



The Community of Membertou

Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award

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2012



Membertou First Nation Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Nomination

Names of Groups within the community who have joined together to put forward this nomination:

1. Membertou Communications Department
2. Governance Committee
3. Elders Advisory Committee
4. Membertou 55+
5. Membertou Elementary School
6. Membertou Human Resources
7. Parents Against Drugs Committee
8. Youth Governance Committee

Membertou History

Named after the Grand Chief Membertou (1510-1611) the community of Membertou belongs to the greater tribal group of the Mi'kmaw Nation. Membertou is situated 3 kilometers from the heart of the city of Sydney, Nova Scotia, within its tribal district of Unama'ki (Cape Breton). It is one of five Mi'kmaw communities in Cape Breton, and one of thirteen in the province of Nova Scotia. Membertou is an urban First Nation community consisting of over 1300 people, and one of 5 communities that make up the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, with a total population of over 115 thousand people.

Membertou was not always situated at its present location. Many years ago, Membertou (formally known as the Kings Road Reserve) was located just off of Kings Road, along the Sydney Harbour. In 1916, the Exchequer Court of Canada ordered the relocation of the 125 Mi'kmaq; the first time an aboriginal community had been legally forced through the courts to relocate in Canadian history. In 1926, the Membertou Community was officially moved to its present day location.

Governance

Membertou operates under the Indian Act of Canada; federal legislation enacted by the parliament of Canada. It is governed by 1 Chief and 12 Councilors that are elected every two years by the Membertou community members. Chief Terrance Paul has been elected Chief of Membertou for the past 27 consecutive years. The Chief and Council meets twice monthly to discuss Membertou's future plans, resolve any current issues, voice the thoughts and ideas of the community members, and to ensure smooth operation of its business and administration departments.

Community Facts:

Registered On Reserve Population:	912 people
Registered Off Reserve Population:	435 people
Total Land Base:	1.1 km ²
Population change since 2006 census:	+25.6%

Essential Criteria

Membertou is a community held together by a shared heritage, a collective history and a pride of being Mi'kmaq. Throughout the history of our people we have never wavered from the important aspects of what makes our community great.

We respect our elders, we encourage our children and we welcome our neighbours.

Unique Strengths

We are a community within a community.

In living this way, we have created a very strong community within a community. Many Aboriginal nations are not located within a large city but rather kilometers away from the urban sprawl, therefore it is easy to keep their sense of community and not lose their cultural identity. Membertou however is located in the middle of the city of Sydney. This could have led to many struggles however Membertou has proven it is possible to progress while still staying true your culture and heritage.

Being an Aboriginal nation within the greater community of CBRM has given us the ability to build on our unique strengths in many ways. We have geography on our side. Membertou is fortunate to be an active participant in the community events of the CBRM but we are still able to have a sense of autonomy so our own culture and heritage can shine.

We are not only fortunate to share our culture and heritage with our people within the community but also with others in the bigger community of CBRM and the rest of Cape Breton Island. Many Cape Bretoners have taken part in our annual Powwows. In sharing what is important to us, we try to encourage an inclusive society.



Embrace Diversity

Membertou has many different cultures and races within the community. Our resident population consists of 10% non-Aboriginal residents and 5% of our community consists of members from other First Nation bands. Many residents of Membertou have been part of the community for years but are not originally from the community. However, they are now some of the most community driven participants.

As well, there are many people who work within the Membertou community. Our work force is 50% non-Aboriginal and that half is also very diverse. The MTCC, Bingo Hall, Business Centre, Membertou Market, Gaming, and Membertou Elementary all employ people who are non-Mi'kmaq.

Whether they come to this community for work, love, school, or family they are all included in what we call Membertou.

High Degree of Citizen Participation

In order for a community to grow stronger, all members must take an active role in the direction that it is going to go.

Our community members stand true to this statement. When a call goes out for volunteers, for youth representatives, to pull together to support an important event or so many other causes, the community comes together. We have many examples in many forms of the participation of our community members. They get involved in event planning, committees, forums and cultural requests.



Passing on belief

Whether it is a religious ceremony taking place in the church on Membertou Street or a Pow wow in the field, our spirituality and faith is a large part of who we are as a community. Our people gather together many times a year to celebrate, to remember and to share.

