

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Friday, March 20, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC – WEEK 1

Thunder Bay, Ontario – With the COVID-19 pandemic being declared by international, federal and provincial bodies as a ‘global health and societal emergency,’ and with some of our member First Nations declaring the pandemic as a State of Emergency this past week—Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) has played an active role towards assisting their 9 member First Nations in minimizing the likelihood of transmission and providing extended supports. Measures have also been taken to ensure the safety of management and 200+ employees.

Working within a wrap-around approach, utilizing services established by our First Nations such as the Matawa Health Co-operative, the Matawa Education Authority, and Nibi Water Services (amongst others)—the following has been provided during the week of March 15 – 21:

For Matawa First Nations

- Deciding (on March 13, 2020) on an extended school closure of the Matawa Education and Care Centre (from March 14 – April 5)
- Provided communications support to member First Nations calling for governments to address the pandemic
- Developed a ‘COVID-19 Best Practices Guide for MFNM and First Nations in Matawa’ which included links to Public Health Ontario Resources such as ‘Guide for Caregivers,’ ‘How to Self-Isolate,’ ‘How to Self-Monitor’ and ‘Cleaning & Disinfection for Public Settings’
- Participated in regular teleconferences (this includes Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Matawa Chiefs Council, Sioux Lookout Regional Table teleconference calls)
- Sharing updates provided by Nishnawbe Aski Nation via social media when new information arises including informational material and resources available at: www.nan.on.ca/covid19
- Assisted off-reserve command centres that have been established in Thunder Bay
- Provided extended supports to Matawa families at risk of child welfare involvement through the Awashishewiigihiwaywiin program in Thunder Bay
- Provided emergency food hampers to Matawa families in need in Thunder Bay (and started looking at how more food security could be provided to First Nations in Matawa)
- Participating in communications that appraise on the Indigenous Service Canada’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Funding Process for Ontario Region
- Sharing ‘Draft Emergency Pandemic Plan for MFNM’ drafted with medical personnel with Health Directors and First Nations in Matawa

For MFNM Employees and All Subsidiaries

- Deciding on an extended office closure from March 16 – April 5 with employees working from home and cancelling all training, events, workshops, and non-essential travel for management and staff and, postponement of all in-person board, committee and working group meetings (office lines have remained open)
- Developed a ‘COVID-19 Best Practices Guide for MFNM and First Nations in Matawa’ that educates employees providing essential services, including working with clients, on the symptoms of COVID-19

including Public Health Ontario Resources such as ‘Guide for Caregivers,’ ‘How to Self-Isolate,’ ‘How to Self-Monitor’ and ‘Cleaning & Disinfection for Public Settings’

- Prepared, with medical personnel, a ‘Draft Emergency Pandemic Plan for MFNM’ and started the process of establishing an Emergency Pandemic Committee
- Participating in regular MFNM teleconferences (ie. Program Managers and Broadband Working Group)
- Matawa Health Co-operative looking at the possibility of providing virtual health care for First Nations in Matawa

Next Steps

MFNM recognizes the key role we play in minimizing the likelihood of transmission and impact on our First Nations. Into the next week, we are working towards providing regular updates and encouraging everyone to do their part in preventing the spread of the virus by adhering to guidelines set out by First Nations Chiefs and Councils and the federal/provincial governments. So far, there are zero (0) confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our First Nations.

If anyone is concerned that they may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, should contact their primary care provider, local public health unit, or Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000.

For the most up-to date information on COVID-19, visit: publichealthontario.ca

