



# Cowessess First Nation #73

*Office of the Chief*

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TO: Citizens, Cowessess First Nation

**Re: Updates and Sharing of Growth**

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It is a great honor to provide an update to Cowessess citizens on behalf of Council. As Chief and Council, we pride ourselves on being transparent with citizens regarding issues relating to our Nation’s governance and operations. The delegated responsibility given to each of us, in order to ensure that the Nation flows, has its opportunities and challenges. One day at a time decisions are made with the mindset that we have the duty of care for the future of our children and children yet unborn.

**2021-2022 Cowessess First Nation Budget, Financial Bylaw and Future**

Each year, Chief and Council approve a budget to assure accountability and good governance on behalf of the First Nation. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Chief and Council approved the 2022-2023 budget with a \$862.00 surplus. The total revenue approved was \$19,342,024.00 The following is the last four year’s approved global budgets:

	<b>2019/2020</b>	<b>2020/2021</b>	<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>
Revenue	\$16,453,636	\$15,146,012	\$16,052,995	\$19,342,024
Expenses	<u>\$16,405,824</u>	<u>\$15,046,741</u>	<u>\$16,427,549</u>	<u>\$19,341,162</u>
+/-	\$ 47,812	\$ 99,271	-\$ 374,554	\$ 862

This includes all Administration departments, Chief and Council and Entities (not including Chief Red Bear Children’s Lodge as they got their own flow through direct funding). After the first quarter of last year’s annual budget, Chief and Council adjusted the deficit to a break even. In years prior, Gaming Dollars provided around \$1.3 million which went to unfunded areas. Last fiscal we received around 40% of what we would normally receive and this fiscal we are hopeful that we will receive around 80%.

In the Fall of 2020, Chief and Council approved an updated Cowessess First Nation Financial Administration Bylaw. Working with the National First Nation Financial

Board, we view the updated bylaw as enhancing Cowessess First Nation's self-government, long term goals. We are working towards direct reporting and inclusion with citizens. One new change is there is a Finance and Admin Committee that meets to review decisions prior to the Duly Called Council meeting. This committee consists of the Chair of Finance and Admin and a co-chair as well as the Executive team and two seats are open for non-elected citizens. Council thanks the Director of Finance, Executive Director, Finance Staff, Directors and more for assuring that the First Nation runs an accountable and effective government.

The fiduciary obligation to assure Cowessess First Nation has implementation capacity has been assessed. In 2021 Juliano Tupone was hired to assess what Cowessess currently receives and what funding would be needed to have a long-term sustainable relationship with the Crown based on Cowessess First Nation approach. The numbers are inflated over 10 years and a conversation with Canada is ongoing. The challenge is what kind of funding relationship do we want. The current four year (we are in year four of four) has a lot of reports and paternalistic. There are other options: known to Canada as the 10-year grant provides a 10-year funding agreement for most programs. We can also work on a self-government agreement which would take around 10 years. This is being assessed as to assuring the Treaty relationship is foundational. Another option is having a funding relationship per department. This approach can be confusing. The focus here is to have a long-term fiduciary relationship.

At the Spring General Assembly, we can take questions and share more.

#### **4C Farms Ltd.**

4C Farms had a successful year for grain farming. In 2019, 4C Farm seeded 750 acres, in 2020, 4C Farm seeded 1350 acres and in 2021, we grain farmed 4500 acres. In 2022 we will be farming 4500 acres again. 4C Farms has received federal grants to support our gain farm expansion. 4C Farm purchased a John Deere FWA tractor, 7 grain bins, Vermeer baler, a semi with grain hauler, and more. We thank Terry Lerat, Jessica Nixon, and Reed Piller for helping lead the grain farming.

4C Farms also oversees livestock. Terry Lerat has been the Ranch Manager for the past 3 years and will continue to oversee the cattle operation and support the grain farm expansion. Serayne Perkins holds a full-time labour position with 4C Farms. We are proud to share we have 98% pregnancy rate and all cattle have up to date vaccinations. We invited veterinarians to the ranch and were advised our livestock are healthy and have high value. This year we will be updating the infrastructure around the ranch and one challenge we need help with, is new ranch hands. Terry will be retiring in the future and we are seeking citizens who what to be long term ranch leads.

### **Awasis Solar Limited Partnership – 10 MW Solar Project**

Cowessess First Nation business board is called Cowessess Ventures Ltd. (CVL). The board has a company called Awasis Nehiyawewini Energy Development Limited Partnership (ANED LP). On the east side of Regina on Cowessess land, a 10-megawatt solar project is under way with final completion set for June 2022. At the beginning of the project, Cowessess was a 51% owner, and our partner Elemental Energy Inc. was 49% partner. Together, we agreed Cowessess should have more ownership and agreed that Cowessess would be 95% owner and 100% owner at year five. The project will consist of 30,000 bi-facial solar panels, which will cover over 100 acres of land and could power up to 3,000 homes. All the power will be sold to SaskPower under a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement, the purpose of this project is to create an economic return for our development corporations and jobs.

