

TREATY 8 FIRST NATIONS OF ALBERTA



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ANNUAL REPORT**

MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND CHIEF




Chief Arthur Noskey

I pay homage to God, our Creator, for the Blessings of Life, Family, Community and First Nations. My life has been dedicated to the service of God and fellow man. My family also must be honored for allowing me to give part of my life to the service of our peoples and communities.

It has been my privilege to serve the people of Treaty No. 8 in Alberta over the past year. Each year of my service as the Grand Chief has been increasingly challenging but also increasingly gratifying. This past year has been full of encouraging opportunities on all aspects of Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta.

First and foremost is the continuing support of the Elders. Their patience and wisdom provides me with greater energy and purpose. My fellow Chiefs have given me latitude to pursue the growth opportunities for our people and our First Nations within Treaty No. 8 in Alberta. Our staff has continued to grow in excellence, experience, capacity and commitment. Last year, you the Chiefs have given me a mandate to cultivate the development of a full time Grand Chief position and office and associated political structure, with a particular emphasis of a political “charter”. This mandate has been pursued with conviction and enthusiasm. The growth opportunities that unfolded for Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta has somewhat hampered the meeting with “all” First Nations Chiefs and Councils. Nonetheless, I have met with the majority of Chiefs and Councils and in some cases with Chiefs only.

But before I continue to present my report, I need to convey the impact of my role as the Grand Chief and the human connections that we all live with on a daily basis. This year was extremely difficult with the passing of close family members and community members. It is especially true for the loss of one of our hunters from Loon River who got lost in the bush and personal impact of finding his body. Later, and more recently, the loss of my Mother-in-law. This was very personal loss of a loved one and the hardship of seeing my wife lose her Mother and my children losing their Grandmother. The loss of my Mother-in-law was extremely difficult and caused me to review my life and my role as a leader. This kind of loss puts life into perspective and causes one to do an inventory of purpose and relations with all life. The lesson learned from the tragic loss of life is that **CHANGE** occurs. It is up to us to choose how we live with, influence or manage that change.



I take this opportunity to convey that lesson to the changes that are in front of us. Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta will change. It is how we react to or influence the change. We can contribute to the change in positive way or we can fight the change and seek status quo until our personal needs and aspirations are satisfied. Or we can step forward and provide leadership and contribute in a positive and constructive manner.

For the past year, I have managed to meet with the majority of First Nation Chiefs and Councils on the matter of a full time Grand Chief. There is an overwhelming support to establishing the “full time” status of the Grand Chief and a Grand Chief’s office. There was general support to a delegated mandate from the Chiefs, but limited response on the criteria. There was also discussion on a support staff for the Grand Chief’s office. Further, the Grand Chief could play the role of the Chief Executive Officer in tandem with the political role. To ensure a seamless leadership that incorporates all aspects of Treaty No. 8. Included in these discussions were the selection or election, eligibility and term of a Grand Chief. The Chiefs in Assembly have indicated that the eligibility should be open to any bona fide member of Treaty No. 8. There is some interest in the term and timing of election of the Grand Chief to coincide with an overall coordinated term and timing of all of Treaty 8 First Nation elections of Chief and Councils. There is some interest in ensuring the Grand Chief has sufficient political authority without prejudice to First Nations. There was a suggestion that the position we should be looking is the Vice Chief as a full time status on an interim basis. In June of last year, the Chiefs instructed the technicians to present a “charter” concept. This was done and the charter documents were sent to the offices of every Chief and Councils within Treaty No. 8 Alberta. For the most part, my directive from last year has been fulfilled. The factors that led to the fulfillment of meeting with all Chiefs and Councils now come into the picture. These factors are also very significant in terms of growth opportunities.

As you may recall, in December of 2006, at our meeting in Edmonton Ramada Hotel, we met to discuss, among other things, an economic strategy. Arising from that meeting were several key strategic directions.

One was our meeting with the Gwich’in Tribal Council. As a result of this meeting, we pursued a formal relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding. This concluded this past January 2008. In Calgary, we signed a friendship MOU to pursue joint social, political and economic interests. We now need to scope out a joint strategic plan with Gwich’in Tribal Council. Second, we agreed that we would present to Minister Prentice our priorities. That was done. This led to a meeting with Prentice where he challenged us to develop an economic strategy. Strategic Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) got underway. The intent was to finalize this initiative with an economic summit with Canada, Alberta, Industry and T8FNA. SEDI will present their report at this Assembly. Specific business opportunities were presented to T8FNA. These opportunities were considered and pursued.