



Volume 12, Issue 1

Summer 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Kaska Dena members,

I am pleased to be able to use the occasion of the KDC summer newsletter to congratulate the new Chief and Councillors of the Liard First Nation and the new Deputy Chief and Councillors of Daylu Dena Council on their recent election as well as the Chief of Dease River First Nation on his re-election, the election of Councillors there and the Councillors for Kwadacha First Nation. I believe the people have sent a strong message that they want leadership which will work hard together to steer a course away from divisive politics and tensions and towards creating opportunities for positive change in our communities. I want to do all I can to help make the most of this new day for the Kaska Nation.

I would like to say that the incredible efforts by all the folks in each of our communities on the Covid-19 committees have set the bar very high as an example of the kind of teamwork and commitment that we should all strive to follow. Their work to keep us all safe from this devastating virus has been nothing short of heroic and I commend and thank each and every one of you for your tireless work, patience and care, certainly above and beyond what any of us could expect. Bravo and much gratitude to all of you!

Along with you, I am disappointed that we cannot see each other at our Annual Assembly but the Covid-19 circumstances have dictated a postponement until next year out of an abundance of caution to keep everyone healthy and safe. Instead, a small delegation of Bill Lux, Chief Donny Van Sommer and myself are going to be travelling to each Kaska community in August and are very much looking forward to these visits as a chance to catch up on all the news, share some moose meat and bannock and swap stories by the campfire with you.

In the meantime, I send best wishes from Shawna and our family to you and your family for a safe and happy rest of the summer. Keep well, keep safe and continue to follow the Covid -19 protocols, of wearing a mask when out shopping or on errands, washing hands often and respecting physical distancing. Together we will get through these difficult times. Let's look after one another. And I look forward to better days ahead and a busy and productive fall time.

Mussi Cho,

Danny Case, Chair
Kaska Dena Council



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Kaska Dena News

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE DURING COVID-19

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic was taken quickly by Kaska Leaders and their Emergency Operations teams.

The health and safety of Kaska communities during the outbreak of covid-19 continues to be a top priority for Kaska leaders.

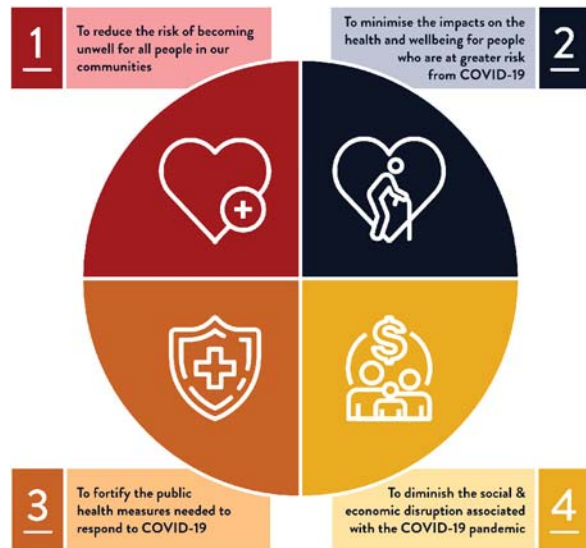
On March 11th, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry declared a public health emergency in BC on March 17th, and on March 18th the BC Government followed suit by declaring a provincial State of Emergency. At this point there were 46 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the province, By July 14th the number of cases of COVID-19 in BC had risen to 109,000 with 72,377 recovered and 8,810 deaths.

Since the first case of COVID-19 in British Columbia was announced in late January, the situation evolved quickly into an unprecedented health-care emergency. Response was taken quickly by Kaska Leaders and their Emergency Operations teams.

Each of our Kaska communities quickly responded through the establishment of their Emergency Operations Committees (EOC) who became the main response pillars for COVID-19 in our Kaska communities. Immediate efforts were taken to prevent transmission of the virus to our communities.

Communities were locked down, with gates put at our community entrances, allowing only residents access, and restricting movement in or out to keep us all safe. Our EOCs put COVID-19 policies in place, they distributed educational material to raise community awareness of safety and protection measures, and promoted the importance of physical distancing. They provided essential needs such as food, cleaning supplies and personal protection masks. Our thanks go out to the tireless efforts of our EOC and other members: DDC: Vanessa Law, Pamela Moon, Tanya Ball, Bernice Ball, Robert Greenway and Deputy Chief Schilling, DRFN: Ruby Johnny, Norma

3N COVID-19 Pandemic Plan Goals



RCMP Sergeant Steve Woodcox, Constable David Ribeiro and Norma Martens.

Martens, Minnie Dennis, Carol Ann Johnny and Chief Manygreghorses and KFN: Eileen Castelli, Eric Hocking and Chief Van Somer. They have worked diligently to keep us all safe. Special thank you to Dease Lake RCMP members Sergeant Steve Woodcox and Constable David Ribeiro for the tremendous support provided to Good Hope Lake.

