

# The Westlock News

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KRISTINE JEAN/WN

**DOTY DEBUTS IN WESTLOCK** – Alberta singer-songwriter Ellen Doty made her Westlock debut Jan. 27 as part of the 2022-2023 Cultural Arts Theatre Society (CATS) performance series at the Cultural Arts Theatre. Doty entertained the crowd with her upbeat, soulful performance that included a mix of jazz, soul, pop and folk music with a selection of songs from her previous collections including her ‘Gold’ album, current CD ‘Come Fall’ released in 2018 and several new numbers from her upcoming album. Doty was joined on stage by drummer Peter Hendrickson and Devin Hart on piano.

## Town to host second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

*Cultural awareness, education, history will be shared at Sept. 30 event*

BY KRISTINE JEAN  
Westlock News Staff

**WESTLOCK** — The Town of Westlock will be hosting a second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Cultural Awareness event in partnership with Alexander First Nation this fall.

The inaugural event held last September with support from Alexander First Nation, featured an educational session, drummers, dancers and a traditional meal.

At the Jan. 23 regular council meeting, CAO Simone Wiley told council about a grant application to the Department of Canadian Heritage, under the Commemorate Canada Program, requesting \$6,250 to assist with hosting another event this year. The total project costs are \$12,500.

“The intent is to build upon our successful Truth and Reconciliation event of 2022 and hold another community event in 2023, and this Canadian Heritage grant is specifically for that,” said Wiley.

Although no details have been finalized, Wiley said they have been in contact with event partners and noted that Sept. 30 falls on a Saturday this year

which is the day the town is looking to host.

Noting some feedback from the community about the inaugural event, Wiley said “the timing was tricky” because it was a bit too early for many people still working and trying to accommodate work schedules. “It was a challenge though because we had so much to pack into that evening that we didn’t want it to run too late either,” explained Wiley.

In building on the relationship with Alexander First Nation, this year’s event will include education and awareness on the history, impact, and legacy of residential schools, as presented by an Elder, the sharing of culture and traditions, with performers from Alexander First Nation showcasing traditional drumming and dances, in addition to having an Elder share a prayer and a traditional meal.

About 150 people attended the event in 2022 while the town is anticipating double that number this year.

“We certainly look forward to it, bigger and better each year,” said mayor Ralph Leriger.

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## Land and Property Rights Tribunal to hear appeal in Westlock County dispute

*SDAB makes decision following preliminary hearing Jan. 12*

BY KRISTINE JEAN  
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**WESTLOCK** — The hearing for a stop order appeal involving an ongoing dispute between Westlock County, a local farmer and his neighbour, will be decided at the provincial level following a preliminary hearing by the county’s Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) Jan. 12.

The matter dates back several years to the spring of 2015, when the county first issued a stop-work order against farmer Nick Jonk and refused a development permit for his farm operations. Subsequent appeals has seen the back-and-forth dispute continue.

In the latest development, the preliminary hearing was held to decide whether an appeal, filed against the development authority’s decision Nov. 17, 2022, by Jonk, should be heard by the SDAB in Westlock or the Land and Property Rights Tribunal in Edmonton. The decision last November included a stop-work order to bring lands into compliance with the *Municipal Government Act* and the county’s land-use bylaw.

In a decision dated Jan. 25, the board provided background on the stop order, and outlined the county’s position that “the appeal must be heard by the Land and Property Rights Tribunal (LPRT), pursuant to Section 685 of the *Municipal Government Act*.” They also provided a summary of the preliminary hearing, detailing all sides — the appellant (Nick Jonk), the development authority, and the affected party (Norm Mercier) before presenting its decision, including several reasons for it.

“The SDAB finds that this appeal is within Section 685(2.1)(a)(i)(C) of the MGA and therefore directs that the hearing of this appeal be referred to the LPRT,” read the decision statement.

At the Jan. 12 preliminary hearing, presentations were made to the board by Jonk’s legal counsel, Benjamin Ferland and county manager of planning and development Kathleen Deshoux and her legal counsel, Jeneane Grundberg. A written submission provided by Greg Lintz, legal counsel for Norm Mercier, was also presented, which stated that Mercier’s position is that the LPRT should hear the appeal.

In his presentation, Ferland argued the “appeal deals with the location of a shop, and it is an entirely local matter with no provincial interest” and that even if the provisions of the MGA regarding appeals to be heard by the LPRT are applicable, “the MGA does not require an appeal exclusively be heard by the LPRT and the SDAB still has discretion to hear the appeal.”

Deshoux noted in her presentation that the “MGA does not provide for concurrent jurisdiction for the LPRT and SDAB to hear appeals. If the appeal fits within Section 685(2.1)(a) of the MGA, then the appeal must be heard by the LPRT.” Also noted in the development authority’s argument, was that “the SDAB bylaw was passed prior to the MGA amendments and cannot override the MGA.”

In an e-mail Jan. 27, SDAB chair Ken Mead said via Westlock County municipal clerk, Dianne Johnston, that “our decision was vetted through legal counsel” and “it is very clear and there would be nothing else that he would be able to comment on.”

Ferland did not reply to our requests for comment regarding the SDAB decision and attempts were also made to contact a representative with the Land and Property Rights Tribunal in Edmonton but inquiries were not immediately returned.

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