

UPDATE

Friday, March 26, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC – WEEK 2

We providing this as follow up to last week's update. Updates will be posted online each Friday. During the week of March 22 – 28th—Matawa First Nation Management (MFNM) continued to work 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, along with our departments. This week, the following took place:

For Matawa First Nations

- Continued to participate in regular teleconferences (this includes Nishnawbe Aski Nation (including Mental Health & Addictions Working Group), Matawa Chiefs Council, Sioux Lookout Regional Table, Chiefs of Ontario teleconference calls)
- Assisted First Nations, where requested, on proposals to Indigenous Service Canada's COVID-19 Emergency Response Funding Process for Ontario Region and to access to resources to implement their Pandemic Plans
- Matawa Health & Social continued to provide supports to First Nation communities with respect to Pandemic Plans, provided supplies, groceries and other needs to Elders and Children living in the city, liaised with other agencies, assisted in disseminating information, packaging supplies/materials and provided supports, case management and advocacy for individuals
- Matawa Financial Advisory continued to work with community Band Managers/Finance Officers to provide assistance on administrative/funding matters related to the pandemic
- Matawa Health Co-operative continued to look at the possibility of providing virtual health care for First Nations in Matawa - in the interim it is providing its nursing and mental wellness services by phone during specific times
- Matawa Education completed its 2nd emergency food hamper delivery to Matawa families in need in Thunder Bay (they delivered close to 500 hampers on March 25th and 300 hampers on March 20th) – they are considering future emergency food hamper delivery in Thunder Bay (with dates to be determined) but at this time are focusing efforts on First Nations food security for the next couple of weeks
- Matawa Education continued to provide mental health counselling by phone and other supports to its students – it also continued to work with Education Authorities on providing access to resources to implement their portion of their community's Pandemic Plans as well as provide them comprehensive COVID-19 information
- Extended supports to Matawa families at risk of child welfare involvement through the Awashishewiigihiwaywiin program in Thunder Bay has continued
- Nibi Water Services continued to coordinate water supply for First Nations on boil water advisories
- Matawa Technical Services continued to provide advice to First Nations on infrastructure issues - they also continued to be involved in *Emergency Management Ontario* and *Provincial Emergency Operations Centre* (PEOC) processes, where appropriate through their Office of the Fire Marshal
- Matawa Communications continued to share 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 – it also shared related information from other sources

For MFNM Employees and All Subsidiaries

- Matawa Board of Directors made a decision to extend office closures from March 16 – April 5 to April 17 – employees will continue working from home and office lines will remain open
- MNFM Program Managers and other Working Groups (such as Broadband) continued to participate in regular teleconferences
- Rapid Lynx Telecommunications (broadband/internet services) continued to proceed with their brush cutting/land clearing program in the area of Marten Falls First Nation
- KKETS continued to monitor two (2) of its off-site training programs (1 was completed this week and another will be completed on April 17, 2020)
- A new page on the Matawa website has been established at <http://www.matawa.on.ca/services/covid-19/> - it was set up to publish Matawa specific information on the pandemic

Next Steps

The Matawa Chiefs have directed that we make every attempt to assist our most vulnerable members residing in Thunder Bay. We will continue to determine where we can assist in either providing support or, work with service providers in the city—amongst other activities we will be looking at. Matawa will also be of assistance to our First Nations who want to set up services for their members in the city.

Within the communities, Matawa First Nations have been diligent in developing and implementing their Pandemic Plans. So far, there are zero (0) confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our First Nations. Although, four (4) have been confirmed in the last week in Timmins, Ontario and one today in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

We urge you to continue to practice social distancing, and especially around the elderly and other vulnerable members and to practice good hand/home hygiene by washing hands frequently, avoid touching your face and cleaning household surfaces regularly.

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

