



STATE OF OUR NATION REPORT

Newsletter – Winter 2021

Prepared for: *NCN Annual General Assembly*

Message from the Chief

When I first became chief in 2014, I had many concerns on my list. But never would I have anticipated a global pandemic, and the way it has taken precedence over the last two years of our lives.

We've had many initiatives and long-term plans put on pause, so we could focus efforts on keeping the community safe. After temporary stoppages, others have been pushed through for the same reason, such as the new water treatment plant and the new high school.

The dedication and ingenuity of the Citizens who serve Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, and the people who choose to call this home, is amazing. An efficient vaccine rollout from Public Health and the Nursing Station has resulted in an incredible NCN immunization rate of more than 90 per cent. Stringent constraints on all movement within and outside of the community from our Emergency Response Team has capped our COVID cases at less than 30 at this time. Delivery of cleaning supplies and grocery runs organized by the Government Office ensured everyone had what they needed.

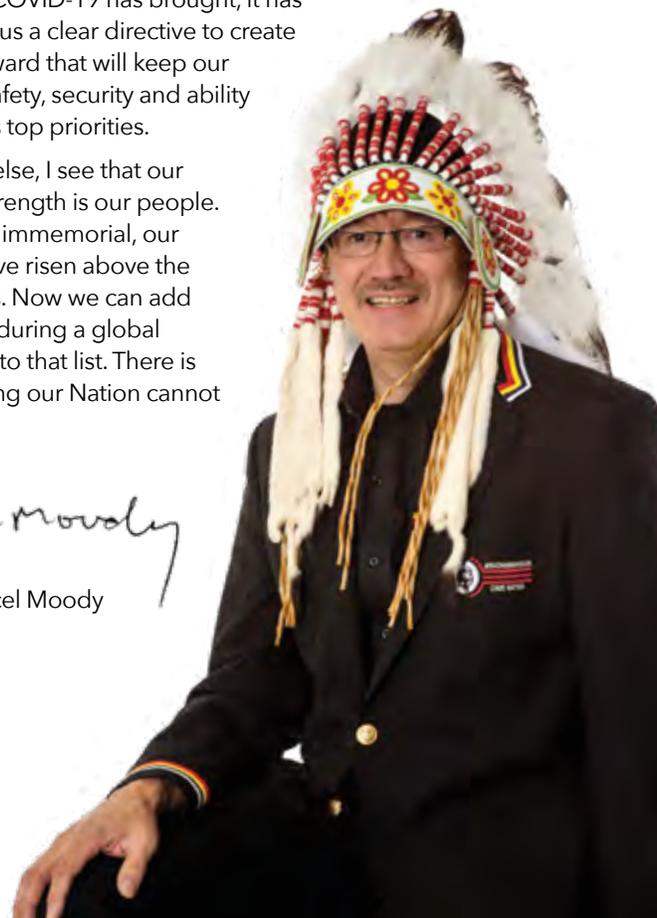
**By an overwhelming majority,
NCN Citizens have agreed on what is
truly important, in many cases putting
aside their own pursuits for the security
of our Nation.**

The pandemic has been a galvanizing event. It is a challenge on a scale our Nation has not faced in decades. It has highlighted the dire need for social services and resources, as rates of violence and addictions have risen. It has emphasized the gaps in our infrastructure, governance, social services and economic development. For all the stress and strife COVID-19 has brought, it has also given us a clear directive to create a path forward that will keep our Citizens' safety, security and ability to thrive as top priorities.

Above all else, I see that our greatest strength is our people. Since time immemorial, our people have risen above the challenges. Now we can add persisting during a global pandemic to that list. There is truly nothing our Nation cannot achieve.



Chief Marcel Moody



HIGHLIGHTS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Projects That Support Our Growth And Progress

New Water Treatment Plant

The new water treatment facility is located near Industrial Road and Otetiskawin Drive junction, and will provide the community with consistent water, its treatment and distribution, and collection and treatment of wastewater. It is based on the original 2008 feasibility study, but updated to include new effluent discharge regulations and current treatment technologies.

