



Happy New Year to all Band Members, wishing you a happy and healthy upcoming year during these strange times!

Please note, it is really important to check your mailboxes, emails and the BRFN website. There are many programs and services available that require end dates. These deadlines/dates are VERY important, not only for organization, but also for reporting. Our staff are just not in the position to contact each Band Member every time a new/short time program becomes available, so it is important to check the various forms of communication processes put in place for you. Our Community continues to grow and this makes us happy, but it also means more work and time for the staff when it comes to programming. Thank you for your understanding and for taking responsibility on this matter.

The Band Office remains closed to the public from Jan 10-14 for cleaning. During Christmas Break the floors were redone in the lobby, hallway and front offices.

COVID-19 UPDATE

We have been meeting and working hard to do what is best for the entire Community. Thank you to everyone who has done their part to help ensure our Community stays as safe as possible.

Until further notice visitation is restricted to the public buildings such as the Band Office, Health Center, Cultural Center, etc. For questions, comments and non-essential programs; you can contact our staff via email or phone. Any visitors scheduled to be at the public buildings must be completely symptom free. Staff will be masking, sanitizing and social distancing while in the workplace.

We have proposed for funding throughout this pandemic to help both our On and Off Reserve Membership. We are pleased to have been able to provide funding, food security and sanitation supplies for households. Thank you to the Health Center and all the staff who have been instrumental in ensuring these programs and services were available.

We will continue to monitor and make decisions as best we can during these ever changing times of waves, rules and regulations.

INTEROFFICE STAFF CHANGE

After much brainstorming and consideration and after speaking with the appropriate staff members it was decided to do an interoffice staff change. Effective February of 2022 Dawn McEwan's position will be Administrative Assistant and Support. The Administration Assistant and Support person will be the first point of contact for visitors to the Band Office and provides direct support to Chief, Council, Band Administrator and Staff. We are excited for Dawn and she is excited to return to her roots when she first started working for the Bear River First Nation many moons ago. Kait Harlow's position will be Community and Economic Development. The Community and Economic Development position is created to assist and enhance already existing programs and new development that encourages both business own source revenue and community driven proposals. We are excited for Kait and she is excited to take on this new endeavor. We are excited about these role changes and believe it will benefit the staff and community as a whole.

The METS officer (Lorraine Melanson) continues to be available to answer questions and assist Band Members in regards to personal business, employment, training, resumes, etc.

As we continue to grow there may be more changes like this happen and we will update as often as we can. Continue to monitor notices, website, etc. for when new employment opportunities are available.

RAPID HOUSING INIATIVE

While there were some bumps and minor issues we were pleased with the Rapid Housing Initiative and how quickly the five (5) houses were able to be completed. Again thank you to the staff who were instrumental from the proposal to completion of this project.

HOUSING

We continue to work on the long term housing strategy and search for funding opportunities to help alleviate the housing list. We will be meeting in the next few weeks to discuss and update housing and will update accordingly when we can. Thank you for your patience. We understand that housing is priority and we are doing the best we can to accommodate as often and as quickly as we possibly can.

FOOD SECURITY

We have been able to provide moose meat, strawberries, lobster, scallops, food boxes, turkeys and gift cards over the past year. Thank you to all the departments, staff and Council members who helped to organize these distributions as it is a lot of organizing. Please know that while we try to provide as much as possible each year, it is not guaranteed and should not be depended on.

HARVESTER'S GATHERING

The Harvester's Gathering was much more community oriented this year. The atmosphere and energy was light and inviting. Food, stories and lots of laughs were shared along with some of the favorite events and even some new ones. Meals were shared, there were arts, crafts and teachings, sacred fire side chats with Elders, and much more.

PINES

During this Covid-19 Pandemic the Digby Pines Golf Resort and Spa continued to hold its own. While it is closed for the season as of the middle of October a loan has been secured to do some much needed renovations to update it, as well as prepare it to be open as an all-season resort. This work is set to begin once paperwork is complete.

COMMERCIAL FISHING/AQUACULTURE

Last fall the Oyster four (4) Experimental Leases were put in the water in the Annapolis Basin. For this year it was decided to forgo the St. Mary's Bay leases and we will reassess this upcoming year. At each site in the Annapolis Basin there are three (3) cages and each cage has six (6) bags of oysters consisting of three (3) different classes (age in the growing process). Just before November the cages were "sunk" for the winter. Sinking the cages is a form of securing them from freezing over the winter months while they are "dormant". Not only were the aqua crew monitoring growth, mortality, etc. they are also collecting data on the water which includes many factors such as temperature, salinity, pH etc.

MODERATE LIVELIHOOD

This continues to be a Chief and Council priority. Please see attached notice that was distributed earlier in 2021.

ENTRYWAY

The entryway into the Community continues to be priority and while it is a slow process we continue to move towards a fix. Last fall Harbourside Engineering Consultants were hired to complete the engineered design for the retaining wall. In November they completed the geotechnical portion of the contract.

NEW DISTRICT CHIEF

We are pleased to announce the District Chief in our territory is Dr, Sherry Pictou. She attends many meetings in regards to KMKNO, MK and Fisheries.

FINAL REMARKS

I, as Chief, continue to meet with the higher levels of Government to ensure our rights, environment, resources, future generations, fishing, hunting, roads, schools and treaties continue to be protected.

If you would like to see information on a particular program or service in our next update please email the Band Administrator at kerrypayson@bearriverfirstnation.ca and we will do our best to give information following within the confidentiality and privacy laws.