If you were to pass the site today, work is underway. We have Cory Lavallee, who is site lead, Daphne Kay, Jessica Nixon, Ventures board and staff and more for the work to complete this project. We are proud to share that 70% of the workers onsite are Indigenous.

### **1246 Albert Street – Tim Hortons Development**

Cowessess Ventures Ltd (CVL) is developed our first urban commercial property at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Albert Street in Regina. After years of planning, we are proud to announce that CVL has opened a 2400 square foot restaurant and drive thru and leasing the building to Tim Hortons, under a 20-year lease agreement. The restaurant operations will be managed by a local Regina franchisee holder, who operates four other locations in Regina. In the coming months, the adjacent lands on the block are to be purchased with a potential location of a SIIT campus building and the finalization of the four-story office building. When projects are assessed, the Cowessess team will assure a return on investment is guaranteed.

### **Chief Red Bear Children's Lodge Led by the Miyo Pimatisowin Act**

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Cowessess First Nation asserted jurisdiction when it comes to children in care and prevention services. Since 1951, the provincial governments had overall jurisdiction, and this is no more. Cowessess First Nation led this initiative following our Constitution by ratifying the Miyo Pimatisowin Act in March 2020. Chief and Council advised the Government of Canada and provinces of our direction and over seven months we finalized the Coordination Agreement as well as the Funding Agreement. The Coordination Agreement is a contract as well as a transition plan. In the first year of opening and operations over jurisdiction, there was a lot of work that has been completed. We view our transition of jurisdiction like diming a light switch. In order to be fully functional, we need 120 staff; as of today, we have 23 staff. We also require

office and cultural space in key areas both on and off reserve. We have a plan to be fully functional by 2024. We will work effectively to get there and ensure our new long-term approach to child welfare renewal is done in a good way based on our healing approach.

### **1907 Surrender Negotiation**

Cowessess First Nation has been addressing the Government of Canada to settle the 1907 Land Surrender claim. January 2020, the Government of Canada accepted the Claim to negotiate a settlement. We remain in active negotiations with Canada on our 1907 Land Surrender Claim. We have completed three joint studies in respect of the Claim and about to begin adding costs to what Cowessess lost due to illegal claim. The primary focus in the months ahead will be to finalize costs and come to a common number by both Canada and the First Nation. We are quite happy with the progress we are making on the Claim. Once we both agree on a number leadership will present the information to the citizens for feedback and if in agreeance, a ratification vote.

### **Healing Journey and Cowessess Miyo Wīcīwitowin Plan**

As a First Nation, we have grown closer together and for some, farther apart over the generations. We all inherited the intergenerational trauma of the Indian Act, residential school legacy, 60 scoop, and more. As we heal and move forward, we must find our strengths within and get stronger; no one outside our First Nation is coming to help us. We must put aside our frustrations and differences to focus our energy on ensuring families are healing and getting stronger. Our Administration offices, CCEC, Daycare, Governance approach and more are continually finding ways to strengthen our First Nation. For long term success, we shall focus more on strengthening our home fires and family unity. From this we will strengthen our Administration Centre's, Cowessess Ventures, Chief Red Bear Children's Lodge, Eagle Woman Tribunal and more to be successful organizations to complement our strong families of Cowessess First Nation. In the coming months Cowessess will begin our internal reconciliation plan, we currently call the Miyo Wīcīwitowin Plan (we walk and share this together). This will provide us with a plan to focus on, so our kinship families can get stronger.

### **Cowessess Housing On-Reserve & Deficit Discussion**

There are 211 residential homes on Cowessess First Nation (61 homes with Mortgage). The renovation backlog requires major investment on reserve. The waiting list for a home is an average of eight families on the waiting list. As more and more citizens have thoughts of moving home the supply and demand gets tough. The goal is to have homes that are safe and up to code so that families can have healthier home fires and family pride. The challenge is, we all share in this responsibility and there is always a lack of funding. The current situation is not well and change is required to revamp a housing department with pride. This initiative will result as a shared responsibility between

tenants, housing staff and Chief and Council. In March 2021 a *Housing Survey* was completed and on average 70% of participants welcomed the change. This includes updated administration paperwork, consistent rent and more. You can read the results on the website and copies available at the Administration Centre. In 2019, Chief and Council created Mikiwam Housing Inc to eventually oversee Housing with housing minded people to help lead this initiative. Because housing is sensitive, Council will remain final decision makers for housing until more understanding of Mikiwam Housing Inc. The discussion of a \$75 per month rent for non-mortgaged homes is being discussed with potential recommendation to be implemented in the future. The revenue will go towards costs like emergency services, insurance, water/sewage services, garbage services, and more.

The housing deficit is now at \$2.1 million dollars. This is money owed from tenants to Cowessess First Nation for unpaid rental arrears and outstanding maintenance fee of \$60. Council and others are assessing how to address the deficit. It has accumulated over the past thirty years. Regardless of rent collected, the First Nation pays the mortgage and pays for services from own source revenue. There are ideas like anyone owing, pay a fixed amount and the remaining will be cleared and others like payment plans. Chief and Council will provide options and feedback in the coming months on how to address this deficit.

