



Listuguj
MI'GMAQ GOVERNMENT

Nnuimtmo'taqan Agnutas'g Listugujg: Interview with Chief Darcy Gray

August 10th, Listuguj, QC – This is the transcript from a video interview with Chief Darcy Gray that was published today on our YouTube channel, ListugujMigmaqGov. This is the first interview for our new segment, Nnuimtmo'taqan Agnutas'g Listugujg.

Transcript:

M: Mike Isaac

C: Chief Darcy Gray

M: Hello Listuguj. My name is Mike Isaac and I'm the Communications Manager for the Listuguj Mi'gmaq Government. Today is our debut segment for Nnuimtmo'taqan Agnutas'g Listugujg. Today I'm joined by Chief Darcy Gray. Hi Chief. How are you?

C: Hi Mike. I'm fine. How are you?

M: Not too bad, sir. Today, we're going to be asking you a few questions, some community questions, and hopefully we can inform our community on what's taking place with this new administration. Starting off, this is your first time being re-elected. Congratulations on that by the way. We'd like to know what it is about this new administration or what was different from your first administration to the new one. What changes do you see and how are you taking a different approach this time around?

C: That's a good question, and it is a little different, I guess, being re-elected. My first time getting in here as Chief, a huge and steep learning curve. There's so much that happens here at LMG. There's so much to learn and so much to become familiar with. Although sometimes the perception is that not much happens in the community, there's a lot that happens behind the scenes. Getting up to speed with all of that can be quite difficult and time-consuming. This time, obviously, being re-elected, a little more knowledge about what's going on and what we've been doing over the last two years. The approach now is to make sure that council and staff and everybody that's new can get up to speed and we can develop some strategic plans together and move forward as a cohesive unit.

M: With that being said – you spoke about getting projects going – some of the community members are looking to inquire, actually, about some of the projects that will be continuing into this new administration, one of which is the paving project. Is there anything you can give us an update on in regards to that file?

C: Absolutely. We've been working very hard on that one. We know that paving is a long-standing issue in this community. It should have been done a long time ago. I have no problem admitting that, but we've found a plan. We've developed a way forward where we can pave a significant amount of the roads that are unpaved at this time. We're going to be doing it in two phases where you'll see some of the roads started this year and then much more done next year. We've been able to secure the finances that we need to do that, and we're hoping that the paving will start as early as September 1st.

M: Excellent. That's definitely some good news. Continuing on, we're looking to get some information on the Zenabis file. The last we as the community had seen there was a vote. The vote was a predominant yes. Since then, what - if any - updates can you provide to us on that file?

C: Okay. At this point, we have converted our loan into shares. We are working on our collaboration agreement because it wasn't simply a shareholders' agreement, but we've also reached a collaboration agreement. In that agreement, there's a number of issues or a number of topics to be addressed and worked on. Those topics actually come from the community consultations that we've had, the discussions and the concerns that we've heard from community over the last two years of working on this file; employment opportunities, spin-off opportunities, collaboration, different areas that we can continue to build this relationship and make sure that it's not simply an economic venture, a one-time investment of becoming a shareholder, but really, how do we explore all options around this partnership.

M: Excellent. You had mentioned in the first question about being re-elected and being able to come into this new administration with a lot more knowledge. One of the things that was discussed was the election code. It's something that – from what I understand – has been really worked on to a certain extent. A lot of due diligence is being done currently. Would you be able to fill us in a little bit more as to what's taking place with the current status of the election code?

C: Okay. It is something that was talked about we know going back as far as twenty years ago. There was talk of development of a custom election code. There's been two cracks at it, at least, that I'm aware of. Here we are discussing a third attempt at it. It was talked about in the previous administration. We reviewed some potential drafts, key questions that would come out of that. Unfortunately, at that time, the timing didn't work out. We felt it would have been a rushed initiative but we did ask some good questions and we got some good insight and direction from the community members in some of the conversations that we had in public meetings actually. So we've incorporated some of those questions and ideas into a consultation that will be starting soon. The new council has reviewed the draft, again, made some minor amendments, suggested some key questions that would be important to get some insight from community members. We're hoping that those consultations will be kicked off soon and that within about a year from now we're making a decision on how we want to move forward in our own way with selecting our leadership.

M: Excellent. It's good to know that there's going to be more community engagement that will be taking place in regards to a lot of different files. One in which we can speak about that has actually recently finished is the housing policy. There was a lot consultation and community

engagement that went on in regards to that. Where are we on potential implementation or a release of a final draft? Is there any update that you can also give to us about the housing policy?

