

## **Lheidli T'enneh Maintaining Cultural Practices**

Written by Jane Inyallie, Tse'khene Nation

Thursday, 19 February 2009

Lheidli T'enneh.

Translation: Where the two rivers flow together.

Prince George and surrounding area is on Lheidli T'enneh traditional territory. Lheidli T'enneh now live on two pieces of land separated by the Fraser River. They refer to them as South side and North side. Approximately 321 people live on both sides of the river.

They have other traditional lands; Miworth, which is northwest of Prince George on the Nechako River, Szallacho by the Chilako River, burial grounds at Fort George, and T'sun Dusai by the gully on the south side of Cameron St. Bridge. The translation of T'sun Dusai is "bones up there." The cremation site was on the hill just above the bridge, the final resting place for bones left after cremation.

The Chief of Lheidli T'enneh Nations is Dominic Frederick. Council members are Vanessa West, Rena Zatorski and Louella Nome.

Lheidli T'enneh are residential school survivors who are regaining cultural practices. They've always hunted, fished, and gathered food and continue to do so. Young people are going back to their culture, learning to sing in their language, drumming and dancing. They've formed a youth group and sing, drum and dance at special events.

Lheidli T'enneh has recently been in the news regarding old, beautiful stained-glass windows that were removed from their church. These windows will be displayed at Exploration Place. At some point they will be restored. Elder Violet Bozoki tells the story of her father who was the watchman for the village. He watched over the land, church and other buildings to make sure everyone and everything was OK. When he passed on, Violet and her brother Ron Seymour took on the job, and initiated the process of saving and restoring the windows of the church.

First Nations people publicly acknowledge the traditional territory they're on before they do anything on that territory. Historically the protocol was to speak to chief and council, or their representative, to announce your arrival and the purpose of your visit on their land. It still is practiced and is a sign of respect and gratitude. Example: if someone from another territory wanted to pick medicine, they would bring tobacco and/or other offerings when making their request. The gifted tobacco or offerings are used in various ceremonies.

Most health professionals have learned to stop in at the band offices to announce who they are, and the purpose of their visit. A band member will often accompany that person to show them where someone lives, or to assist in what they need to do.

I acknowledge Lheidli T'enneh by speaking to one of their Elders Violet Bozoki, before writing about First Nations people in Prince George.

If any of this information isn't correct, or if we have offended or hurt anyone, our apologies, it wasn't intentional.

Mussi!

Elder: Violet Bozoki - Lheidli T'enneh Nation

Assist in Translation: Lucy Mattess - Tl'azt'en Nation

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