The project includes:

- ▶ Decommissioning the existing water treatment plant;
- ▶ A new raw water source intake structure;
- ▶ Installation of watermain and forcemain piping to connect to the existing water distribution and sewage collection system, and to the new Health Centre and school sites;
- ▶ An enclosed truck fill station between Dog Point and RC Point.

The contractor, Kelsey Pipelines, was delayed by COVID restrictions, but has been on-site since August 2020. Work is progressing at the main building and the new truck fill building. Piping and road works are nearing completion in the subdivision area. Completion is scheduled for the end of 2021.

The total estimated cost to complete this project is \$25,179,316. Contingency costs have not been finalized or included.



The new water treatment facility... will provide the community with consistent water, its treatment and distribution, and collection and treatment of wastewater.



New High School

Located at Site 1 and currently non-serviced, the new high school is a 5,613 m² building with an additional 48 m² storage warehouse.

The contractor, Penn-Co Construction, was delayed by COVID restrictions,

but has been on-site since August 2020. The building is essentially complete with some exterior brick work remaining. Landscaping is complete with seasonal issues to be completed in spring. Commissioning of building systems and site servicing (water, sewer, electrical and communications)

will commence shortly. Construction is expected to be substantially completed by the end of 2021.

The total estimated cost to complete this project is \$46,123,976, inclusive of contingency.



The new high school is essentially complete with some exterior brick work remaining.

HIGH-SPEED FIBRE OPTICS

NCN has applied for funding with the Federal Government to reimburse their costs to bring fibre to the premises of each business and residential structure - to date no award has been granted. In the Winter of 2020 backbone Fiber was completed by Clearsky Connections. To fully utilize the new fibre infrastructure, NCN has pursued funding for installation at a total cost of \$2.897 million. NCN has currently drawn a loan to pay for these last miles project costs and continues to pay its financing costs.

Broadband Communications North has been working in partnership with NCN to assist with network engineering and project management. 21 businesses were connected and the final businesses are expected to be fully completed in 2021.

Approximately, 588 homes have been identified for fibre coverage and a tendering process was done in April 2021. We are anticipating major completion of this project by December 2021. NCN will then operate a community ISP and will provide plug and play Internet services, billing and customer support for all of its community members. This service provides economic opportunities for the local community.

Phase 1 - Fibre Optics from Thompson to Nelson House

- ▶ Approximately 80 kms fibre optic connection along Highway 280 to Nelson House;
- ▶ Approximately 75 km of trenching was completed in the fall of 2019;
- ▶ During the fall of 2020 the final 5 kms were trenched, 80 kms of fibre optic cable was installed, and spliced together;

- ▶ Lighting of the main tower was completed in November 2020;
- ▶ Approximate cost of \$2,000,000 (Thompson to Nelson House).

Phase 2 - Last Mile: Backbone of Connectivity in Community

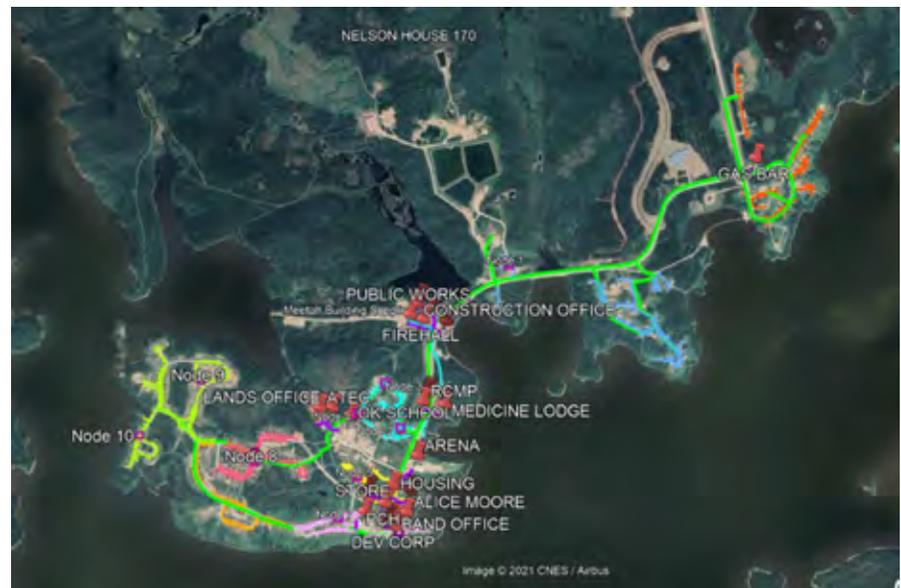
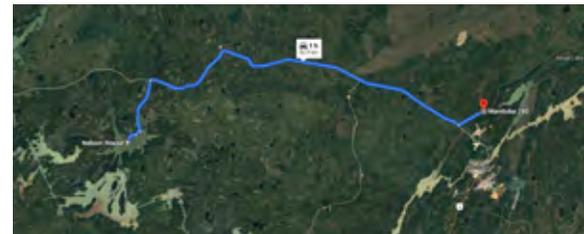
- ▶ 10.8 km of conduit and fibre optic cable trenched and installed throughout the community to make up the fibre optic backbone;
- ▶ Implementation of connectivity for 12 major anchor tenants;
- ▶ Approximate cost of \$940,000.