C: Well, the housing policy is an interesting initiative. Again, that's something, I think, that's been tried on a number of occasions. It was clearly voiced to us during the first public meeting in the last administration that the public would like to see a little more transparency and clarity on housing-related decisions. We undertook that project, and right now we're at the stage where we've gone out and we've heard a lot. That information is being brought together and developed into a policy. I think in September you'll see – I wouldn't say a final version but maybe – a draft version of a policy to make sure that everything that's been gathered is exactly what we've heard from community members, from leadership, from the staff that have been involved in housing for, you know, thirty-plus years. It was really a major undertaking to make sure you gathered everybody's information. You want to make sure that the policy doesn't just apply to the past but how is this going to shape our future in terms of housing in Listuguj.

M: Excellent. Segueing into my next question, there is currently some development in one end of the community just off of Caplin Road. There's some houses and foundations that are starting be put up. This is causing some questions in the community in regards to this seeing as we've just come out of this housing policy discussion. Will there be housing selection this year? If so, what will that look like?

C: Well, I think our policy is really going to inform those decisions. This is the community's input. This is coming from our community members and our housing people that have been working in the area for so long. There was always a perceived lack of – maybe – transparency in the decision-making so we're hoping that that will change. Who decides is an important aspect but I think how people decide is equally if not more important. We do have two Section 95 homes that are being built right now; the foundations are up and more work is to come. Then you'll see five LTO homes that will be started soon. Yes, there will be selections. I think the key question here is how will they be selected and how is that process driven by our community members.

M: Thank you very much, Chief. Those are some great updates in regards to projects that are being worked on as of right now. Are there any other projects that are coming down the pipes at this point in time; maybe something that hasn't been 100% released or is there something that we can be introduced to at this time? Are there any other projects that might be coming down?

C: I think one of the most important things that's come out of the brief time that the new administration has been in is that continued commitment to community, continued commitment to engaging with community, going out there, getting opinions. We know that we've heard a lot with well over a hundred, maybe with as many as two hundred opportunities over the last two years for community members to provide opinion on a number of topics. I'm happy to say that that continues to be the driving force as we go forward as well as how do we develop methods or mechanisms for community decision-making. These are all new and exciting things. We've also talked about how do we develop and outline the role of Council, Chief and Council. Seeing some full-time commitment to people working on the important files that we have at a political level. I think these are some exciting developments. I very much look forward to what can come out of these. I also want to say thanks to you guys. This is a long talked about initiative to continue and to improve the communication to the community members. I think this is great and I'm anxious for where it's going to go. Thank you for that.

M: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. We do our best to try to communicate to the community as often as possible. We're going to move into some community questions. We put a post out a couple weeks back asking community members that if they could ask Chief and Council one question what would it be. One of those questions actually came from a community member almost immediately. It was pertaining to the recent AFN National election. The community member was wondering if there is a way or a mechanism that can be implemented to actually engage our community on where you as leadership or you as Chief should vote in that election. Is there anything that we can do – maybe a community engagement or a town hall – to say, you know, where would you like Listuguj to vote in in the upcoming national election seeing as that it has been passed, but this is something that we can definitely look into for the future.

C: That's a very interesting question, and it's one, you know, this is my first time being part of the AFN election process. Leading up to it, we did have a conversation here amongst Council about how do we want to approach this. We talked about the importance of Council at the very least having some input and putting forward some opinion and discussion on who we'd like to support as a community. I think that was interesting. That was good to do, and we did have some input from Council on different candidates. Even while you're there, you're learning more and more about the candidates. I think it is worth considering and looking at how do we make this more of a community-driven process just as we've been doing with everything so that when I am there casting a vote on behalf of Listuguj I can guarantee that it is representative of the voice of Listuguj. As it stands, there was an election, there are results and we roll with those results. It was really interesting to see and be a part of. How we can do that better going forward is always worth talking about and finding solutions for.

M: Our final community question; we've had speed bumps implemented in place by the Youth Centre to protect our youth and to protect our children who will be there for the majority of the summer. There have been reports of community members indicating that there have been vehicles on side streets still travelling at excessive speeds. Is there something that possibly can be done in regards to allowing for more monitoring or possibly putting more speed bumps in different areas of the community to try to slow down that excessive speed?

C: This is a long-standing concern. I can remember when there were speed bumps installed at different places throughout the community whenever I was much younger and a more reckless driver, I think, and saying, "Hey, those speed bumps do work, right?" Really, what it comes down to, I think, a big part of it is us as community members and drivers. We have to respect and recognize where we are driving, that there are children all over this community. It's important that we drive with care and safety. The speed bumps do encourage you to slow down, but ultimately, I think it's a personal decision that we want to drive in a safer and friendlier way for our community.

M: Thank you very much, Chief Gray. I appreciate your time and I thank you for answering all of my questions. We hope to be hearing some updates from you in the near future. I'd like to thank you, Listuguj, for tuning in to Nnuimtmo'taqan Agnutas'g Listugujg. We will be having our next segment coming very soon so stay tuned. If you have any concerns or questions about the next broadcast, please don't hesitate to contact LMG Communications at 418-788-2136. Wela'liq.