The Mi'kmaq have a strong sense of religion. We practice and teach the religion to many. The elders of Membertou organize a pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne de Beaupre, Quebec for community members each year. This is a great experience and many of the elders take the younger generations on this trip where they learn about their religion, their beliefs and respect for one another.

St. Anne's Mission is an annual celebration that is shared by all Mi'kmaq in all communities throughout the Atlantic Provinces. Potlotek is the main community where the Mi'kmaq have gathered for hundreds of years to celebrate St. Anne's Mission. Membertou also has celebrations held at St. Anne's Church in Membertou. Many community members come together to prepare for the celebrations by cleaning the church and working together to make sure everything is ready so the community can come together to pray.

Membertou also has a prayer group which consists of elders and community members. This prayer group gathers together whenever possible to practice the rosary as well as pray together when a community member is sick or has passed.



The Dream Catcher

In the lobby of our Membertou Trade and Convention Centre hangs a very large Dream Catcher and hanging from this Dream Catcher are just over one hundred smaller Dream Catchers. Each year for the last 7 years (representing 7 generations) the Membertou Elementary grade 4 class made their own individual ones to catch their dreams.

In 2007, the regional president of Lockheed Martin visited our grade four class to talk about goal setting. In his presentation he asked one of our boys what he wanted to be when he grew up. Being the precocious little boy that he was he replied "I want to be a rocket scientist!" At that point, the presenter said to him "Great! You go to school to get your education and I will have a job for you when you are done!"

At that point the dreams were given flight. The children in Membertou create their Dream Catcher with the visions of a future and then hang them among the others in the jewel

of the community, the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre. This large dream catcher holds the dreams of our youth. For everyone who works or visits the MTCC they look at the dream catcher and know that, because of our children, our future is bright.



Parents Taking An Active Role

For the last 2 years Membertou has held their own “Parents Against Drugs Walk”. This is a volunteer program, which holds events throughout the year to promote a drug free, healthy and happy lifestyle. This year Membertou combined the Parents Against Drugs Walk with The 25th Anniversary Rick Hansen Relay.

Rick Hansen spent his life raising awareness for spinal cord injuries and he created the Rick Hansen Foundation to help encourage healthy, accessible and inclusive communities. This past year, the Rick Hansen Foundation celebrated 25 successful years by continuing his *Man in Motion* journey. The Rick Hansen Relay team made its way across the country, passing commemorative medals from one province to another. Membertou was proud to be one of the many host communities across Canada.

The walk started with an opening prayer, smudging by two of our elders followed by a brief speech by the honorable Mark Eyking, Member of Parliament. A representative of the Rick Hansen team then said a few words and honored the two medal bearers who were nominated by the community. Viola Christmas is an elder who was nominated for her dedication to volunteerism and her strong beliefs. Grayson Googoo, a Membertou youth was also nominated for his strength and courage for overcoming many health issues he has had throughout his life. The Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay team also honored and thanked the community of Membertou by presenting Dan Christmas with a small token of appreciation.

Parents Against Drugs appreciation plaques were presented to Viola Christmas, Membertou Public Works, Membertou Wellness, MACS, CB Regional Police and CB Regional Municipality representatives Mark Eyking and Derek Mombourquette.

Approximately 300 community members from Eskasoni, Waycobah, Wagmatcook and the Sydney area participated in the event.



Membertou C@P Site and Youth Centre

The Membertou C@P site offers an array of programs for community members and the surrounding area. The center is responsible for facilitating summer computer seminars, tutoring for junior high and high school students and gives any visitor the opportunity to surf the web or check email.

This facility is dedicated to the encouragement of cultural, academic, social and recreational programs to youth. The Membertou Youth Centre supports Membertou’s long term goals of promoting active, educational and cultural activities to the future of Membertou, and encourages the youth to be involved in a wide variety of activities that they may not have otherwise had the chance to participate.



Membertou’s Governance Committee

The purpose of the Membertou/Maupeltu Governance Committee is to develop laws and codes for the consideration of the citizens of the community of Membertou First Nation. Chief Terry Paul encourages the community to get involved in the Membertou Governance Committee and its workshops. He says “If our community continues to work as a team, it makes success a lot easier to achieve.”

