

**Emergency Preparedness Plan:
A Community Plan
for the People of Tulita**

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Introduction

- It is apparent to me and others that the people of Tulita need to be better prepared for future emergencies.
- During an emergency leaders and first responders must be able to act quickly and decisively.
- I hope that Tulita remains a peaceful, happy community. However, the leaders here must remain vigilant.
- It is our responsibility to ensure that we have necessary funds available to spend during an emergency. Our emergency responders must also be adequately trained and prepared. That way we can be ready if there is indeed an emergency.

Background (Summer 2012)

Missing Person / Summer 2012

- A terrible tragedy afflicted all of us this past summer. Nicole Horassi's death was heartbreaking for everyone that knew her.
- Nicole's tragic passing showed us that tragedy can and does strike at any moment. In many instances it happens suddenly, without any warning.
- I was extremely proud of Tulita's response to the tragedy. People donated their time, money and labour to help with the search.

Background (Summer 2012)

- Volunteers searched the Mackenzie and Great Bear Rivers and scoured the land. People opened-up their homes to outsiders that came here to help us.
- Our neighbours in nearby communities (throughout the Sahtu) arrived here to help with the search effort. We even had volunteers come from Ontario and even all the way from America.
- The Search and Rescue Mission was able to bring Nicole's body back to her parents. Although the outcome was not what we wanted, Nicole's loved ones were at least able to have some sense of closure.

Background (Summer 2012)

- Nicole would never have been found if it wasn't for the perseverance, compassion and dedication of the people here in Tulita.
- The Search and Rescue Mission was well-organized. However, we cannot wait until a crisis occurs before acting. We must remain vigilant and prepared. This is the only way to ensure we respond swiftly and correctly to future emergencies.
- Hopefully, we will never have to face a situation like Nicole's disappearance again. However, we cannot assume that things will always be tranquil and peaceful. We must hope for the best but prepare for the worst. This is the only way we can prevent further tragedy.

Lessons Learned

- The Search and Rescue Mission was unable to accomplish its ultimate goal – finding Nicole safe and alive. Sadly, Nicole could have perished moments after she got in the water. Realistically, the eventual outcome (bringing Nicole's body back to her family) was the best possible outcome available.
- The organizers and volunteers performed admirably under stressful circumstances and with limited resources. Now that some time has passed since the tragedy it is prudent to reflect on what occurred so that we can learn from it. The goal is to be prepared so that emergencies like this can be mitigated or prevented entirely.

Lessons Learned

- During times of crisis we cannot depend on others for help. Additionally, we cannot organize ourselves after an emergency. Planning and organization is critical. Leaders in Tulita have a responsibility to ensure the community is protected and kept safe. We must all work together to ensure that this happens.
- Funding is a critical issue. Businesses and individuals were extremely generous and donated substantially to the Search and Rescue Mission. However, it is inefficient to scramble for funding after a crisis occurs. Time and speed are critical. Money must be available so we can respond to an emergency quickly.

Moving Forward

- It is not enough to simply make recommendations. I want to see the people in Tulita take action. *To ensure that this happens I recommend that the Hamlet establish an Emergency Fund.*
- The money should be kept in an escrow account. It can accrue interest in a Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC). The funds will only be used during a legitimate crisis.
- During an emergency the Hamlet council and Mayor can vote on how best to distribute the funds. For example, if there is a large fire the funds could be dispersed to the local fire department. Or in the case of last summer, the money could go to the volunteer Search & Rescue Mission.

Moving Forward

- There is an Emergency Response Team in Tulita. The Hamlet has a thorough emergency preparedness plan. When an emergency happens the Hamlet, RCMP, Fire Department and Health Centre are supposed to meet together. Together they form the Emergency Response Team and are guided by what is contained in the plan.
- ***I recommend that money be available to help fund additional training for the Emergency Response Team.*** It is critical that this team operate cohesively. We need training money to help ensure that the team is truly prepared.

Conclusions

- Tulita suffered a horrible loss this past summer. Although I am sad over what happened, I am proud of how the people here banded together. I am also very grateful for the support we received from our neighbours and friends from the USA and rest of the country.
- Now that some time has passed it is important for us to learn from this experience so that we can build a better community.
- Establishing an emergency fund and providing first responders with much need training are two things we can do to that will greatly help us. We should hope for the best but prepare for the worst. By being prepared and vigilant we will be doing our part to ensure that are community remains safe, healthy and most of all happy.