## **Legal Cases**

### **a) Housing**

A Notice of Application for judicial review was brought forward by Edward Aisaican. The applicant is asking for insurance money for a prior house which was destroyed by a fire. It is currently before the courts.

### **b) Certificate of Possessions (CP's) on Cowessess First Nation**

Cowessess First Nation has begun a legal case against the Government of Canada on the process and lack of clarity when it comes to CP's on Cowessess First Nation. CPs are legal private land holdings on reserve. We have been working with Indigenous Services Canada on a fair and long-term process for leasing and return on investment for land we manage on behalf of citizens. Over the past two years we asked for documents for CP's on Cowessess First Nation. During this process Canada informed Cowessess First Nation there was another CP. We asked for documents on it and was not acceptable to what was presented. We hired two citizens to go through Indigenous Service Canada's records called RG-10 files and concluded Cowessess First Nation has no CP's. Chief and Council approved this legal approach to ensure that we have full documentation for all lands owned for the children and children yet unborn.

c) **Treaty Land Entitlement Potential Fraud Case**

Chief and Council along with Treaty Land Entitlement Trustees have submitted all documents for the RCMP to press criminal charges against TLE Trustees who served between 2015-2017. The submission also includes staff who benefited from decisions made. The information is currently with the Crown Procedure and will update when information arises.

**Eagle Women Tribunal**

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, Eagle Woman Tribunal was officially launched. It is a judicial system within Cowessess that will reflect our laws, values, and what is important to Cowessess First Nation. It will not address criminal code but rather ensure Cowessess First Nation laws have a place for re-dress. It will be accessible and respectful to our people, not intimidating. If someone has a complaint about a decision that affects them, Eagle Woman Tribunal staff will help them with steps they need to have Eagle Woman Tribunal review. Very often disputes arise through simple misunderstandings. With talking circles/sharing circles, healing circles, mediators, and other facilitators, the parties to a dispute will have a chance to talk, understand and arrive at a mutual agreement. If matters cannot be resolved informally and a hearing is required before the Tribunal, this process will be focused on fairness (inquisitorial), not referee style (adversarial).

This is important for our First Nation as we all need to get along with each other as much as possible. The Eagle Woman Tribunal administrator is Bob Merasty, you can contact him directly at (306)222.4341. The future home of Eagle Woman Tribunal will be in trailers beside Marieval hall on Cowessess First Nation.

**New Heritage Centre**

Cowessess First Nation is in the process of finalizing a new Hall/Community Centre. The current hall was built in 1948 and remains our main place to gather. The potential new centre is currently titled *Heritage Centre*. There have been two questionnaires done in the past three years getting feedback. The Centre will incorporate an area to bring home historical artifacts, a ceremonial area, kitchen, workout facility, gathering and more. The major decision is going to be location. There are three proposed areas: close to current hall, behind the mall, and in the field across from Tazzy's Tire Barn. There are also other options up the hill and around existing Administration Centre.

**Marieval Gravesite Technical and Research**

Cowessess First Nation has a technical team and research team to address unmarked graves. The end goal is to have names to unmarked graves. If anyone has questions or comments, please contact Coordinator, William Desnomie at (306)331.6330 or research lead Barb Lavallee at (306)539.6140. The technical side is near completion and the

research team has visited the archives and have a lot of historical information to share. In the coming months community gatherings will happen to have conversation and feedback to ensure research completion.

### **Chief & Council Strategic Plan**

Council have been active and ongoing with plans to help better our First Nation. This month is the halfway point in this election. With a four-year mandate, the strategic plan has been the focus. The three long term outcomes we want to achieve are *Economic Self-Sustainability, Political Sovereignty, and Cultural Rejuvenation*. From these outcomes, the Council will work with administration, citizens, entities and allies on key inputs *Good Governance, Change Management, Trust and Values, Data, Communication, and Strategic Planning*. Council are Nation builders and with this have new portfolios and responsibilities in *Stewards of the Land, Inherent and Treaty Rights, Capital Projects, Soniyakawe (Treasury), Miyo-pimatsowin (living a good life), Community Planning, Citizen Enhancement, Finance and Administration committee, and Nation Building Committee*. These are areas of focus Council have specific goals in. You can find the Council's strategic plan on the website or at the Office.

### **COVID-19**

The pandemic has been ongoing for approximately 25 months. The Government of Canada has invested resources to assure the COVID-19 Task Force team can make decisions to ensure we can get past this pandemic. The vaccination remains the best line of defence in the long term. The community is currently 57% vaccinated and more conversation is needed to learn more to keep our community low risk. The community is beginning to open with more community gatherings and are doing it at a pace to ensure we all remain low risk.

On behalf of Council, I want to thank the administration staff and 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.



Cadmus Delorme  
Chief, Cowessess First Nation