Membertou was approached by the National Centre for First Nations Governance (NCFNG) as a leader in First Nations Governance and asked to participate in its “Circle of Excellence” program which culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) being signed between the two parties in December 2009. Both parties agreed to work cooperatively to document Membertou’s challenges and successes in implementing its model of governance. A Circle of Excellence video of Membertou was created and is currently available on the internet.

Membertou’s Chief and Council ratified the Terms of Reference for the Governance Committee and mandated the committee to work on developing land and citizenship codes for review and discussion within the community. Chief and Council sent out a call for community members to apply to sit on this committee. All thirty-four people who applied were accepted. Resources were made available to establish the committee, to conduct governance workshops and to hire a Governance Coordinator to embark on this important initiative.

Because of community involvement in the governance committee, the people of Membertou can have a voice and a say.



Youth Governance Committee

It is important for the youth of our community to be informed about the governance in Membertou. The youth opinions and feedback about governance issues are important to the Governance Committee. Recently the youth in attendance at an engagement session were provided with information about the activities of the Membertou Governance Committee. The youth participated in a “world café” activity to answer questions about how they identify themselves as youth, their role in governance and how to make Membertou a better place. One of the main outcomes of this engagement was setting a goal to develop a Youth Advisory Committee on Governance. The youth will participate in an Emerging Leadership program this summer that will help them gain more insight, tools and information about becoming strong youth leaders. The program will help them develop their Youth Advisory Committee on Governance.

Clear Evidence of Community Pride



Shrove Tuesday & Annual Address

Every year on Shrove Tuesday there is a community event put on at the MTCC. All community members and employees gather for a pancake dinner and to mingle. This event also honours many community members with awards such as female sports person of the year, male sports person of the year, citizen of the year and lifetime achievement award. Chief Terry Paul also gives the community an overview of the events that have taken place over the year,

an update on the projects taken on within the development corporation and what is yet to come. This keeps the community members up-to-date with what is happening within the community of Membertou but it also encourages a sense of community pride that is felt through accomplishment and recognition.



Education Awards Banquet

Each year Membertou hosts an Education Awards Banquet in June at the MTCC. This gives community members a chance to acknowledge and award all graduates each year. There are special awards and prizes given out to many of the students from primary up to post-secondary. In the elementary levels, students are encouraged to strive for the Chiefs Award for Attendance which requires the students attend classes 95% of the time or above. Each student who reaches this level earns a bike donated by community member, Robin Googoo.

The Chiefs Award for Academic Excellence, which is given to grade 7-12 students who are listed on their respective schools honour roll, is another award that encourages the youth to work for and earn recognition. This inspires all of the students and provides proof that hard work is recognized and their community is proud of them.



Membertou Heritage Park

The Mi'kmaq people of Membertou and our ancestors have lived in this area long before the arrival of the Europeans to these lands. The culture and history that we maintain are gifts that have been passed on to us from our ancestors. Our oral history and traditions are significant and unique when considering indigenous experiences.

Our community and our elders recognize the importance of sharing our exclusive culture and history with all people, and realize that this sharing and celebration must come from the community itself.

The Heritage Park will honour the spirituality and the strength of our people by telling the story of Membertou, educate and share the Mi'kmaq culture and preserving the Mi'kmaq heritage. Through the Membertou Heritage Park, all people will have the opportunity to touch, feel and learn while experiencing firsthand the rich culture that is Membertou.



Membertou's Annual Powwow

Membertou hosted their 9th annual powwow this past September. People from Membertou and the surrounding area attended the powwow to watch the beautiful and touching grand entry which included Membertou's head female dancer, Cindy Kabatay and head male dancer Oonig Paul- Ward. Both dancers did an amazing job and beautifully danced throughout the whole weekend.

A traditional feast was held each day for the community. Events included a waltzes competition, drum competition, dance, karaoke, fiddle music as well as the Ultimate Bologna Chef Challenge that was enjoyed by everyone.

The last day of the annual Pow wow was the 10th Anniversary of 9/11, a special Honour Song took place for all the 9/11 victims and their families.

Vendors were on site selling beautiful handmade Aboriginal crafts and jewelry. Many were there to offer snacks and food. This event was widely promoted and welcomed everyone to join in and experience Membertou's culture.

Creating an Enduring Community

We will build a Membertou that our future generations will be proud to call home

Our community has come full circle. The ancestors of Membertou travelled to the shores of the Sydney Harbour as entrepreneurs from the four other Mi'kmaq nations. They were laborers, salesmen, traders among many other professions in order to fill positions within the Sydney community. Membertou ancestors became a community out of necessity. They endured together.

