



Cowessess First Nation #73

Office of the Chief

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December 20th, 2018

TO: Citizens, Cowessess First Nation

Re: Updates and Sharing of Growth

It is with great honor to provide an update on behalf of Council. As Chief and eight Councillors, we pride ourselves on being transparent with citizens regarding issues relating to our Nation's operations. The delegated responsibility given to each of us to assure the Nation flows has its opportunities and challenges. One day at a time, decisions made, have in mind the core opportunities today as well as opportunities for our children.

Old Church

November 14th around 2am, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church was destroyed by a fire. The cause of the fire is under investigation by the RCMP. The quick response from Cowessess First Nation Peace Keepers, Cowessess First Nation Fire Department, and Kahkewistahaw First Nation Fire Department assured the fire was contained but because of the material and original structure from 1930s, the entire building was turned to ashes within hours. Insurance covered the clean up. Minimal discussion has happened to date in regards to moving forward.

Cowessess Gas and Grocery I and II

In August, Little Child Holdings Board signed a new Motor Fuel Supply Agreement with McDougall Energy who manages the Imperial Oil (ESSO) brand. Cowessess Gas and Grocery (CGG) has had many successful years to build the two stores to maturity in what it can succeed. With a strategic alliance, this new partnership will invite more clients as the ESSO family has collector points. The new alliance leaves Cowessess Gas and Grocery with the same autonomy as before, the name Cowessess Gas and Grocery, just an ESSO logo beside it.

The equipment is being installed this week and will continue for the following few weeks. Store I on reserve will receive new tanks, new pumps, new Point of Sale System and a light highway sign with a price change. Store II will receive the same upgrades (with exception of no tanks as the existing tanks are still relatively new). At Store I, Manager, Bev Sparvier has retired after dedicating over two decades to helping grow the store. Her time and commitment

has been impactful and the Nation commends her for her leadership and wishes her a relaxing retirement.

Grain Farming Initiative

Cowessess First Nation has 110,000 acres of land with 72,000 acres agriculture ready. In 2019, Cowessess First Nation has the goal of grain farming up to 2,000 acres. As a business, this initiative will be communal based and once the business grows, more acres can be used for the business. There will always be land leased at fair market value but Cowessess First Nation has the opportunity to be a major player in the Agriculture industry. Not only grain farming but selling byproducts and finding other areas in the supply chain are other areas being assessed. Myers Norris Penny is completing a business plan to provide a realistic plan to achieve grain farming 2,000 acres.

Constitution Draft

In 2016, Chief and Council hired Urban Systems who did a strategic plan highlighting five priorities; you can find this strategic plan on the website. One of the priorities was to *create good governance*. The second Wednesday of each month are Governance gatherings at the Hall on Cowessess. Direction given was to bring forward a constitution draft. This has been citizen driven and it is with excitement to ask for your participation in setting the foundation for future generations.

There was a constitution draft reading that occurred this past week. A constitution is a framework which will empower Cowessess First Nation citizens, state who we are, define how we will make decisions, state our direction, and help solve disputes. For the past three decades, Cowessess First Nation created two draft constitutions. An ad hoc committee came together in September, amalgamated the two drafts and built upon them to what we have today. The ad hoc committee includes the following: Shelly Tootoosis (Agecoutay), Tracy Lavallee, Nola Mahingen, Stephanie Delorme, Amanda Louison, and Terrence Pelletier. Denise Pelletier has been the administration lead. Anyone seeking information, you can contact Denise and it is also available on the Cowessess First Nation website.

