

## AGNUTMAQAN

### Welcome to your first edition of *Agnutmaqan*

Chief Brendan Sheppard and the Qalipu Mi'kmaq Band Councillors are committed to transparency and communications on all matters discussed during regular Band Council meetings. Through *Agnutmaqan*, you receive a summary report of the latest proceedings of your Band Council with news presented on-line after each Council meeting.

*Agnutmaqan* will help keep Band Members informed and will enable you to engage in a timely fashion in the ongoing discussions of your Band Council.

**Pronunciation:** *a-gê-nu-dê-ma-hgan* **Translation:** Story

**Meanings:** story; news; report; message; discussion

## SHAPING OUR FUTURE

Our Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation (QMFN) is in a good position heading into the next fiscal year. We have well-developed plans for programs and services and we have a tightly managed budget. The Chief and Band Councillors discussed important issues and reviewed detailed plans and budgets at two recent meetings: the first on March 26 in Corner Brook, and the second on April 12 in Grand Falls-Windsor. The March meeting was the last quarterly meeting of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band for fiscal year 2012/2013.

Chief Brendan Sheppard set a positive and focused tone at both meetings. Chief Sheppard, Vice-Chiefs Kevin Barnes and Randy Drover along with the elected band councillors in attendance dealt with issues related to postsecondary education, enterprise development, and membership enrolment. They also reviewed annual plans and budgets for each program.

Chief Sheppard welcomed newly elected councillor Calvin Francis to his first Band Council meeting in March. Councillor Francis won his seat in the Gander Bay Ward by acclamation Feb 22, 2013. Our Chief recognized Councillor Francis's longstanding record of service which includes thirty-one years as Chief of the Gander Bay Indian Band and as Director of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

At the March meeting there were discussions on investment guidelines for the Qalipu Development Corporation and a report on business opportunities currently under consideration. There were discussions and motions regarding Work Force Qalipu policies and postsecondary education, appointment of an auditor, and the

establishment of standing committees for human resources and finance. Members also considered best courses of action related to the transfer of individuals recognized under the Indian Act from other bands to Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band. The council received an update on funding arrangements for the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band.

At the April meeting the Chief and Councillors focused on setting the best course of action for the future, and they:

- reviewed the 2013-2014 Annual Plan;
- reviewed annual operating plans for Non-Insured Health Benefits, Work Force Qalipu, and MAMKA/AFS (Mi'kmaq Alsumk Mowimsikik Koqoey is Mi'kmaq Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management in the Mi'kmaq language);
- approved Terms of Reference for the newly formed Finance Committee;
- conducted a detailed review and discussion of all budgets for the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band for the next fiscal year before approving them;
- discussed and approved updated policies and procedures for Work Force Qalipu;
- discussed preparations for the formation of a Cultural Foundation; and
- completed draw for 2013 fishing licenses.

#### **CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO SOUND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chief Sheppard discussed with Council that challenging but exciting times face the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band, noting that "We are now in the process of making the transition from a collective of nine community bands to a single governing Band Council, with nine wards." The Chief and Councillors agreed that it is vital for all those affected to have an opportunity to voice their concerns on issues around economic planning and policy making for Members.

Chief Sheppard reinforced the Council's goal of sustainable economic development and independence for the Band. "As we meet the many challenges we must face as a Band without reserve land, through economic independence we will reduce our need for government funding. At the same time", he cautioned, "we have to be realistic about the pace of change - slow and steady wins the day. There are misconceptions to be overcome too, such as the assumption by some members that, as a First Nations People, we are entitled to non-insured health benefits and postsecondary education support. This is simply not the case. It is a benefit that can be removed."

