest success achieved between 1986 and 1991 and in response to the larger unmet challenge of employment and income parity[3] with non-Aboriginal people, the economic development activities of the MLTC continued. The basic strategy adopted was to "develop and establish 'anchor' businesses around which smaller enterprises can flourish bringing long lasting economic activities and benefits" (MLTC 1994, 20). The MLTC decided that forestry offered a particularly good opportunity for the creation of such an anchor business and acted on that decision. We will consider the Tribal Council's forestry activities in some detail in the next section.

MLTC Forestry Activities

The MLTC's involvement in the forestry industry began in 1988 when the Chiefs of MLFNs purchased of 50% of the Meadow Lake Sawmill from the provincial government. At the time of this sale, the mill had been losing money for a number of years and was virtually shutdown (Price Waterhouse 1994b). The remaining 50% interest in the sawmill was purchased by Techfor Services Ltd., a company wholly owned by the mill employees. The company was renamed Norsask Forest Products Ltd. (Norsask). Norsask's most valuable asset was (and still is) the Forest Management License Agreement (FMLA) it holds from the Province of Saskatchewan. This FMLA gives Norsask the harvesting rights (for both softwood and hardwood) and reforestation responsibilities for 3.3 million hectares of Crown Land in the traditional territory of the MLFNs (see Figure 3).

While its mill only used softwood, the FMLA required that Norsask develop the capacity to use the hardwood (poplar) in the license area within four years or the rights to the poplar stock would be lost (Star Phoenix 1993, A2). Further, the FMLA required that a co-management process be established involving "complete consultation between the sawmill [Norsask] and northern communities over issues including harvesting, hauling, reforestation, road construction, as well as trapping and fishing" (Price Waterhouse 1994a, 5).

Figure 3: Norsask's FMLA



Source: Anderson and Bone 1999a, 25

Norsask's rights and responsibilities under the FMLA were central to the MLTC's forestry-based development strategy. These rights set the stage for the formation of a network of business alliances and joint ventures among the MLFNs, between them (through Norsask) and a non-First Nation corporate partner – Millar Western Ltd., and among the non-First Nation residents of the communities in the FMLA area. The key alliance in the network was the joint venture between Norsask Forest Products Ltd. and Millar Western Ltd.

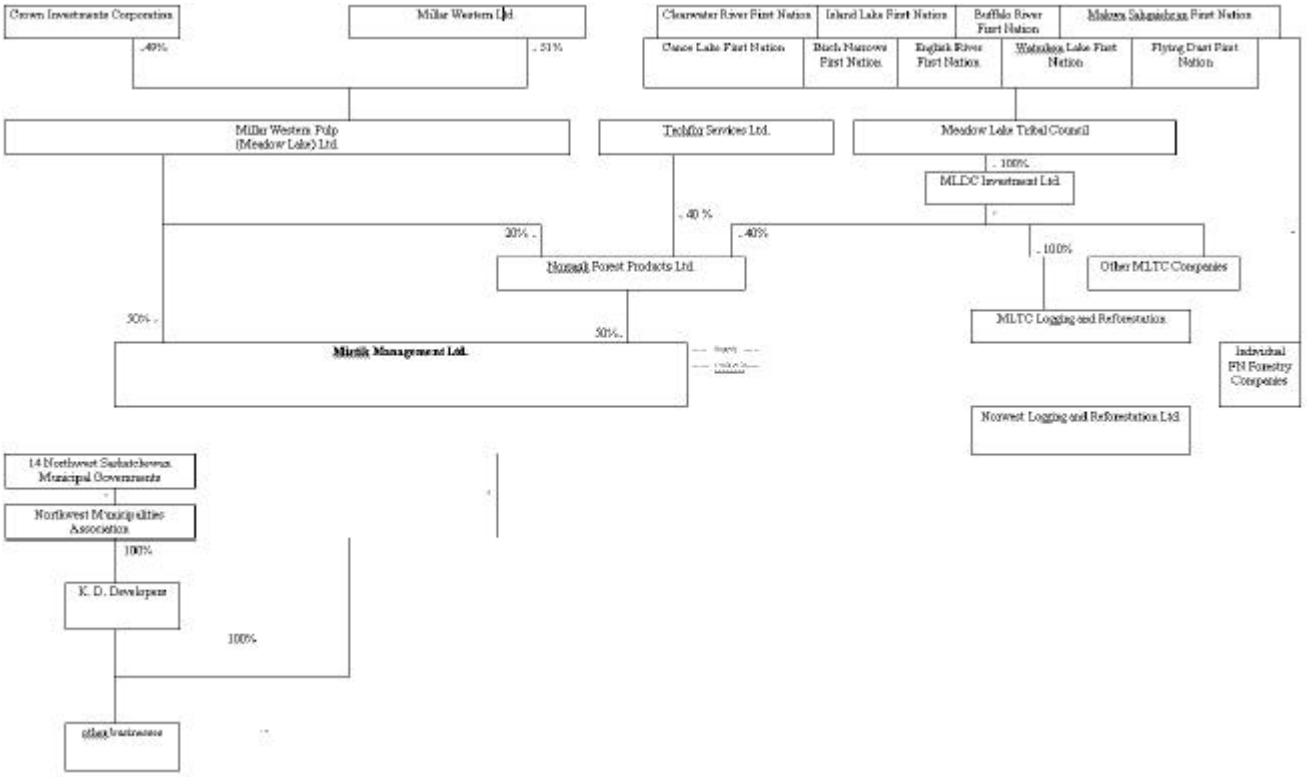
At the time that MLTC was searching for a way to exploit the business and employment opportunities presented by the FMLA, Millar-Western Ltd. a privately-owned Alberta corporation wanted to build a 'zero pollution' pulp mill that used poplar instead of softwood as a raw material. The company saw this mill as the cornerstone of its strategic plan for the future. Throughout its market area (particularly in the United States) increasingly rigorous environmental regulations were rendering older paper plants using the chlorine-based bleaching process economically obsolete. For Millar Western, the cost of refitting an old plant to meet new standards compared to the cost of a new chlorine-free plant favoured the latter. However, forest resources suitable to supply a new plant were not available in Alberta. All had already been licensed to other pulp producers. Therefore, the company's owners had to look elsewhere for an assured supply of poplar. They found such a supply just over the provincial border in Saskatchewan in the hands of