Legal Cases

a) Lands Case

The Notice of Application for judicial review was brought forward by Gary W. Pelletier and Gordon D. Lerat. It seeks to review and set aside the Band Council Resolution and related decisions made by Council. This case deals squarely with the challenging of a governance decision to a fully integrated land administration system. Where all lands under administration within the home reserve like those added to the reserve under our Treaty Land Entitlement would be used to benefit citizens as a whole, as compared to just a handful of individuals. Cross examinations are completed and legal is working with the Federal Court to set a date.

b) ATCO Sustainable Inc

This case was inherited from the prior Chief and certain Councillors. In 2015, Cowessess First Nation brought a notice of application for judicial review. The current Council have been providing options in moving past the legal case with ATCO Sustainable Inc. but have not finalized anything yet. Terrence Lavallee and Valarie Tanner signed an agreement to provide Flood Claim Dollars \$800,000 to ATCO Sustainable Inc. to build the then Soccer Building. The plan did not fulfill and ATCO Sustainable Inc. stood by the agreement signed not releasing remaining dollars of \$420,000. An option to settle was presented with returning remaining dollars and in return, the case will be dropped.

c) Housing

A Notice of Application for judicial review was brought forward by Edward Aisacian. The applicant is asking for insurance money for a prior house which was destroyed by a fire. Council assessed the situation and insurance money is for replacing homes, not individual payouts.

d) Phillips Law Firm

Council taxed Phillips Law Firm. The prior Chief and Council used Phillips Law Firm to act on behalf of the Nation. Over 30 months of representing Cowessess First Nation, \$920,000 was charged and paid the Nation. The current Council assessed and brought a legal case forward to have each invoice assessed and are seeking repayment. It is now at the stage of awaiting the Judge to direct an assessment of invoices.

10 Year Funding Agreement

Government of Canada has provided an opportunity for First Nation bands to opt into a 10 year funding grant. Currently, Cowessess First Nation is on a fixed funding model. This current model requires extensive reporting to Indigenous Affairs Canada (ISC) and limited options to use dollars specifically in programs where they share similar goals. The 10 year funding agreement will remove up to 400 reporting requirements and replace with up to 40 reporting requirements to ISC and instead increase reporting to citizens. It will also allow long term planning and flexible transfer of dollars between programs.

Cowessess First Nation is continuing to assess if this will benefit the Nation. Two action plans left with the Government of Canada: 1) Are contemporary funding rates with inflation included over the next 10 years, and 2) Are there capacity dollars to prepare staff and leadership to take on more responsibility? To date, ISC provided dollars for capacity training and also Cowessess First Nation was confirmed to receive Education Dollars comparable to Provincial funds. Council has not agreed but have shown interest in moving to the final stages of preparing. In the coming months, an update will be provided.

Cowessess Ventures LP

Of many successes in 2018, Cowessess First Nation created *Cowessess First Nation Ventures LP*. This board will oversee all business activities for the Nation. Over the past year, Council hired Praxis Business Consulting to bring recommendations on board members. After great feedback, Lucy Pelletier, Tonii Lerat, John Hopkins, Dana Soonias, Brayden Parisian, Cory Furman, Councillor Rook Spariver, and myself were chosen. The board is now seeking a CEO. In the coming months, Little Child Holdings overseeing Cowessess Gas and Grocery I and II, 4-C Farms LP, Wind Energy LP, and others will be transferred to the Board. This move will allow business minded people to make decisions to grow, enhance and create more business opportunities on behalf of the Nation.

Little Child Community Development Board

Of many successes in 2018, Cowessess First Nation created *Little Child Community Development Board Inc.* This board will oversee gaming (bingos) and lead in seeking new ideas like Chase the Ace, ratio bingo, and more. Board members are Denise Pelletier, Memory Delorme-Antoine, Sheri Sparvier, Ella Redwood, Jennifer Pelletier, and Councillor Curtis Lerat. Similar to Painted Hand Casino Community Development Corporation (CDC), this board will have responsibility on behalf of citizens to maintain, grow and strengthen gaming.

Cowessess First Nation Flood Claim Land Purchase

November 8th, the vote passed to internally sell land to the Flood Claim from the Treaty Land Entitlement. A total of \$2,610,000 was transferred from Flood Claim trust account to the Treaty Land Entitlement trust account. This sale included 19 acres of land in Yorkton purchased for \$1.25 million and 1 acre in Regina purchased for \$1.36 million.