Our official recognition as the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band provides us with the opportunity to engage in business and economic development. Success as a landless First Nation Band depends on sound business investment. And the first step in that direction was the development of an Economic Development Strategy in June 2012. It provides clear direction for the path ahead. (To review the Strategy visit <http://qalipu.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/QMFN-Economic-Dev-Strategy-2012.pdf>)

We developed this strategy after extensive consultations with members throughout the nine wards. You gave engaged and passionate input to recommend direction. Now it's time to get started. Elected councillors are helping to set direction and policies to guide business and investment decisions and ensure that they are in the best interests of the Band members in all the wards.

One area where we need to be very clear is on our investment and business decisions. In particular, we need to be clear about the difference between the profit-oriented development corporation activities and community economic development activities which are guided by the principals of social justice and Qalipu community values.

*We need to be very clear on the distinction between the strictly profit-oriented development corporation activities & those activities guided by the principals of social justice in community economic development.*

As a new entity with limited capital we will initially be dependent on government support to attract private investment. But, with a mandate to deliver support services to tens of thousands of members, we need to generate income and wealth from sources other than direct government funding. In our economic development strategy we identify the need to create two new entities to identify and pursue business opportunities on behalf of all members: the Department of Community Economic Development and the Qalipu Development Corporation (QDC).

The QDC, as a commercial for-profit corporation, has already been established and is fully owned by QMFN. It is a holding company for all the business operations of the band. It has a key role to play as we seek out business investments and joint ventures in construction, real estate, personnel services, seafood processing, insurance, and other opportunities that are in line with our economic strategy.

The opportunities in community economic development are equally exciting and include business and community support, major business opportunities, and tourism, culture and heritage. In such cases

elected Councillors will work with the wards they represent to help prioritize the goals of Members and work towards solutions and prosperity.

Councillors agreed that, by planning carefully for the way forward in business and community development, the Band's departments will work more effectively with government departments and agencies, funders, leaders, and various stakeholders in economic growth.

At the same time, however, Council felt it was important to be very clear on the point that, with the limited federal funding we receive, we cannot fund 100 percent of educational services. We cannot make non-repayable equity investments in private business. And we cannot fund community improvement projects.

### **A COUNCIL ENGAGED IN THE BIG PICTURE**

At each Council meeting, and in all the Council's work, the strategic plan accepted by the Chief and QMFN Band Council guides decisions and directions. As already mentioned, the 2013-2014 Annual Plan was presented and approved at the April meeting. With that approval we begin the work aimed at achieving three-year goals. We will do this by focusing on key areas of activity with measurable objectives including:

1. Economic Development
2. Community Economic Development
3. Aquatic Conservation
4. Work Force Qalipu – employment, training and postsecondary education
5. Health and Social
6. Culture and Heritage
7. Finance
8. Organization Operations
9. Communications
10. Governance
11. Band Development

(To review the Strategic plan, go to <http://qalipu.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Qalipu-Strategic-Plan.pdf> )

While the Council sets governance and operating policies it also takes seriously its role as a hands-on group for major decisions that affect the direction of the Band's programs and services, its financial well-being, and its good standing. Directly responsible to the Council, the Chief Executive Officer, at their direction, makes operational decisions within budget and policy limitations for the ten portfolios or areas of responsibility.

Councillors are fully engaged and involved as well. Each Councillor chairs a Portfolio Committee including:

<b>Portfolio Committee</b>	<b>Council Chair</b>
1. Finance	Litty MacDonald
2. Community Economic Development	Brendan Mitchell
3. Strategic Planning and Governance	Frank Skeard
4. Culture and Heritage	Kevin Barnes
5. Training and Post-secondary Education	Ben Bennett
6. Fisheries	Gerard White
7. Employment	Ben Bennett
8. Health and Social	Karen White
9. Executive	Brendan Sheppard

Each committee will meet at least four times per year, and works with staff year-round to monitor progress towards the strategic and business goals and to evaluate and plan Band operations. Chairs of each standing committee report regularly to Council on progress.

In March Council passed two resolutions to accept the Finance Committee and the Human Resources Committee as standing committees of council.