Phase 3 - Last Mile: Installation to Homes

- ▶ Started July 2021 - Estimated completion January 2022;
- ▶ 564 homes within NCN;
- ▶ 24 homes in the Metis Community;
- ▶ Plan to start turning on homes in December 2021;
- ▶ Approximate cost of \$2,100,000.

Phase 4 - Installations to New Subdivision

- ▶ Planning and installation of fibre optic cable and vaults for the new subdivision;
- ▶ Start and end dates to be determined.



GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The signing of our MOU with Canada on self-governance and the recognition of our rights has been delayed due to the pandemic and the federal election. Chief Moody raised concerns about the ongoing delays during his recent meeting with Minister Patty Hajdu on November 17, 2021. We hope to get the MOU signed shortly.

Work on the Governance Agreement has also been delayed during the pandemic. The Governance Agreement will address jurisdiction and related fiscal arrangements. An outline of the Agreement has been reviewed. One or more agreements will include the following as well as other issues that are identified through community engagement sessions:

- ▶ Relationship of NCN laws with other Government's laws including confirmation the Indian Act provisions no longer apply;
- ▶ Recognition and general governance provisions related to Nisichawayasi Nehethowuk Okemawin;
- ▶ Ohtuskanesiwin (NCN Citizenship);
- ▶ NCN Lands and Resources (co-ordinating federal legislation governing the Land Code into this Agreement);
- ▶ Education;

- ▶ Health;
- ▶ Child and Family matters;
- ▶ Wills, Estates, administration of property of NCN Citizens;
- ▶ Local Services and Infrastructure;
- ▶ Economic Development and business activities;
- ▶ Public Safety and Law Enforcement;
- ▶ Tobacco, Liquor, Cannabis and other intoxicants;
- ▶ Justice;
- ▶ Fiscal arrangements including revenue enhancement and protection of own source revenue;
- ▶ Implementation Arrangements;
- ▶ Dispute Resolution;
- ▶ Future areas of negotiation;
- ▶ Ratification process.

Technical teams will continue to work on the different areas and obtain as much input as possible from NCN Citizens as the process proceeds. Over the next few months the technical teams will be starting work on the development of our own Animal Control Law, Education Law, Child and Family Law and

Citizenship Law and will be seeking input from the community.

In addition to this work, various technical teams are also working on policies in the areas of Education and Finance. Human Resource policies including Workplace Health and Safety policies will be reviewed and updated.

Over the next few months the technical teams will be starting work on the development of our own Animal Control Law, Education Law, Child and Family Law and Citizenship Law and will be seeking input from the community.



TAPITOWINIKEWIN: A FRAMEWORK FOR RESTORING BALANCE

Over the past few years, we have engaged with over 500 NCN Citizens about the development of our Nisichawayasi Court and Peacekeepers Tribunal through surveys, workshops, presentations, booths at community events and General Assemblies. Restoring our justice processes based on our own customary laws is finally coming to fruition. Three laws and some related regulations were developed (Nisichawayasi Court Law, Peacekeepers Tribunal Law, Offences and Tickets Law). Packages with information about the three laws were delivered to every household in the community last summer. We have obtained a number of great ideas for implementing these laws.

