

## Community Support & Fire Recovery

The needs of our communities are diverse ranging from land to water to food security to fire prevention and emergency preparedness to IT capacity. The June 30, 2021 wildfire that ravaged the Nlaka'pamux homeland substantially increased the needs of the communities.

NNTC, which includes the communities of Lytton First Nation, recognized that the fire created both short and long term needs and set out quickly to negotiate agreements that addressed both sets of needs regardless of whether the impacted Nlaka'pamux person lived on or off reserve. By July 10, 2021, NNTC had negotiated Letters of Commitment with both the federal and provincial governments which far surpassed what had initially been offered for support. It was possible to negotiate these commitments because NNTC was known to be a strong governing entity with significant leverage which could be used if reaching agreement were not achieved. It has taken years of consistent, disciplined work by NNTC to reach this state. All NNTC communities were in agreement with the Letters of Commitment and a Nation based approach. The best interest of the Nlaka'pamux depend upon a Nation approach. A band approach quickly has the *Indian Act* and programs determining what can be done. The letters of commitment are available on this website.

The Federal and Provincial commitment letters provide for significant community support.

The Letters of Commitment from both governments provide for:

- Establishment of a Leadership Table – to oversee implementation of letter commitments
- Establishment of an Implementation Task Force – to develop and implement work plans for meeting the communities' needs with the commitments made
- Immediate Funding to support Nlaka'pamux recovery needs.
- Acting in a manner consistent with UNDRIP
- Recognizing Nlaka'pamux title, rights and jurisdiction
- Work in new ways for future emergency situations and dispute resolution.

The additional commitments from the Province include enhanced health supports, recommitment to the 2017 Political Accord. Highlights include providing for matters such as strengthened shared decision making, consent based decisions making, strengthening of relationship between the Province and Nlaka'pamux, return of land, an emergency management pilot and capacity support.

The additional commitments from Canada include developing a plan and funding for interim housing. The Commitment Letters provide for a unique, Nlaka'pamux specific approach so that we do build back better, not build back with communities divided and the status quo intact.

The commitment letters are being implemented through the NNTC-BC-Canada Coordination Task Force on Wildfire Recovery and Rail Safety which is responsible for developing and implementing work plans for each of the commitments letters and tracking the completion of immediate, near, medium, and long-term deliverables. There are representatives from each of the three levels of government on the Task Force. In addition there is the Leadership Table which provides oversight. Members include BC Ministers Farnworth and Rankin, Canada – Minister Marc Miller and NNTC Chiefs Janet Webster and Matt Pasco. Currently there are two working groups under the Task Force including Land Based Recovery Working Group including the Heritage and Fire Prevention/Fire Management subcommittees and the Build Back Better Working Group with a food security sub group. The Task Force is essential for ensuring all Nlaka’pamux are included regardless of whether they live on or off reserve or which community they are from. NNTC has offered non-Nlaka’pamux to be involved to also benefit from the commitment letters. Please contact Jessie August at NNTC if you want further information about the Fire Recovery Task Force.

There are many other initiatives the NNTC is involved in to support communities. Training and employment opportunities are important supports. For example, NNTC community members are working in archaeology, heavy equipment, fisheries – employment provided through NNTC initiatives. Information on these opportunities is posted regularly on the NNTC Facebook page and the NNTC website. NNTC also provides technical and administrative support to communities and education relating to economic initiatives. NNTC plays a critical role in advocacy for communities to ensure needs are met as best as is possible. In the process of decolonization, there are many needs especially as they relate to the consequence of the residential school system. NNTC works with communities to support the well-being and best interests of the Nlaka’pamux.