Members of the Finance Standing Committee include Councillor Litty Macdonald, Port au Port; Vice-Chief Randy Drover, Central; Neil Lucas, Member; and Jodie Wells, Finance Officer. (As the Council portfolio holder for the Finance Committee Litty MacDonald abstained from the vote on that resolution to appoint the committee.)

Members of the Human Resources Standing Committee include Councillor Andy Barker, Exploits Ward, Annie Randell, CEO, Janet McAuley, Executive Assistant/Human Resources Officer and Keith Goulding, Director of Work Force Qalipu. In the vote by the Band Council, Andy Barker abstained because he is Council's portfolio holder for that Committee.

## THE PATH TO FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

In its report to Council on March 26th, the Finance Committee provided details of its March 5th, 2013 meeting. Members prepared a Terms of Reference, a per diem and honorarium structure, Financial Management By-Laws and the Financial Policies and Procedures for review by the Band Council. The items covered under finance also included year-end transition funding, the appointment of auditors Bonnell Cole Janes, and a decision not to reimburse Councillors for loss of employment wages while attending Council meetings.

QMFN budgets and manages its operations by accessing and

complying with a diverse range of government funds tied to each program and service. Chief Sheppard reported at the March meeting that the Band had secured a \$9.2 million commitment in the QMFN Funding Agreement for 2013-14. That included \$6.6 million for postsecondary education which was essential to cover existing contracts that the Band has entered into since band creation. Because the budgets were still being prepared for the budget meeting scheduled for April 12, 2013 in Grand Falls-Windsor, no financial

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reports were presented in March.

At the April meeting the Finance Committee presented a series of budgets. These were discussed at length by Council and approved.

### Qalipu Programs & Budgets

Program	Budget
Post Secondary Education	\$6,651,932
Aboriginal Skills Employment & Training Strategy (ASETS)	\$1,229,472
Community Economic Development	\$545,000
Band Support	\$399,532

Aboriginal Fisheries	\$200,000
Non-Insured Health Benefits Navigator	\$93,068
Indian Registry	\$91,264
Total	\$9,210,268

## **MAKING THE RIGHT INVESTMENTS**

The Qalipu Development Corporation (QDC) Board met twice prior to the Council meeting and reviewed reports and strategies. During the same period Councillors were interviewed by Cheryl Whitten, CA, a senior consulting manager at Grant Thornton LLP, to determine how they thought the QDC ought to be set up and what its relationship ought to be to the Band Council.

At the March meeting QDC Chairperson Randy Drover presented a report updating Council on their activities and identified business opportunities available to QDC.

As part of that March presentation Ms. Whitten, who specializes in internal audit services, risk management, certification readiness assistance, and forensic audits, reported on the investment parameters for the QDC. She provided an overview of how the corporation was set up and summarized the findings from her Councillor interviews. Afterwards, Councillors asked questions and presented their ideas.

During this discussion Councillors made a number of contributions that will help shape policies and direction such as:

- which sectors to invest in and which ones to avoid;
- levels of investment, comfort with risk, risk tolerance;
- diversity of the portfolio; and
- how revenue and profits should be re-invested and/or distributed.

The discussions around these issues also reinforced the business and profit focus of QDC (an emphasis which, as mentioned, separates it from the Band's community economic development initiatives). The Corporation is looking at ways to make the most of band-owned assets including buildings, fishery licenses, and transferable quotas and to stimulate and support business opportunities. Council decided that the investment parameters should be brought back to Council for further discussion and consideration after a presentation to the QDC Board.

Much of the activity in this first year has been about getting the corporation established and securing an annual operating budget of \$140,000 for three years, and hiring General Manager Deidre Hutchings.

In the administration of the start-up of the QDC professional systems, liability insurances were secured and staff focused on building partnerships and finding opportunities for best ventures. Among ongoing activities encouraged by Council was a potential partnership with Emera Newfoundland and Labrador. Council granted approval to the QDC general manager to continue research and identification of opportunities for an affordable regional housing project.