The 3 Nations Society developed a COVID-19 Response Plan to support the Kaska, Tahltan and Taku River Tlingit communities which was quickly put in place by early April.

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The 3N Pandemic response team, led by Feddie Louie and Jody Nishima with support from Technical Team representatives Michelle Miller and Vincent Esquiro, continue to work with the community EOCs, Primary Care Givers and FNHA to implement Standard Operating Procedures for testing, medical support and response should a positive case occur. Their work strengthens and supports the work being done by our EOCs and has been instrumental in identifying the health care gaps in services particularly for Daylu and Dease River First Nation. They continue to work with primary care givers and FNHA to address and close those gaps.



Security Check Point Lower Post

By setting and following strict preventive measures, Kaska have stopped COVID-19 from reaching our Territory and devastating our communities. To date, we have had no cases of COVID-19 in any of the Kaska, Tahltan or Taku River Tlingit Communities. What we have been doing – in unison – has been working.

However, the pandemic is not over. With travel restrictions lifted there will be more visitors from the south coming up to Kaska territory. We must continue to protect ourselves and our communities. It is expected that the number of cases will rise again in the upcoming flu season. We must remember the words of Dr. Bonnie Henry: “We’ve never had a pandemic in recorded history that has not had a second wave.”

The practices we have put in place over the past few months must be adhered to so that we keep our communities, our elders and our most vulnerable safe. We have learned what **each one of us** can do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Every day we can and **MUST DO OUR PART** to hold the line on COVID-19.

We must all stand strong and relentless in our day to day practices of:

1. Avoid ALL Non-Essential Trips

Limit the number of times you go to high traffic areas, and if you do go out remember to always practice physical distancing.

2. Physical Distancing

Ensure you stay a minimum of 6 feet away from other people.

3. Wash Hands Regularly

Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds or more. Soap is the best-known remedy for killing this virus, so wash frequently.

4. Cough or Sneeze into Your Elbow or a Tissue

This can prevent potentially infectious droplets from escaping into the air around you and infecting others.

5. Don't Touch Your Face

The virus can be transferred into your body by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Wear a mask:

Masks are recommended if you are going out in public where you know physical distancing may be difficult.

We must stand strong and vigilant to prevent COVID-19 from entering our communities.

In the words of Dr. Bonnie Henry

BE CALM

BE KIND

BE SAFE



*Ruby Johnny,
Norma Martens
and Chief Myles
Manygreyhorses*



Kaska Dena News

RESCHEDULING KASKA GATHERINGS

While not being able to come together as we usually do is difficult and disappointing, rest assured that once the concerns about COVID-19 are over, we will gather again stronger than ever.

COVID-19 and the precautions we have all had to take to keep our communities safe has resulted in a far different summer that we can remember. The health and safety of our communities and particularly our Elders is our top priority. We have had to make the difficult decision to defer large gatherings until such time as the pandemic is no longer a threat and we can gather in large groups safely. While not being able to come together as we usually do is difficult and disappointing, rest assured that once the concerns about COVID-19 have been alleviated, we will gather again stronger than ever.

The following is an update on gatherings:

KDC Annual General Assembly

The KDC Annual General Assembly is a gathering we all look forward to. It is a time for KDC to report out on all the initiatives of the year, unite with family and friends and celebrate our Kaska heritage. There is also a legal requirement under the BC Society's Act for Societies such as KDC to hold an Annual General Assembly. However, this year due to COVID-19 a revision to that legal requirement was implemented by the BC Society's Act allowing for the deferment of a Society's AGA for 2020. This is consistent with KDC's



Enjoying the KDC GA in Lower Post, July 2019

decision to defer large gatherings until it is safe to do so. It is planned to hold the KDC GA in 2021 as usual, barring any future restrictions with respect to the pandemic.

Kaska Elder's Gathering

An Elder's gathering was being planned for September 2020. The gathering that we held in Watson Lake in 2019 was a great success and Elders requested that we do this on a regular basis. In response to that request plans were in motion, but regrettably had to be put on hold due to COVID-19. Be assured plans will resume for an Elders Gathering once it is safe to do so.



Elder's Gathering, Watson Lake, 2019

Kaska Dena News

KEEPING OUR PEOPLE SAFE DURING COVID-19

Kaska National Youth Gathering

In January 2020, KDC brought a contingent of youth to Prince George for a four-day workshop to experience the work their leaders do and to learn about the range of topics that face leaders today. The youth were able to sit in on a two-day KDC Board of Directors meeting listening to their leaders discuss and make decisions on a range of topics including economic opportunities in forestry, land protection and health and wellness.

During this workshop, the youth stressed the importance of bringing together the youth of all the Kaska Nations, and spending time on the land with Elders. They asked if this gathering could take place at Turnagain Lodge as some had attended MK Environment Youth Camps at Turnagain and have wonderful memories.