Purpose of the land transfer is to convert the land to Addition to Reserve (ATR) under a "Specific Claim" which will enable Cowessess to avoid paying a School Tax Loss Compensation Agreement with the two school boards. This small clause in the Flood Claim Trust Agreement will allow Cowessess to save thousands of dollars in taxation over the life of the land holding. Also, transferring the land under a specific claim may be faster than the

TLE ATR process. Because the two land transactions are each over \$1,000,000, the purchase between the two sister entities (TLE and Flood Claim), it required an approval by band membership.

Children in Care Home

Cowessess First Nation has over 120 children and young adults in care. Playing more of a direct role, funding was confirmed and an ad hoc committee is putting final plans to a 10-bedroom home to be built on Cowessess First Nation. This home will provide ones in care a

option to move home. Colonization and oppression created many challenges we all inherited today. It is action plans like this which will help us in our healing journey. Our Children are our most precious gift and children in care deserve the best opportunity to succeed.

Cowessess First Nation is also hiring a position solely dedicated to keeping continuous contact will children in care whom are from Cowessess First Nation. The more we instill *who we are* as Cowessess First Nation people into our children, the better opportunity they will have in being proud of where they come from.

Successful Operations

Staff, Council, and committees have been working diligently to provide quality services and more resources to all benefiting. Many 2018 success stories to share and to highlight a few:

- Department of Housing has confirmed almost \$2,000,000 to build new homes, find dollars to renovate current homes, replacing homes with insurance dollars, all while restoring the reserve fund (a account which was drained by prior Chief and certain Council). In 2019, more projects are being worked on like women and men's shelter, seniors village, housing authority;
- Cowessess First Nation received a letter from Indigenous Services Canada removing Cowessess First Nation from *Management Action Plan* (MAP) which First Nations are put into when not fulfilling funding agreement and mentioned Cowessess First Nation runs one of the best financial and transparent operations;
- Department of Economic Development has brought in more then \$2,400,000 in grants to help businesses which created a solar panel field, and created new business plans and help further development existing business plans;
- Department of Health and Social Development have restored 16 positions (there were 4 positions in 2016) and are final stages of being accredited once again;
- Department of Education have received confirmation for the upcoming school season, funding will be equivalent or greater to provincial funding;
- Department of Public Works have moved into a proactive state (finally caught up) to many sewage drainage, old water pipes, purchased a new Grader, achieved status to remove the *boil water advisory*, confirmed funding for an assessment of Public Works Department and assets, as well as a feasibility study for the Solid Waste site, and work is continuing on Water Treatment Plant upgrades;
- Department of Lands have assured fair market value for land administered
- Department of Urban Services have moved to a new location for easier access, more program, and have began youth drum and share, teach youth cultural activities, host monthly senior gatherings, partnered with *Working Warriors* to do a asset update on

finding citizens jobs, and coordinated with the Recreation Department to send youth attend sports;

- Department of Justice run professional Peace Keepers to assure safety for the community, help reintegrate community members, and enhancing the emergency management plan;
- Department of Sports, Culture, Recreation brought in new playgrounds, assisted in over 90 youth to attend Winter Games, and provide community members with more opportunities.

There are more success stories to share and this growth in 2018 was because the 105 staff have worked non-stop on behalf of the Nation; THANK YOU TO ALL STAFF.

On behalf of Council, I want to thank the administration staff, citizens whom sit on boards and Trusts, as well as all who play a part in making our Nation better one day at a time. We will continue to grow Cowessess First Nation to be an economic player in the economy as well strengthen our identity as citizens of Cowessess First Nation. May the Christmas holidays be filled with food, laughter, and love.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cadmus Delorme". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial 'C' and 'D'.

Cadmus Delorme
Chief, Cowessess First Nation