At the April meeting, the Band Council considered presentations on the annual operational plan for QDC and for the Mi'kmaq Commercial Fisheries. Along with specific schedules for submitting budgets, cash-flow statements, and reviews and quarterly board meeting reports to ensure high levels of accountability, QDC's plan outlined measurable actions to evaluate business opportunities and to conduct efficiency reviews in enterprises such as affordable housing, homecare, insurance, fishing and aquaculture, personnel services and property management.

### **INVESTING IN QALIPU PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

The annual operational plan for 2013-2014 presented in April for Community Economic Development reinforced Council's belief that, while profit is the focus for the Qalipu Development Corporation, it is not the only focus of the Band Council. Also of great importance is building capacity and carefully investing in people and opportunities at the community level. The Chief and Councillors recognize this as an important focus for the long-term success of Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation.

The plan for the next year includes the continued administration of the employment subsidy programs, the building of a virtual business network with a database of interested Qalipu members companies, further sourcing of opportunities to initiate prosperity, as well as continue to investigate funding and partners for the Mi'kmaq Business Development Centre. Other work will include planning an annual business forum, and exploring the potential to partner with Emera Newfoundland and Labrador on the maritime Link Project through western Newfoundland.

Other initiatives for community economic development include further development and promotion of the *Ginu* labour force database which also helps the Band to work with employers and educational institutions to connect members with relevant training opportunities.

Building on Mi'kmaq culture and heritage remains a fundamental pillar for developing Qalipu communities and people. For this reason, Council has directed that work continue on mapping traditional land use and cataloging sources of tangible and intangible Mi'kmaq culture.

## **BUILDING AND TAKING CARE OF OUR NATURAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Aquatic Resources Department works with MAMKA and Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (Mi'kmaq Alsumk Mowimsikik Koqoey is the Mi'kmaq translation of Mi'kmaq Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management). This is where Qalipu natural interests prevail. Qalipu staff will work at researching and protecting habitats and species such as eel, sea turtles, and Atlantic salmon, as well as birds at risk including the piping plover. Another priority is monitoring and reporting on alien and invasive species such as green crab.

The annual operational plan for 2013-2014 is to continue development of the aquatic marine resources inventory by documenting freshwater habitats, surveying for and mapping of eel grass, and conducting Atlantic salmon surveys. Species at risk conservation and recovery will continue, especially for American eel and elver in Western Newfoundland. The department will focus on engaging people to get actively involved. Their primary method for doing this will be through community and youth engagement activities such as Ocean Day and the collection of traditional aboriginal knowledge, and by participating in stakeholder consultations for salmonids conservation and management.

Members of the department will be actively involved in conservation and protection. These activities will include regular monitoring and surveys of piping plover in St. George's Bay and Western and Central Newfoundland. They will also patrol marine and aquatic systems in Gander Bay, Glenwood, Bay of Islands, and St. George's Bay. Aboriginal fisheries strategy work includes reporting on guardian patrol and enforcement activities and violations, and documenting the department's guardian conservation and research activities.

At the April meeting Council completed the draw for 2013 fishing licenses. In order, the names drawn were Rene Young, Juanita Kerfout, and Jeff Pumphrey.

## **GROWING WITH OUR GREATEST ASSETS – OUR PEOPLE**

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) is a core federal funded program for Qalipu. Work Force Qalipu's annual operational plan allows for:

- employment assistance services,
- pre-employment readiness programs,
- program design based on *Ginu* database identified needs,
- adult literacy strategy design, and

- connecting Qalipu members with postsecondary institutions and private and public partners to upgrade skills.

Included will be management of funds provided to assist Qalipu members with wage subsidy, graduate incentives, and self-employment assistance programs. Also included are youth-focused summer employment programs in partnership with the RCMP. There are programs for skills development in trades and university, and a parachute program to help youth find employment.