the MLTC. The potential for a mutually beneficial alliance in these circumstances was obvious to the leaders of both parties.

Millar Western required access to an assured supply of poplar at a globally competitive price. They had the expertise and capital necessary to develop the pulp mill. The company was quite prepared to subcontract the harvesting and reforestation activities to outside organizations while it focused on its core activity, the production and sale of pulp. On their part, the MLTC controlled access to a suitable (to Millar Western) supply of poplar. They needed a use for this hardwood to satisfy the requirements of the FMLA and to realize the related employment and business development potential. However, they lacked the capital and expertise to develop this capacity. The leaders of the two groups negotiated an agreement with terms and conditions intended to satisfy the needs and objectives of both. Figure 4 illustrates the structure that emerged from these negotiations.

Millar Western, along with the Crown Investment Corporation of the Province of Saskatchewan, established a company called Millar Western Pulp Ltd. to build and operate the pulp mill at Meadow Lake. Millar Western owns a controlling interest (51%) in Millar Western Pulp. Millar Western Pulp acquired a 20% interest in Norsask Forest Products (10 % from each of the two original owners Techfor and Norsask). This left the MLTC with a 40 % interest in Norsask. Norsask Forest Products and Millar Western Pulp then established a joint venture company called Mistik Management Ltd. (Mistik means wood in Cree) with each parent holding a 50 % interest. Mistik was assigned the responsibility to manage all forest operations under the terms and conditions of the FMLA. Mistik was not expected to do the actual work but rather to contract to have it done through operating companies[4]. It is through these operating companies that most benefits (employment, business creation and profits) were expected to reach the people of the MLFNs.

Figure 4: Forestry Industry Structure in the Meadow Lake District



Source: adapted from Anderson and Bone 1999, 27

In June 1990, the MLTC created its own operating company MLTC Logging and Reforestation Ltd. to realize the benefits from forest operations for the citizens of its member First Nations. Under contract with Mistik, the company provides logs to both mills and undertakes other activities such as road building, log hauling and reforestation. Some individual First Nations, as well as some First Nation individuals, also created operating companies. As well, non-First Nations people (mostly Metis and non-status Indians) living in the 14 northern villages and hamlets of the area also saw participation in forestry as a key to employment and economic development. Though an association of their municipal governments (K. D. Developers), they created an operating company called Norwest Logging and Reforestation Ltd..

The company [Norwest Logging and Reforestation Ltd.] signed a contract with Mistik "for the provision of logging services starting in 1991/92 (year 1). The contract includes a schedule of annual wood volume allocations which increase from an initial volume of 50,000 m3 to a maximum of 250,000 m3 in year four and thereafter (K. D. Developers 1991, x).