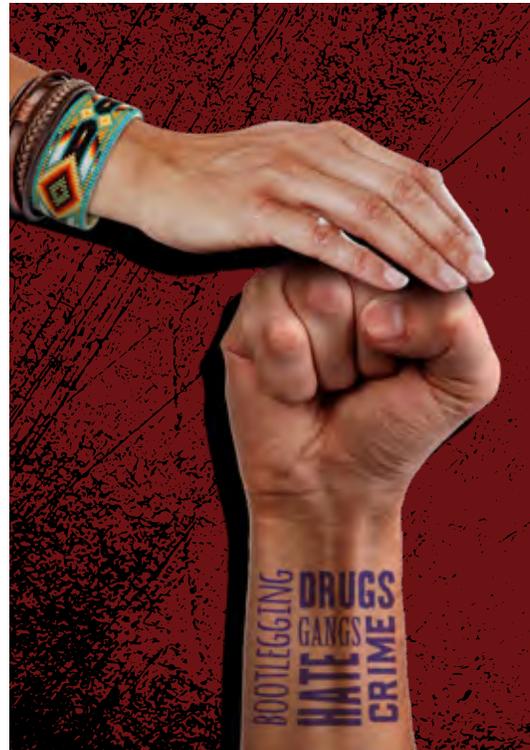
Chapter 16 of Othasowewin indicates a Nisichawayasi Court will be established. Numerous reports have documented that the Canadian legal system is not working well for Indigenous Peoples and recommended the re-establishment of Indigenous justice systems including tribal courts [Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI), Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)]. A few First Nations

in Canada have started to establish their own courts similar to the tribal courts in the United States.

NCN will be the first Manitoba First Nation to take this important step to reduce the number of our people who end up in jail or the child welfare system.

Plans are underway to work with Justice Canada, Justice Manitoba, law enforcement and the existing Courts to develop and implement sustainable protocols for pre-diversion and diversion and alternative measures that utilize Ethinehkahiwewin (wellness plans) and O'tapitowinikewuk (peacemakers). These protocols will be used to resolve disputes and restore balance individually and collectively so they do not have to proceed in the Manitoba Court system. We were recently advised that a national committee reviewing various justice funding proposals was impressed with NCN's innovative ideas so that was good news we hope to build upon further.

The repurposing of the high school into an interim Justice Centre is under



consideration. This facility could also be used by the Provincial Court for offences that the Nisichawayasi Court will not deal with or where a person chooses to proceed in the existing system. Longer term we hope to obtain funding for the design and construction of a new facility to house the Nisichawayasi Court where the focus will be on helping our Citizens rather than punishing them. We hope to utilize Provincial Court rental moneys to assist in the operation and maintenance of our facility similar to what some other First Nations have been able to do in other provinces.

NCN will be the first Manitoba First Nation to take this important step to reduce the number of our people who end up in jail or the child welfare system.

A SUCCESSFUL FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 PANDEMIC - BUT WE'RE NOT DONE YET!

As we all know, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation has had stringent restrictions throughout the pandemic. The community has come together in unity to battle waves of the pandemic while other parts of the world were struggling.

NCN has done very well during the pandemic. The few cases we had were quickly contained, and no one in our community has died from COVID-19 to date. As difficult and annoying as the restrictions and lockdowns have been, the cooperation of our Citizens has been amazing.

We have an incredible vaccination rate of over 90 per cent of our eligible population in the community. Over 99% of our employees got vaccinated as required by our Mandatory Vaccination Policy which has meant we have been able to retain almost all of our staff.

By taking self-governance seriously all of these actions have resulted in a small number of Covid-19 cases in the community so far. We want to keep it that way. Now that children ages 5 to 11 can be vaccinated, please make sure your child gets vaccinated as soon as possible. Studies are underway for children ages 2 months to 4 years old, so hopefully the vaccine will be approved for that age group early in the new year.

It is important to recognize the tireless efforts of our healthcare workers. While we have achieved significant success so far, this pandemic is not over. New variants continue to emerge. Exposure to unvaccinated people creates risks for everyone even for the fully vaccinated.

Get your booster shot as soon as you are eligible.