Through the turmoil of the last century, our community has come from being a "have not" community to becoming a "have" community. And again we have endured.

Present day Membertou works through economic development in order to bring gracious abundance to the community.



ISO Certification

In January of 2002, Membertou received official notification of its ISO status, making Membertou the first aboriginal government in the world to become ISO:9001 certified. The purpose of ISO 9001 compliance was to further enhance Membertou's indigenous economy based on the pillars of sustainability, conservation, innovation and success. The ISO designation allowed us to position our community as a very credible player in the global market economy.



The Membertou Trade & Convention Centre

This facility, aka *The Jewel of Cape Breton*, attracts visitors from around the world to the community and we welcome all visitors with warm hearts.

Having this large facility in Membertou not only allows visitors to come to Membertou for work and play but also provides the perfect facility for community events. For many, many years our community hosted all of our events in a small hall, and as the community grew, it was becoming more difficult to entertain the growing number of community members. This now allows all community members to attend and it is a great revenue source to fund other great projects within the community.

As well, this facility is a major employment draw for many community members and the residents of Sydney and the surrounding area.



Membertou Business Centre

The Business Centre incorporates many of the community's goals under one roof. It is a place where business owners and Aboriginal entrepreneurs come together to offer their products and services to the greater Sydney area and community residents alike in a prime location along the new extended Churchill Drive within Membertou's Business Park district.

The Membertou Entrepreneur Centre which is located in the Business Centre encourages and promotes Aboriginal entrepreneurship by providing tools to eliminate any barriers.



Membertou Education System

The staff is dedicated to providing a quality education for all students. They strive to provide a safe and comfortable environment where mutual respect results in academic, social, physical, and emotional growth for everyone.

Only recently Membertou acquired a parcel of land which is intended to be used for building Membertou's new school which will house grade primary to nine. The school is scheduled to open by September 2013.

The current school, Membertou Elementary on Maillard Street, was built more than a decade ago and houses students up to Grade 6. It was originally opened as a temporary fix when it was constructed in 2000. The school doesn't have a library or a cafeteria and has an inadequate gym facility.

Membertou signed a self-government agreement in education in 1997 that gave them the opportunity and freedom to run their own education systems by adapting the provincial curriculum to a First Nation's individual language and cultural needs.

This new school will also give Mi'kmaq parents who have sent their children to Sydney area schools the option of returning to school in Membertou.



Membertou Wellness Centre

The Membertou Wellness Home has a full time staff that is committed to empowering the community to take control of their health by offering health care services and prevention programs. They also encourage a healthier lifestyle and behaviors. The services offered in our community make proper health care much more accessible and consistent for our people at the same time as providing employment.

The Health Centre has also formed many partnerships with the Cape Breton District Health Authority, Tui'kn Partnership, Union of Nova Scotia Indians, Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, VON, Cape Care, Red Cross, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch – Atlantic Region, Diabetes Education Centre, Membertou Inter Agency, Addiction Services, Cape Breton Resource Centre, Healing Our Nation, AIDS Coalition of Cape Breton and many more.



Anaia Global Renewable Energies

Membertou respects the environment and is determined to create a lasting, healthy environment for generations to come. Membertou First Nation and Grupo Guascor from the Basque country of Spain formed a partnership to provide renewable energy solutions to North America. With Grupo Guscor a leader in the renewable energy field and Membertou with

proven success in social economic development, they created Anaia Global Renewable Energies.

Anaia Global Renewable Energies provides renewable energy solutions to rural and remote communities as well as realize large-scale initiatives through partnerships with local organizations and industries.

Guscor's positive results with the rural and indigenous communities of Amazonia and Membertou's excellent relations with tribal groups in North America provide Anaia Global Renewable Energies with a solid foundation built on trust and mutual understanding.

A full range of renewable energy solutions will be designed specifically for small rural communities and remote parts of the continent. Anaia provides a vehicle for sustainable economic growth and will take several steps forward in reducing our carbon footprint for future generations.

Membertou: A Long Time Enduring Community

Membertou is not creating an enduring community; we have been living in one for many generations. We will continue to live graciously, live respectfully and live as proud as we do today, within our community.