Individuals from these communities also formed companies to participate in forestry activities.

To build the capacity of their people to participate in forestry industry as employees and business persons, the Tribal Council developed and offered two post secondary education

programs. One was a diploma program in Integrated Resource Management developed offered in partnership with the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology. The other was a three-year university Diploma in Business Administration program in partnership with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College.

By 1994, the Millar Western Pulp Ltd. mill was fully operational. The total harvest in the FMLA area that year was 1,000,000 m3, up from the 300,000 m3 harvested in 1990. Of the 48 contractors involved in meeting this demand in 1994, MLTC Logging and Reforestation was by far the largest. The company harvested 300,000 m3 in 1994; up from the 50,000 m3 it harvested in 1992. This increase in logging and related activities had a significant impact on First Nation employment.

According to a Price Waterhouse report, MLTC Logging and Reforestation's output in 1994 provided employment for 140 people and placed the company among the top 10% of logging companies in Canada. Norsask Forest Products by the same date was ranked in the top 6% of Canadian sawmills, employing 103 people (Price Waterhouse, 1994a). In addition to these 243 direct jobs, according to same Price Waterhouse report, these First Nation companies created an additional 730 indirect jobs in the region (most of them since 1993). Employment is expected to remain stable at this level in the future.

Almost all of the 243 direct jobs created by Norsask Forest Products and MLTC Logging and Reforestation were held by members of the First Nations of the MLTC, as were at least 50% or 365 (a very conservative estimate) of the indirect jobs. The sawmill and supporting forest operations were virtually shutdown in 1986 so these are "new jobs" since the 1986 census. Given that only 730 members of the MLTC First Nations reported themselves employed in the 1986 census, the creation of these 600 or more good-paying, permanent jobs for people from the MLFN is a considerable accomplishment. At the same time, these results emphasize the scale of the challenge facing the people of the MLFNs as they struggle are to achieve their 20 year objective of employment parity with the province – 600 jobs created, 2,640 permanent, good-paying jobs to go.

The Crisis

While the people of the MLFNs were satisfied with the increase in employment and business activity generated by forestry activities, many were unhappy with certain operating decisions and actions taken by Mistik Management and MLTC Logging and Reforestation. This is particularly true for certain members of the Canoe Lake First Nation. Much of the logging was occurring on Canoe Lake traditional lands. Peoples' concerns centered on three issues. The first was the effect that clear-cut logging with mechanical harvesters was having on their land and their ability to continue traditional practices. Second and beyond the specific issue of clear cutting, the people of Canoe Lake felt that they lacked an effective method of influencing the operating decisions taken by Mistik Management and MLTC Logging and Reforestation. Third and finally, they felt that they were not receiving a fair share of the benefits from forestry activities on their traditional lands.

By May 13, 1992, dissatisfaction had become so intense that protesters, led by Elders from the Canoe Lake First Nation, established a blockade on Highway 903, 65 kilometres north of Meadow Lake. The purpose of this blockade was to halt the operations of MLTC Logging and Reforestation in the area (Windspeaker 1992a, 12). The protesters formed an organization called 'The Protectors of Mother Earth'. Allan Morin, head of the organization, described its concerns and demands as follows.

The Elders object to clear cutting and the use of mechanical harvesters. They want control over their own resources, compensation for their people, [and] financial and technical compensation for local people who want to start their own forestry related businesses (Windspeaker 1993b, r2).

It is important to note that the protesters from Canoe Lake were not demanding an end to forestry activities in their traditional lands. Rather, they sought to change the terms of their participation in forestry in order to increase their control over the process and the benefits they received from it, and to decrease its negative impacts on their community and its people.

Speaking about the blockade on behalf of the MLTC, Vice-Chief Oniell Gladdue blamed the dispute on a lack of communication. He said many of the concerns expressed would be resolved once the communities get more information (Windspeaker 1992b, 12). When he said this he was speaking about the plans being put in place to incorporate community involvement in the decision-making process. Norsask had just begun the process of establishing the community co-management boards that were required under the terms of its FMLA. Barry Peel, president of Mistik Management, said that these co-management boards would give the people of the communities in the region "a say on issues such as where and how logging should take place, including the size and shape of cuts, location of roads, harvesting methods, reforestation and operating plans" (Star Phoenix 1992b, E1).