New Mask Guidance

Health officials are now advising everyone to use medical masks not just cloth masks to obtain the best protection. The virus spreads through the air and by close contact with others especially indoors. In the winter people spend more time indoors, so extra caution is necessary.

Follow the Fundamentals so Christmas 2021 will not be like Christmas 2020

Increased reports of breakthrough cases of vaccinated individuals mean we cannot let up on safety protocols – wash your hands frequently, wear your

mask consistently and get vaccinated for COVID and the flu.

Being diligent now will help ensure we do not face tighter restrictions and lockdowns as the holidays approach. No one wants to go through another Christmas like last year.

Keep up the Good Work - Know the Symptoms - Stop the Spread

Symptoms can include fever, cough and difficulty breathing – very similar to a cold or flu. Some people can develop a more severe illness. People most at risk of this include older adults and people with severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease. If you develop symptoms, contact public health or the nursing station.



LANDS, ENVIRONMENT & RESOURCES (LER) PROGRESS

DEVELOPING OUR RESOURCES WHILE PROTECTING OUR LANDS

Community Land Use Planning (CLUP) for IR170

The Lands, Environment & Resources Department, Land Advisory Committee, and technical advisors are working on documentation for designation and zoning the community reserve lands IR170. It will include residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities and protected lands.

The CLUP will allow NCN to implement its Land Code, protect our lands and resources, create a better environment, plan for future generations, improve decision making, and achieve community-identified goals.

Community engagement, including 250 Citizen interviews, have identified environmental, housing and economic development priorities. McKercher LLP is drafting documents so that this land can begin to be leased and generate revenue for the Nation.

Environmental Management Plan (EMP)

An Environmental Coordinator was recruited in early 2021 to work with an external consultant to complete the first draft of the EMP. It identifies NCN environmental priorities and recommends strategies for environmental best practices, management plans and protection.

Community engagement sessions have identified six priorities. The main issue is the current state of Solid Waste Disposal Ground. The goal is to coordinate all environmental management, such as pollution

reduction, waste management, environmental health and risk.

Lands, Environment & Resources is working with Public Works to secure longer term funding from Indigenous Services Canada.

Legacy Issue Survey Project

A legal land survey was completed in 2020, which included the entire road network for IR170 (main reserve), all commercial properties and some residential lots. This will benefit our ability to grant/register land interests, leasehold/mortgages and home ownership.

NCN now has an increase of survey lots, from 24 to 114, in the Canada Land Survey Register.

LER is obtaining more funding to continue legal surveys on residential lots, to start creating revenue and home ownership for NCN Citizens.

Treaty Land Entitlement

This committee (TLEC) is in negotiations with the Government of Canada to resolve an ongoing dispute in the consultation process with the Manitoba Metis Federation and the breach of the Framework Agreement.

The TLE selections impacted are Wuskwatim Brook, Wuskwatim Lake South, and Driftwood Rapids to Gridstone Rapids. The MMF are asserting they use these TLE selected lands for their harvesting, gathering and hunting purposes.

All TLE selections have been put on hold until this process with the Government of Canada is concluded.

Fisheries Program

The Nelson House Fisherman's Association was the first program to be established under the NFA implementation agreement as



compensation for the damages done to our land and water.

It was initiated to provide a viable employment opportunity for NCN Citizens; to help them earn the \$8,400 threshold to be eligible for employment insurance; to continue using our renewable resources with traditional and sustainable practises; and to protect fishers' interests.

The Fisheries Program has three seasons: winter, spring and fall. The winter fishery is only partially supported with services, and the fish plant is not open during this season. The fish are delivered to Leaf Rapids or Wabowden for fishers who want to fish during the winter season.

The supports provided through the Fisheries Program are not available anywhere else. It includes a start-up package that provides gas, groceries,

equipment, and transportation. These expenses are deducted once new fishers have production to cover the expenditures.

The Fisheries Program has been hard hit by COVID for the last two years. The COVID check stop closed two of six seasons, and many fishers chose not to deal with the regulations that the pandemic required.