A partnership development program will empower QMFN to connect with targeted employers, labour unions, other aboriginal organizations and educational institutions to ensure Qalipu members are a hiring priority. Included are administrative activities such as professional services, communications and marketing, organizational development and other work focused on efficient delivery. In 2013-2014 work will also include sponsoring career and employment fairs and developing a tourism training plan to support QDC investments.

Council reinforced its direction to ensure that our limited funds are managed for the maximum benefit of Qalipu members. With increasing demand placed on the post-secondary education funding programs, Council stressed the need for further efficiencies to be implemented within Work Force Qalipu. Council felt that they need to prepare for increased demand as our membership grows and post-secondary enrolment increases.

Even though funding is limited, they felt it was important to make the program as fair as possible to encourage all eligible members to apply. In striving for fairness, Council recognized the need to distribute funding to as many eligible students as possible. They noted that not every student who applies for funding is initially approved, but all applications are kept on record in case approved students withdraw and previously committed funds become available to those on the waiting list.

The budgets presented in April reinforced the fact that more than 90% of all post-secondary education funds are distributed directly to students. In April 744 students received assistance and, as unclaimed funds become available, assistance will be provided to others.

In March, and again in April, Keith Goulding Director of Work Force Qalipu guided Council through a number of policy issues. He made recommendations for two changes to the Work Force Qalipu Policies Manual. The first policy change recommended related to criteria for part-time/distance education students and the second change related to Masters and PhD candidates working on their theses.

The change in the first instance was necessary when students have to move away from home to attend university but, because three of their five courses are offered online, and not on campus, they were ineligible under the existing policy to receive living allowances. A motion was made and carried that, effective September 2013, for new agreements signed then full-time status would be granted to students living away from home who do a combination of five courses with at least two courses taken in the classroom on campus.

In the second instance, the Director of Work Force Qalipu reviewed the current regulations in place and made recommendations for policy changes governing support for Masters and PhD Candidates working on a thesis. Since these students are considered full-time students by universities, they should be eligible for the living allowance. A motion was made and carried that the thesis be considered as one course in determining full-time or part-time status.

A final change put forward with regard to funding for post-secondary education funding was necessary because of a directive from the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The Post-Secondary Student Support Programs National Guidelines 2013-2014 have set maximum allowable payable for students for living allowances to the living allowances established by the Canada Student Loan Program. With this maximum allowable in mind, the living allowance for students living at home has to be set to \$95.00 a week or \$410 monthly.

In April, the amended Qalipu Work Force Policy Manual was reviewed, and with some additional edits, was to be made available to members on the website.

## **MANAGING HEALTH BENEFITS**

Non-insured health benefits are funded by Health Canada to help members with the costs of health care when they have no access to any other insurance program. QMFN has a dedicated staff person to help Qalipu members navigate the program and to guide people when they need support with complex services. Every inquiry and request for help will be monitored to ensure budgets are planned to meet need. The annual plan for 2013-2014 includes providing more information to guide members and to make the services available to members as they learn to access benefits.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

In March, Council dealt with an issue related to the transfer of individuals recognized under the Indian Act from other Bands to Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band. In discussions, Councillors decided that, due to the delay in enrolment of applications for the Band, it would be best

in the short term to focus attention on those applications not yet processed for potential members of the QMFNB. Based on a consensus, Council passed a motion not to transfer individuals recognized under the Indian Act from other bands to Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band.

### **MOVING AHEAD**

Chief Sheppard pointed out that the Band Council must continue building on the hard work of Qalipu transition council and professional staff, taking care to build the right programs and engage the leadership of Council members. The Council joined him in expressing confidence and satisfaction with the work of staff and management, and professional advisers in seeking member input to develop initial strategies and policies for Council to consider and pursue. These will assist the band Council as they follow the path towards sustainable economic independence, guided by Qalipu values and principles.

The next meeting of the council was scheduled for June 20, 2013.