In late August 1992, while these co-management boards were being introduced, a meeting was held between the Protectors of Mother Earth, Norsask Forest Products, Mistik Management, and the MLTC. At this meeting, all those involved agreed that the proposed co-management boards and process would adequately address the issues underlying the blockade. The Protectors of Mother Earth asked that Norsask and Mistik stop logging in the disputed area until the Canoe Lake co-management board and processes were established. The companies refused to do this citing their responsibilities to the mills and to their employees. The meeting ended without resolving the conflict and the blockade continued (Star Phoenix 1992a, A4).

The dispute dragged on through the winter of 1992/93 with the focus on court actions. On December 9, 1992, the provincial government asked the courts to evict the protesters claiming that they were illegally occupying crown land. The protesters countered by filing a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. According to Cecilia Iron, a spokesperson for the protesters, the complaint alleged that:

The government [Saskatchewan] has repeatedly ignored our rights under the treaties, under the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, and under the constitution. An agreement [the FMLA] between the government and a local forestry company [Norsask Forest Products] completely ignores Aboriginal rights and licenses to trap, hunt fish for food and harvest wild rice (Windspeaker 1992c, 2).

On May 12, 1993, the Court of Queens Bench ruled that the protesters must remove their blockade within fifteen days unless an appeal was launched. The Elders refused to leave the blockade site and the crisis continued (Windspeaker 1993a, 3).

The Case of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council

Part B

The Economic Development Activities of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council

When we left the case in Part A, the courts on May 12, 1993 had just ordered that the Canoe Lake blockade be removed. The Elders refused to do so. Rather than escalate the crisis by trying to have the court order enforced, Norsask Forest Products resumed negotiations with the protestors. Finally, on October 12, 1993, a tentative agreement was reached. According to Ray Cariou, chairman of Norsask, the people of the Canoe Lake First Nation, through a co-management board, would have the right to participate in decisions about such things as logging methods, the location of roads, and the accommodation of traplines and other traditional land uses (Windspeaker 1993c, r2).

The unfolding of events in forestry, particularly the Canoe Lake protest and its resolution had significant impacts beyond that sector. The experience resulted in a maturing and refining of the MLTC's economic development mission, objectives, strategies and processes – particularly those relating to consultation, participation and traditional values. This impact is evident in the content of the MLTC's twenty-year development plan, From Vision to Reality and the process used to prepare it between April 1993 and October 1995.

MLTC Twenty Year Plan

In the spring of 1993 with the Canoe Lake dispute unresolved, the MLTC began the process that culminated in the completion of the its twenty-year development plan – From Vision to Reality. Preparation of the plan over this period involved extensive consultation with Elders and members of the MLFNs. Key aspects of this consultative process included:

1. a meeting the representatives from the nine MLFN in April 1993;
2. a meeting of Elders in January 1994;
3. a survey of the members of the MLFN during 1994; and,
4. in April of 1995, a three day economic development symposium for members of the MLFN.

According to the twenty-year plan that emerged from this process:

The Meadow Lake First Nations' (MLFN) vision of the future is one of "healthy individuals, families and communities". This state of well being reflects balance and harmony in the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of life. Our vision includes self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-government. We will have control over our own lives and over decisions that impact our quality of life. We will have hope for the future and for the future of our children (MLTC 1995b, i).

This vision had its birth in April 1993, when members of the MLFN met for three days to discuss "all areas of community and family life and relationships with the environment and each other" (MLTC 1995b, I-6). The next key step in the development of the twenty-year plan occurred in January of 1994 when the Elders of the MLFN met to discuss traditional culture and values. The Elders were specifically asked about the important values that contributed to healthy individuals, families, and communities in the past. The event was critical to developing the values regarding future economic development planning within the MLTC District (MLTC 1995b, I-7).

Self-sufficiency and self-reliance, sharing, community decision-making, respect for the environment, and the preservation of traditional lifestyles and culture, emerged as key values. The Elders also stressed that the key to attaining the vision of "healthy individuals, families and communities" was the replacement of the current destructive dependency on welfare with self-reliance. Typical of the Elders' views, one said: In the future, hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering will not provide the self-sufficiency that is required. Young people will not live the same as the Elders live. The people cannot go back to the old days. We cannot turn back. We need to look ahead and know where to go next (MLTC 1995b, II-15). In looking to the future, the Elders concluded that employment opportunities created through economic development were necessary to "allow people to regain self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and increase individual and community pride" (MLTC 1995b, II-3).