Here are some of the objectives the fish program has:

- ▶ To provide a viable employment opportunity to NCN through the fishing program.
- ▶ To mitigate and subsidize NCN fishers as compensation from the 1996 NFA implementation agreement.
- ▶ To continue using our renewable resources through traditional and

sustainable practices.

- ▶ Targeting fishers to earn \$8,400.00 annual to be eligible for employment insurance.
- ▶ To protect the fishers' interests and resources.

LAND GUARDIAN Program

This program was initiated by the Resource Management Board, and is governed by NCN systems including our Othasowewin (constitution) and Aski Pumenikewin (land code).

Guardianship is not new to our culture. Indigenous people have been stewarding and managing the land and water since time began. The future health of our territory's land, waterways and species is dependent on each Citizen enjoying traditional activities while properly stewarding our resources.



Land Guardians are NCN employees, knowledge keepers, harvesters and Elders who work to meet its mandate. This year, they monitored and protected neewanitan spawning grounds; installed signage on trails; cleaned up highway debris and camp sites; and completed a moose survey and a GPS survey of cabins.

The present-day organization and expression of the role is:

- ▶ The NCN land guardian will be comprised of NCN employees, knowledge keepers, harvesters and elders who work to meet its mandate.
 - ▶ The future health of our territory's land, waterways and species is dependent on each citizen to enjoy traditional activities while properly stewarding our resources.
 - ▶ The NCN land guardian program was initiated by the resource management board (RMB) through the land use planning process as an implementation measure.
- ▶ The land guardian program will be governed by NCN systems including Othasoswewin (constitution), aski pumenikewin (land code).
 - ▶ It is under the auspice of the NCN lands, environment and resource department (LER).

Some activities the land guardians worked on this year:

- ▶ Monitor and protect neewanitan spawning grounds;
- ▶ Install signage on trails;

- ▶ GPS cabins;
- ▶ Compile data;
- ▶ Moose survey;
- ▶ Clean up highway debris and camp sites;
- ▶ Help facilitate the land use plan.

**Guardianship is not new
to our culture. Indigenous
people have been
stewarding and managing
the land and water since
time began.**



SOCIAL INITIATIVES

SUPPORTING CITIZENS AS THEY THRIVE

Employment Growth Opportunity Program

This Family & Community Wellness Centre program is designed to assist its young clients with the transition from social assistance to the work field. Participants work in the Land Base Department, where tasks include trapping, fishing, hunting, outdoor safety, and search and rescue. This purposeful work is meant to inspire and motivate participants while they learn lost cultural customs and prepare for a successful future.

Community Safety

Gang activity, drug dealers and bootlegging continue to damage our community, and especially our young people. Crime and violence are always present, and Citizens rate community safety as a top priority.

Gang activity, drug dealers and bootlegging continue to damage our community, and especially our young people.

There are now 10 full-time First Nations Safety Officers (FNSOs) working in NCN. Level One training has been completed by 26 NCN Citizens, and three others have completed Level Two. FNSOs maintain peace throughout the community and have played a crucial role during the pandemic, manning the community check stop and enforcing lockdown procedures.

Chief and Council have recently called for interested Citizens to join the Community Safety Task Force Volunteers to parole 10 different zones of NCN.



FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS FOR NCN

CONTINUING TO BUILD A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ALL CITIZENS

Health Centre

The proposed new health centre in Nelson House will be located in the new sub-development adjacent to RC Point. It will be a state-of-the-art facility providing health care, emergency services, dental, pharmacy, community-based programming, and residences for nurses and visiting professionals. Existing trees and landscape will be preserved for walking trails, community gardens and courtyard space for ceremonies. The Health Centre will provide refuge, education and sanctuary, while reinforcing healing.

This project is awaiting approval to proceed to tendering a construction contract.

Elementary School

The elementary school building is part of the overall educational facilities project. It will include:

- ▶ 8 - Kindergarten classrooms;
- ▶ 10 - Grades 1 to 3 classrooms;
- ▶ 9 - Grades 4 to 6 classrooms;
- ▶ Special Education classroom;



- ▶ Library/Resource Centre;
- ▶ Cree Language office;
- ▶ Counseling office;
- ▶ Health room;
- ▶ Gym/Gym Support/Stage;
- ▶ Cafeteria/Kitchen;
- ▶ Administration;
- ▶ Staff Room;
- ▶ Storage;
- ▶ The elementary school site will include a combination of hard- and

soft-surface play areas, and age appropriate playground equipment.