Coordination and planning began to take place for the Turnagain Youth Gathering, inviting youth representatives from the



Turnagain Lodge

Prince George Workshop to help with the planning. Sadly, COVID-19 caused our plans to be deferred to next year. KDC is committed to supporting our youth and bringing our youth together. Kaska youth can look forward to a 2021 Youth Gathering, and we will continue to work with youth representatives to plan for this event. Look to the KDC website or future newsletters for updates.

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Charlie Boya at Turnagain Lodge



Kaska youth warming drum over fire at MK Kaska Youth Camp, July 2004



Kaska Dena News

Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network – Kaska Land Guardians



*Robbie Porter,
Lisa Shepherd
and Bill Lux*

A safe activity right now during COVID-19 is enjoying being out on the land, and the Kaska Land Guardians have doing just that as they participate in regular patrols, documenting and reporting any concerns.

As well as regular patrols, the Land Guardians have undertaken a number of initiatives, including:

- Invasive Plant Identification Training (Zoom) with Northwest Invasive Plant Council
- Water Quality Training online (Zoom) with Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council
- Tom Creek Hydrometric Station visit with Yukon Government (collecting data)
- Bi-weekly Guardian check in (DRFN/Kwadacha/Lower Post) via Zoom
- Video/Photography Training with Block by Block Creative an Indigenous Land Guardian Initiative



Lisa Shepherd and Robbie Porter



Ruby Johnny, Tanya Ball and Bill Lux

One of their recent initiatives involved Guardians Tanya Ball, Lisa Shepherd and Robbie Porter investigating potential CABIN Sites (Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network) for measuring freshwater ecosystem health. Ruby Johnny, KDC Vice Chair of Lands and Resources accompanied the Guardians to get a better understanding of the work they do. Bill Lux provided support by transporting the Guardians by boat when needed to access the sites. Sites the Guardians visited include Simmons Lake, Bass Creek, Cottonwood Creek, Quartz Rock Creek and McDames and Dease Tributaries. (See Photos)

In anticipation of the upcoming hunting season, the Guardians are developing COVID-19 field protocols, including the use of masks, required particularly when meeting and talking with land users. Visitors to Kaska Dena Traditional Territory are required to follow Kaska restrictions as they apply to hunting and fishing on the BC Orders and Guidance page: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/fishing-and-hunting-covid-19-updates>.

Kaska Dena News

BOYA LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK CHANGED TO A KASKA NAME: TĀ CH'ILĀ PARK

Kaska Dena representatives reached agreement last year with BC Provincial Parks to have Boya Lake Park changed to a Kaska name at the entrance to the park. The name has been changed to **Tā Ch'ilā** (aka Boya Lake), a name chosen by Kaska Elders meaning “blanket full of holes”.

Tā Ch'ilā Provincial Park is situated in Kaska Dena Traditional Territory in north western BC, near Dease River First Nation's



Boya Lake Park has a name change – Tā Ch'ilā – a name chosen by Kaska Elders meaning “blanket full of holes”.

community of Good Hope Lake. The park area is riddled with lakes, which Kaska elders said resembles a blanket full of holes.

This month the old park signage was removed and replaced with a new sign showcasing the Kaska name **Tā Ch'ilā**, honouring the land and Kaska Dena who have been its stewards since time immemorial.



KASKA YOUTH COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

During the January 2020 youth workshop in Prince George, the participants expressed the desire to have more opportunity for youth to gather together and express their views and hopes for the future of Kaska Dena, economic opportunities for youth, learning from elders and having a voice in Kaska governance.

In response to this request and through support of TRM funding, workshops will be able to take place over the fall/winter months in each of the communities. These workshops will strive to bring together youth, hold small gatherings that can be run in compliance with each community's COVID-19 policies and give Kaska youth the opportunity they requested, to learn, speak and be heard. Following each workshops, the intent is to develop a report that can be shared with the youth of all three communities and with leadership. Watch for

information in your community, in future newsletters or on the KDC website.



Election Results

Election of Dease River Dena Council was held on July 6, 2020

Congratulations go out to elected Chief and Councillors.

Chief: Chief Myles Manygreyhorses (Re-elected)

Councillors: Michael Johnny (re-elected), James Malone, Ethan Carlick, Annie Johnny

Election of Liard First Nation and Daylu Dena Council was held on June 29, 2020.

Congratulations go out to elected Liard First Nation Chief and Councillors.

Chief: Stephen Charlie

Councillors: Tim Stewart, Ed Brodhagen, Amanda Brown, Derek Loots

Congratulations go out to elected Daylu Dena Council Deputy Chief and Councillors.

Deputy Chief: Harlan Schilling

Councillors: Malcolm Groat (re-elected) and Catherine Porter

Election of Kwadacha First Nation Band Councillors was held on June 16, 2020

Congratulations go out to elected Kwadacha First Nation **Councillors:**

Bradley Seymour (re-elected), Mason Abou and Darryl McCook



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www.kaskadenacouncil.com/newsarchives/newsletter-archive.

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