As the next step in preparing the plan, over 500 people from the nine First Nations were interviewed. Among other things, people were asked to rate the relative importance of maintaining a number of traditional values as part of the economic development process. Those surveyed overwhelmingly rated the maintenance of the following as very important:

1. obtaining advice on economic development from Elders;
2. getting the approval of MLFN peoples for economic development projects;
3. protecting the environment;
4. sharing the benefits of economic development;
5. developing 'on-reserve' or community employment; and
6. achieving First Nation self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Those surveyed were also asked the question "Can traditional lifestyles co-exist with modern enterprises or businesses?" Seventy-five percent of the respondents answered yes to this question. Typical comments from those answering yes included:

- The two types of lifestyle already do and it's working
- We have to work with Native and non-Native lifestyles.
- Strong family relationships are needed.
- Mixing the two types of lifestyles requires honesty, cooperation and communication.
- It's up to us to make it work (MLTC 1995b, 9).

The concerns expressed by the 25% who felt the two lifestyles couldn't and/or shouldn't be mixed included:

- Modern lifestyles overpower traditional lifestyles.
- Our culture is being lost.
- People can't live both ways.
- The two lifestyles conflict (MLTC 1995b, 9).

The initial meeting with representatives of the First Nations, the consultation with Elders, and the survey of community members resulted in a general consensus about the objective of economic development -- "the achievement of employment and income parity with the Province of Saskatchewan" (MLTC 1995b, ix). Further, it was clearly established that this was to be done in a manner consistent with important traditional values, particularly those of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, protection of the environment, sharing of economic benefits, community decision-making and respect for the wisdom of the Elders.

In April of 1995, a three-day economic development symposium was held to provide members of the MLFN with information about progress on the plan to date and to receive additional input. Approximately 150 members of the nine MLFNs participated in workshops that identified current economic development activities, opportunities for future economic development, and barriers to economic development for the MLTC in general and, most importantly, from the perspective of each member First Nation.

Those at the seminar endorsed the strategy that called for the MLTC to establish the larger anchor business and individual First Nations and their members to create small and medium businesses associated with these anchors. Participants reconfirmed the importance of the key traditional values including consultation with Elders, local decision-making, sharing of economic benefits and care of the environment. They also stressed the importance of continued human and financial capacity building to the creation of viable businesses and the development of a workforce capable of taking advantage of the employment opportunities such businesses will create.

Following the economic development symposium, the final twenty-year development plan was drafted. Building on the strategy of anchor businesses, the plan identified four

key sectors as the main pillars of the economic development strategy. They are (i) tourism, (ii) mining, (iii) forestry, and (iv) traditional activities including hunting, fishing, trapping, and agriculture/gathering. The plan goes on to evaluate each of these sectors in detail (at the Tribal Council and First Nation levels) focusing on opportunities and the barriers to realizing these opportunities. The plan establishes short, medium and long-term business and job creation objectives for the four key sectors as well as for those sectors identified as secondary (retail/service, construction/trades, oil and gas, environmental, management, professional/scientific, and public administration). From Visions to Reality forms the foundation for the business development plans of the MLFNs as they strive to realize their vision over the next twenty years.

In conclusion, the MLTC forestry activities (and other business activities) and the process and content of the twenty-year plan are consistent with the characteristics of First Nations economic development described at the beginning of Part A. The approach has been national and collective with many of the businesses owned by the Tribal Council or by individual First Nations. The activities take place on traditional lands. The purpose is to attain economic self-sufficiency in support self-government and improve the socioeconomic conditions. The process adopted involves participation in the global economy through the creation of profitable businesses, often in partnership with outside companies. Business ownership has provided the people of the MLFN with greater control over the activities on their land. Efforts have been made to incorporate traditional values in the economic development process.

It is also clear that the Tribal Council has learned from experience. In an evolutionary way, the MLTC development process has become more consultative, more strongly centered on traditional practices, more nationally oriented (from the perspective of the First Nations), and more strongly focused on business development and successful competition in the global economy.

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[1] For a more detailed discussion of the First Nations Approach to economic development see Anderson 2000b, 1997 and 1995.

[2] See Anderson 1999 for an in-depth analysis of the changes in employment and income among the MLTC First Nations between 1986 and 1991, and comparison of these changes with those experience by the Metis and non-Aboriginal people in the region.

[3] According to its 1993 Annual report the Tribal Council had adopted an "economic development strategy aimed at achieving parity with the province in terms of employment rate and income level. In short, we are striving to create and maintain 3,240 good-paying jobs in the next 20 years" (MLTC 1994, 20).

[4] The key operating companies are in the circle on Figure 4.