This project has been designed, and is ready to be tendered for construction once funding becomes available.

Proposed Landfill site

NCN has identified the need to explore a proposed landfill site to handle increased refuse. Plans by engineers, JR Cousin Consultants Ltd. have been made for a potential waste transfer station and waste management site off of the main road.



Proposed Waste Management Site Layout



Proposed Waste Transfer Station Layout

New Residential Subdivision Near New School

The new subdivision for housing and lot development is proposed across from School Road, next to the new school development. Upwards of 215 lots are planned. An additional 23 lots are proposed next to the main road. Engineering plans have been created and further land studies will be done, and funding will be secured, prior to the beginning of running the sewer and water lines and new build construction.



Youth Centre

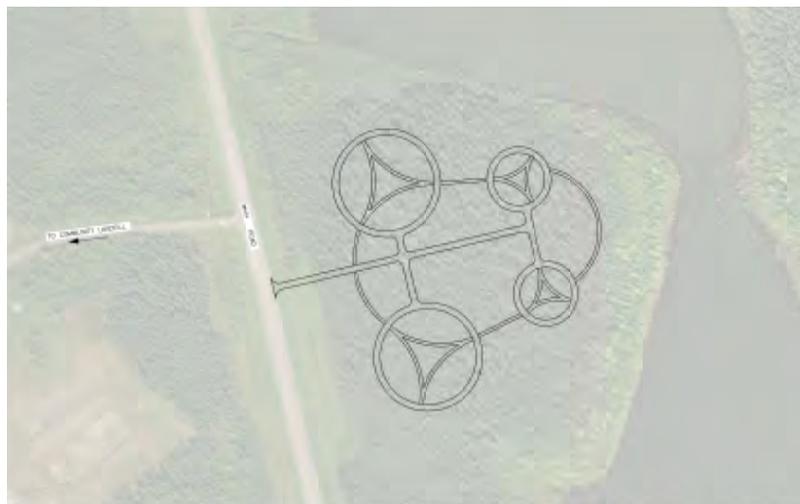
We are working to open up a youth drop-in centre in the community. This is envisioned as a space to support youth connections, leisure and recreation. We plan to use the Duncan Wood Building for now. The youth will be helping to design and prepare the space to suit their needs. They are also being encouraged to invest time and effort in each other by joining in the exciting adventure of our first ever youth-led and community driven drop-in centre. We will be applying to the federal government for funding towards a youth centre in the near future. The youth have had no dedicated space since the previous one burned a few years ago.

Proposed Cemeteries

A plot of cemeteries is planned for the area off of the main road across from the proposed new landfill access road. Another proposed Catholic Church site will have nearly 300 plots or grave sites available.



