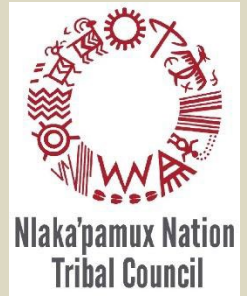


Message from the NNTC on Wildfire Recovery and Food Access

September 12, 2024



NNTC efforts to provide food access for hundreds of people affected by 2021 fires obstructed by bureaucratic stonewalling from Canada and BC

Nlaka'pamux Homeland, BC | Three years after the Lytton Creek wildfire, the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council's (NNTC) advocacy for a permanent solution to food access – a basic human need – remains unanswered. Despite written Commitment Letters signed by Canada, BC and NNTC (including a Coordination Task Force to implement solutions collectively), the NNTC has zero examples of recovery progress to supply food and essential household supplies for people affected by the 2021 wildfire and the loss of the local grocery store. Now, despite a community-driven, evidence-based solution on the table, funding to maintain food delivery is ending as of October 1, creating food insecurity for families and schoolchildren.

Actions to provide local food access. Following the Lytton Creek wildfire in 2021, several Nlaka'pamux communities stepped up to provide food for the impacted region, supported by Food Banks BC (FBBC) and Helicopters without Borders. At the request of these community volunteers, NNTC and FBBC maintained this food access system while a plan was developed to ensure food access for the recovery period and emergency support for long-term community need. Food access after disasters is essential for long-term recovery – and is part of international standards on disaster response like the UN framework (SENDAI).

Nation-based solutions. Beginning in January 2022, NNTC engaged with community volunteers and FBBC to develop a community-informed solution – an relief centre – to provide ongoing emergency services and long-term food security and for all who live in the region. For over two years NNTC has pushed government at the Task Force table to adopt and fund this solution – only to face inaction and bureaucratic delays. Discussions to implement this ready-to-go solution have been stymied by bureaucratic refusal to consider innovative community-driven priorities and stonewalling across ministries.

“The government’s behaviour tells us they refuse to see food access as an emergency issue and that they reject a collective, community-driven solution – despite their pledge to do so within the Commitment Letters,” said NNTC’s Chief Matt Pasco. “NNTC demands action on the relief centre solution now, as well as interim measures to provide food access for hundreds of people and school kids facing food insecurity as of October 1.”

Pasco stated that the government’s inaction is a failure to live up to the requirements of 1) the Canadian Constitution’s Section 35 guarantee to Indigenous self-determination, and 2) Canada and BC government’s commitment to adopt the standards of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in all aspects of their relationship with the NNTC.

About the NNTC

As a governing body for 40+ years, the Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC) exists to protect the rights and title of the Nlaka’pamux. Economic well-being and environmental sustainability are core to NNTC’s work, including wildfire recovery and emergency preparedness. NNTC is an Nlaka’pamux entity, not a provincially or federally incorporated or regulated body. The Coordination Task Force for Wildfire Recovery and Rail Safety (Task Force) is responsible for carrying out the recovery plan as outlined in the Commitment Letters from BC and Canada which are available on the NNTC website [here](#).

BACKGROUND

Many complex inter-jurisdictional issues exist in emergency response. On July 11th, 2021, NNTC, BC, and Canada signed Commitment Letters regarding wildfire recovery and rail safety, based on a foundation that recognizes Nlaka'pamux Nation title, rights, laws, and jurisdiction.

The letters include the establishment of a Coordination Task Force (Task Force)– responsible for developing and implementing work plans for each of the letters of commitment.

Measures undertaken to address this unmet recovery need of food access include:

- Collaborative development of a Relief Centre Proposal at the Task Force table, with community volunteers and logistic partners, to ensure that food and related supports match community needs, stock essential supplies, and provide a centralized space to gather and offer courier services.
- Purchase of a refrigerated van for food delivery to community access points.
- Administrative management, including dedicated staffing for the Lytton First Nation westside community hall access point.
- Ongoing discussions with provincial and federal personnel focused on short-term access to food and emergency household supplies as part of the recovery response, given limited access to a grocery store (from Lytton it's approximately 100km to Merritt, 160km to Kamloops, or 80km to Ashcroft, with no public transportation options).
- Planning for long-term, permanent food security for those who live throughout the Nlaka'pamux homeland as we face challenges of supply chain disruption, climate change, etc.
 - Beginning in January 2022, NNTC engaged with community volunteers and Food Banks BC to develop a community-informed solution to ensure food access for all who live in the region.
 - For two years, NNTC has pushed government to adopt and fund this solution to address the unmet need for food as part of the work of the Task Force. This facility is a Nation-based solution to host the full spectrum of emergency management services throughout the Nlaka'pamux Homeland, as identified by people and community leaders living in the region. Emergency food relief is one type of support to be provided through this facility.