

Housing Update – September 2019

The Housing Committee recently met with a number of lot holders who are making significant advancement regarding clearing their lots and/or erecting a building. During these discussions, great feedback along with some questions were received which we would like to share. Please find the following Q & A.

Question: Does all construction on reserve need to follow the Ontario Building Code (OBC) or National Building Code (NBC)? Can individuals build however they want to on reserve land?

Answer: The Housing Policy and By-Laws require all construction to be compliant with both OBC and NBC. They were created to ensure the safety of not only the builders but also the community as a whole. Building structures non-compliant to either OBC or NBC would most likely create an unsafe environment which puts all at risk within a community. For instance, using a stove for cooking or heating which is non-complaint to OBC can create a fire hazard not only for the individual but for the community as a whole. All lot owners signed a Residential Lot Agreement, agreeing to abide by the approved Housing Policy and By-laws.

Question: In order to fulfill the Inspection Requirements Checklist, all inspections must be in accordance with the Ontario Building Code and completed by a designated inspector. Who is the designated inspector?

Answer: Bimose Tribal Council provides support at no cost to its member First Nations, in regards to compliance inspections on new construction, additions and renovations for each of the following stages: Plan Evaluations; Energy Evaluations; Site Development; Foundation; Framing; Plumbing; Blower Door Testing; Insulation/Vapor Barrier; Final Inspection; other (as required). As the First Nation has officially requested that Bimose Tribal Council be an advisory to the Housing Committee, Bimose will be the primary contact for all inspections and a representative of Bimose will sign off on the Inspection Checklist on behalf of the First Nation.

The contact at Bimose is Chris Price – Technical Services Officer, 807.468.5551, or cprice@bimose.ca. He assures us that he is happy to assist all of our members and it is critical that all new and current builders contact him and remain in contact during all of the construction phases as Bimose will represent the FN regarding the inspections. Although the inspections are a free service offered by Bimose to the FN / membership, it is not required that you use Bimose's Inspector and anyone choosing to hire their own inspector may do so. However a copy of their inspector's credentials, along with any documentation to support the completion of an inspection must be provided to Bimose Tribal Council as they are working on behalf of the FN as an advisory service to the Housing Committee.

Question: The Marine Cable bringing Hydro to our reserve is nearing completion. When can we expect that utility to become available to the residential area?

Answer: It has been rumored that the construction of hydro lines to homes will begin next fall. While the First Nation is making great progress in this area, we cannot confirm at this time that those will be the timelines. This first phase of bringing the Marine Cable is nearing completion. We have been working on proposals that will allow for funding of Phase two of this project, which will focus on bringing the lines past the Community Complex and down to the residential lots/area. We will notify the membership when Phase Two has been accepted and approved for funding.

When it comes time to connecting your home to hydro, if you choose to use hydro, it is imperative that the home owner have an Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) Certificate of Inspection completed in order to connect. Any home without this ESA Certification cannot be connected according to Ontario Electrical Safety Code which is followed by Hydro One. For more information, we refer you to Bimose Tribal Council.

Question: When are wells drilled, waterlines installed, and septic systems placed on lots?

Answer: In order to have a well drilled on a lot, all individuals must clear their lots to ensure that the necessary equipment can safely enter the lot and follow through with the drilling process. Waterlines from the well to the home must be installed prior to the foundation being built and the septic tank must be placed in accordance to the OBC standard. Therefore, it is imperative that each individual member building on a lot, complete a site development plan either with/or at minimum have their plans reviewed by Bimose Tribal Council. This will allow for the optimal placement of the well, waterlines and septic tank.

Question: Why haven't the Certificates of Occupation been issued?

Answer: We encountered delays in the finalization of the National Survey of the lots which is required by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) along with a Band Council Resolution (BCR) to issue a Certificate of Occupation. We are currently working on submitting the needed documents and you can expect to have a Certificate of Occupation for your surveyed lots once ISC has completed their processing. As indicated in the Housing Policy, the Certificate of Occupation is effective for two years and the First Nation has agreed to extend this time period for an additional two years if needed to complete construction of your home or cottage. This time frame will not begin until the date of the Certificate of Occupation has been issued by ISC.

Question: Will re-possession of lots without a Certification of Occupation occur during this time period?

Answer: The First Nation is committed to the re-establishment of its community and is sincerely grateful to all who are pioneering the repatriation of our lands. With this comes a commitment to work with all who are building and under no circumstances, while construction is in progress or the intent of construction while waiting for the formal issuance of a Certificate of Occupation, will a lot be re-possessioned by Council.

Question: Our lot number sign is numbered incorrectly. Will this have any effect?

Answer: We now have the final survey, and some revised lot allocation letters may need to be re-issued. The Housing Committee will contact you, if you are affected, to arrange re-issuance of the letter for signing with the proper lot number stated. This is a formality, as no lot will be reassigned to another individual.

Question: Can we allow our pets to roam loose?