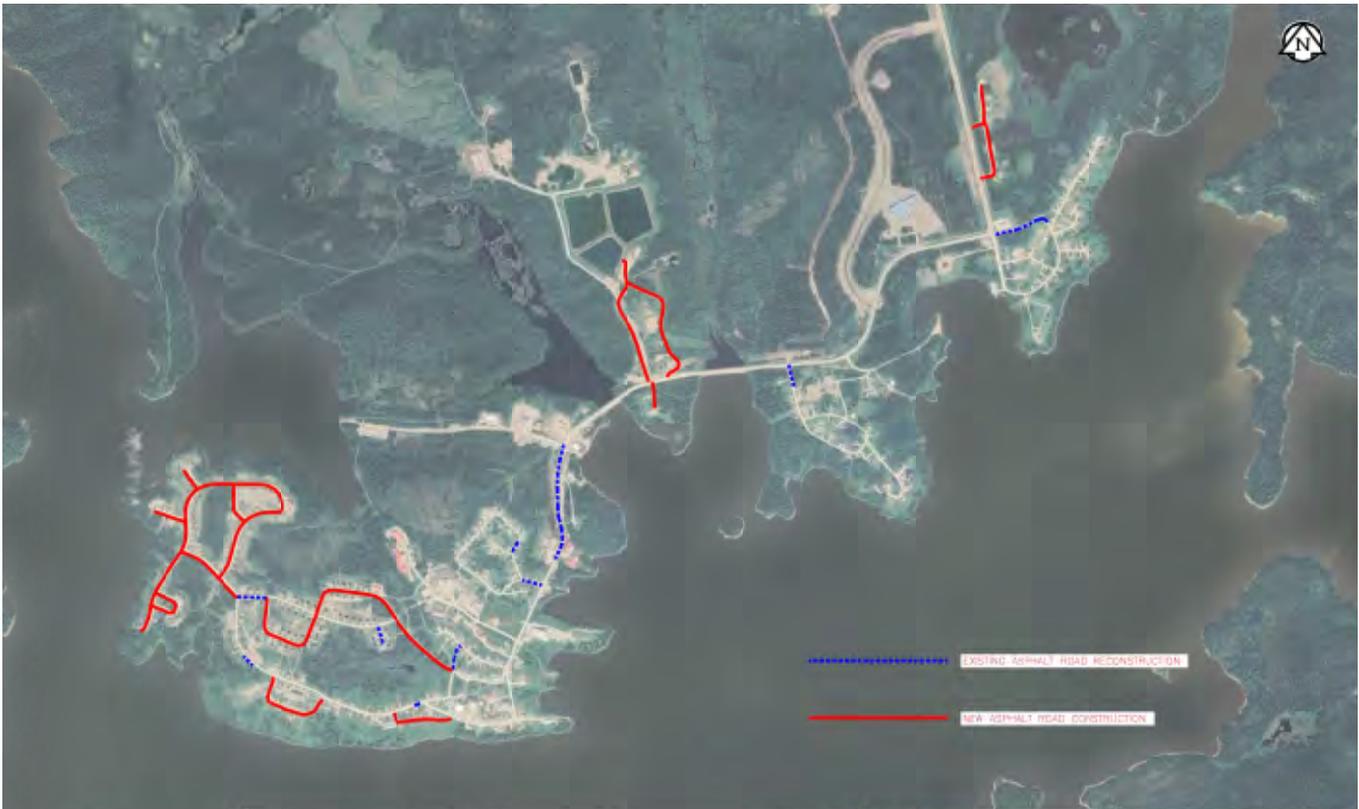
Catholic cemetery



Proposed new cemetery

Road Paving

New asphalt paving and road construction is planned for several new roadways in NCN and will connect to the existing paved roads. Plans to replace gravel roads with asphalt will continue into the next year.



CONCLUSION

The pandemic has slowed our Nation's progress over the last two years, but NCN government is committed to seeing our many initiatives to completion, and continuing our mandate to create a prosperous Nation for all NCN Citizens.



MEET & GREET

INFORMATION MEETINGS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**DOOR
PRIZES**

available
to be won

Chief and Council and department managers will be in attendance to report on the past year and discuss plans with Community off-reserve members at the upcoming information session for the following dates:

November 29, 2021

NCN, Norman Linklater
Multiplex - 1:00 pm

December 7, 2021

Thompson MB
Royal Canadian Legion - 5 pm

December 9, 2021

Winnipeg MB
The Radisson Hotel
(downtown) - 5 pm

Dinner and refreshments will be provided.

Off-reserve NCN Citizens encouraged to attend.

Covid-19 protocol and mask mandate will be in effect. Proof of vaccination and valid photo ID required to attend.

For more information, please contact the NCN Government Office:

(204) 484-2332

STATE OF OUR NATION REPORT

Building a Brighter Future for Our Nehetho Nation



Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
Chief and Council

**Top (from left to right): Jeremiah Spence,
Jackie Walker, Willie Moore, Ron Spence**

**Bottom: Cheyenne Spence, Chief Marcel
Moody, Vice-Chief Cheryl Moore**



Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
General Delivery
Nelson House, Manitoba R0B 1A0
Phone: (204) 484-2332
Fax: (204) 484-2392

Follow us online and on Facebook.

www.ncncree.com

Your Comments are Important to us

Please let us know your thoughts, concerns and feedback on these and future plans. We hope to maintain a government that will listen to you and act only in your best interest.