



A PLACE OF VISIONS AND DREAMS

April 7, 2020

We encourage the Associations to forward this letter to your members.

To the McGregor Bay Association and Bay of Island Association and their members:

Dear Cottagers,

Cottaging is a valuable industry in our region. However at this time, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, exceptional measures are in place in Canada, Ontario and in our community at Whitefish River First Nation. We ask for your understanding, respect and cooperation as we deal with this unprecedented situation.

I will get quickly to the point: We are asking you not to come to cottage country right now. We are asking you not to come to Rainbow Country, the village of Birch Island on our reserve, and the surrounding area.

We are not alone in making this request to you. Other political leaders and national public health leaders are calling for cottagers to remain in their permanent homes for the time being:

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, March 27, 2020: ***"If you have a cottage please don't come up to the cottage. If a bunch head up there the retail stores don't have the vital essentials, and also the hospitals, they don't have the vital capacity that we do in urban settings."***¹

Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, March 29, 2020: ***"Urban dwellers should avoid heading to rural properties, as these places have less capacity to manage COVID-19."***²

There are many practical difficulties you will already find present here. Travel restrictions are in place at the border. Further to a by-law declaring a state of emergency on our First Nation, the marinas and boat launches on our reserve are now closed to non-members of our First Nation until further notice, and our cottage tenants are required to return/remain at their homes.

Unfortunately, things are likely to get worse before they get better. Services in our community and those nearby are reduced to essential services. Across Ontario, non-essential businesses

¹ <https://globalnews.ca/news/6742303/coronavirus-ontario-cottages-rural-properties-covid-19/>

² <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/don-t-head-to-your-cottage-to-wait-out-covid-19-pandemic-canadians-warned-1.4873267>

WHITEFISH RIVER FIRST NATION

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have been ordered to close their doors. Our stores, clinics, hospitals and other critical services are not well equipped to handle an influx of people at this difficult time.

Your actions now could very well save another person's life, or even your own.

The territory of Whitefish River First Nation remains a beautiful and friendly place. These unusual circumstances will pass. We look forward to seeing you again soon when the state of emergency has cleared.

Miigwetch,



Chief Franklin Paibomsai
On Behalf of Whitefish River First Nation Chief & Council



c.c: Kathleen Migwanabi, WRFN Lands Manager
Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford
Honorable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
UCCM Anishnaabe Police Services
John Woodrooffe, President – McGregor Bay Association
Sheila Williams & Cesta Bjornson, Co-Presidents – Bays of Islands Community Association

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