Reminder: you can reach the Chief and Council by email at:

Chief - caroldeepotter@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Council - fredharlowrobar@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Council - robertmcewan@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Council - carolannpotter@bearriverfirstnation.ca

You can also reach the staff by email at:

Band Administrator - kerrypayson@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Housing - chrisharlow@bearriverfirstnation.ca

METS/Education - lorrainemelanson@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Social - chelseapotter@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Finance - heathereisener@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Krista - kristapeck@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Dawn - dawnmcewan@bearriverfirstnation.ca

Health Director - hd@brfnhc.ca

CHR - chr@brfnhc.ca

Nurse - chn@brfnhc.ca

Community Initiative - amberceic@brfnhc.ca

Health Center Front Desk - aa@brfnhc.ca

MSLC Manager - brendapotter@bearriverfirstnation.ca

The BRFN Chief and Council want to take this time to thank you for your support and we look forward to accomplishing many things over the next four years. While last year we only provided one update from the Chief's desk due to the work overload I, as Chief will make it priority to provide these updates more often over the next four years.

Wishing you all the best during this winter season.



Chief Carol Dee Potter

On behalf of Council

Attachment: Moderate Livelihood Community Notice

NOTICE TO BRFN COMMUNITY REGARDING LIVELIHOOD LOBSTER FISHERY

Over the past year, BRFN has been working with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs and the Kespukwitk District communities of Acadia, Glooscap and Annapolis Valley to develop a Kespukwitk District Livelihood Fishing Protocol. This arrangement establishes District fishing principles for all livelihood fishing activities for all species. It is the beginning of Mi'kmaq self-government and self-regulation by the Kespukwitk communities for resources they access and are stewards of. It is based on traditional Mi'kmaw principles and is eco-system driven.

This is just the first step in a long road ahead, but it is an exciting step. The Kespukwitk communities share family ties and based on size, District and membership are very similar in outlook and share very similar opportunities and challenges. We are stronger when we combine our expertise and vision.

Pursuant to the Kespukwitk District Livelihood Fishing Protocol, species-specific management plans will be developed to implement our livelihood fisheries. In the summer of 2021, BRFN developed a joint management plan with Acadia respecting the elver fishery. This was our first opportunity to learn from joint initiatives.

Now under the Kespukwitk District Livelihood Fishing Protocol, BRFN has developed a Livelihood Lobster Management Plan in cooperation with the other Kespukwitk communities.

This community-based collective Livelihood Lobster Management Plan has been developed by our communities alone, without input or discussion with DFO. It is based on our principles and our memberships' needs and expectations.

The Kespukwitk communities presented this plan to DFO as a demonstration of self-governing authority in the fisheries. This was the same process that the Potletek First Nation used in the spring of 2021. As with Potletek, we needed to ensure that DFO respected our designated harvesters fishing under the community plan and stopped pulling traps and charging fishers. We needed to ensure that designated livelihood harvesters could find buyers for their lobster and assure those buyers that they would not be charged by the Province.

Similar to Potletek, we have reached an understanding with DFO with respect to our community plan. They have accepted the parts of our plan that meet their mandate and they have issued an authorization in their system to provide instruction to enforcement protecting our designated harvesters from charges and seizures and authorizing buyers to securely purchase our catch. It also recognizes that our designated harvesters can fish the various lobster LFAs in the Kespukwitk District so long as they are fishing within the season of that particular LFA. With Potletek and ourselves, this is the first time that DFO has recognized District eco-based fisheries access.

BRFN, in cooperation with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, is working to broaden the mandate that the new Minister of DFO will be given to discuss the implementation of our livelihood rights. We are adamant that the current mandate is far too narrow. We must be able to discuss the applicability of livelihood fishing outside the normal commercial seasons – for both safety and conservation reasons. DFO must also provide far more access to our communities so that anyone who wishes to livelihood fish has that opportunity. We also need to expand the discussion of livelihood fishing to all species available to our people.

This authorization is not a license. It is a new instrument that DFO has developed for this purpose. It is valid from October 14 to the end of July 2022. It will then terminate. This arrangement is a new way of approaching this issue. If it does not work to our satisfaction we will not continue the approach.

To be clear, BRFN has not signed a fisheries agreement under this approach. BRFN has never signed a fisheries agreement and does not intend to. In a letter sent to DFO respecting their authorization, BRFN makes this very clear.

At this point in time, BRFN and Annapolis Valley have begun implementing the Livelihood Lobster Management Plan in cooperation with the DFO arrangement. Acadia and Glooscap are considering their involvement and are welcome to join if and when they are ready. This is a new concept for all of us and we are proceeding cautiously and prudently.

BRFN, Annapolis Valley, Glooscap and Acadia have developed a Kespukwitk District Collective MOU that creates a cooperative collective committee to advise Chief and Councils respecting the Kespukwitk District fishing activities. This committee will jointly collect data, ensure designated harvester reporting, liaise with designated harvesters to deal with issues that may arise and help ensure that Chiefs and Councils can administer their fisheries going forward in a collective way. All four communities are committed to this approach.

BRFN will be posting the Kespukwitk District Livelihood Fishing Protocol, the Livelihood Lobster Management Plan, the Kespukwitk District Collective Fisheries MOU and the joint letter sent to DFO by BRFN and Annapolis Valley respecting the DFO authorization.

BRFN Chief and Council have listened to community members over the past year respecting concerns and hopes for the livelihood fishery. We are confident that this attempt at taking a positive step forward in livelihood implementation respects our treaty and aboriginal rights to fish, our self-government and self-determination rights to manage our fisheries in the way we see fit and our commitment to find a way for our members to start implementing their rights in a manner that will not lead to prosecutions and confrontations.

It is time for opportunities, not conflict – it is time for collective leadership.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Chief and Council.