Answer: According to our Animal and Pet By-Law all domestic animals must be securely contained on their owner's property. And any dog while outside and not under the effective control of leash held by a competent person in urbanized areas or under the immediate care and effective control of a responsible and competent person in rural areas, must be kept in an enclosure in the backyard (penned up) or tethered on a proper leash. We note that some people have allergies or do not feel safe around other people's animals/pets. Please ensure that your pets are secured at all times.

Question: How close can we cut to lot boundaries?

Answer: Although the Housing Committee did not identify a Green Buffer between properties, which is basically a non-cut zone on the property line, we ask that all neighbors respect each other's boundary lines and follow a good neighbor practice by not cutting directly on the lot boundary lines.

Question: Can we enter another person's lot?

Answer: In order to enter another person's personal property, we ask that permission be obtained prior to entry. Although you may be fine with others walking on your property, not everyone is in agreement with this approach, therefore a violation of their right and considered to be trespassing. We remind everyone that all individuals should be invited prior to entering another person's property.

Question: Do we have a Brush Dump Site?

Answer: Signs are being ordered for the "brush only" dump site which will be clearly identifiable. If you have any questions on this location, please contact either Chris Price at Bimose or a member of the Housing Committee so they can show you the location.

Question: Do we have a Garbage Dump Site?

Answer: No we do not. We ask that everyone continue to follow safe practices with garbage disposal by bringing it back with you to town, when leaving the land base as we do not have a garbage dump site and any burning of garbage can create dangerous toxins in the air. Safety is of the highest priority here and we cannot take any chances on a fire getting out of control, or wild animals such as bears, wolves, etc., being enticed to your property due to accumulating garbage. Note: Please take all precautions when cleaning and disposing of all waste from fish, deer or moose.

Question: Can we access gravel from the gravel pit located before the reserve boundary at Mays Bay?

Answer: The gravel in the pit located on the reserve boundary is available for sale. As we do not have a scale to weigh any gravel sold, it will be sold at fair market value by the yard. Should you wish to purchase Grade A gravel we ask that you contact Band Administrator, Quentin Snider by leaving a message at the band office. Other grades of gravel, that are located at various construction sites on reserve, may be available at little to no cost to the homeowners.

Question: What additional measures are being taken for community safety?

Answer: Additional signage is being ordered to identify safe speed limits on interior roads for the safety of children and local traffic. We have also ordered additional signs for the "Brush Only Dump Site" to avoid burning of brush in an unsafe environment and a "No Trespassing" sign has been ordered for the reserve boundary. We encourage our members who are building and or clearing their lots to be mindful of "unannounced or unexpected visitors" and to report any suspicious activity to either a member of Chief and Council or Housing Committee. There is a lot of activity occurring on our lands, and people are naturally interested in what is happening. We need to take all precautions when it comes to the safety of our families and possessions.

Question: When and how will the naming of interior roads happen?

Answer: No date has been set as of yet, but we ask you to watch for any future posting on the LDMLFN Website requesting membership for their submission(s) regarding potential names for interior roads.

Question: Will the interior and main roads be upgraded?

Answer: The First Nation upgraded its main access road into the community last year. It is a road that we are very proud of. The work was done by a company which is owned by one of our band members, and many of our members were employed at that time. We are currently in the early stages in the development of our reserve lands. Therefore we ask everyone to use our roads accordingly. For example, if there is a sharp curve or narrowness in the road, we ask that you drive appropriately and slow down. We have come a long way in a short period of time. We thank everyone for their co-operation in ensuring that the safety of their vehicle, occupants, and fellow drivers is respected and noted at all times.

Question: What are our Emergency Procedures (Fire, Ambulance and Police)?

Answer: We would like to remind everyone, that the First Nation is limited in its ability at this point to provide these services. We remind and refer everyone to the Essential Services Waiver that members acknowledged and where we identified risks involved in building in an un-established community, which is the same for undesignated townships were many individuals own cottages and camps. Although we are investigating various options for these services, we are currently unable to provide such services and the nearest available fire, ambulance and police service are located in either Upsala or Thunder Bay.

We would also like to note that for insurance purposes, some individuals have taken the initiative to acquire a water pump to protect their own property with access to the lake water. It has also come to our attention, that although not everyone has cell access on their lots, cell service can be accessed on the last lot at the end of road or on the hill near the complex. Finally, your council is in discussions with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) regarding potential funding of a service agreement. In the mean time and until this is in place, any emergency service being called to the reserve must be done through a member of Chief and Council. For any/all emergencies please contact the above either through the Band Office or through the employees working at the Complex.

Once again, for those that we have met with, we thank you for your feedback and input.

For those lot holders that have not met with the Housing Committee, we will contact you to set up a time at which we would like to touch base with you and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely, Your Housing Committee

Jackie Peters, Councillor Tracy Morrison, Councillor Carmel Zoccole, Mark Sawdo and Tom Lebel