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NEWS Briefs

Territorial shake-up

Numerous changes to the territorial government's senior staff were announced on May 20 by Premier Bob McLeod.

Staff changes include the appointment of new deputy ministers Sylvia Haener to Education, Culture and Employment, Martin Goldney to Justice and Mike Aumond to the Department of Executive. Aumond will also be the new secretary to cabinet.

David Stewart will become secretary to the financial management board as well as deputy minister of Finance.

Tom Jensen has been appointed deputy minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment; Willard Hagen is deputy minister of Lands and Shaleen Woodward is acting deputy minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations.

Clubhouse manager sought

Seven Spruce Golf Course in Fort Simpson is on the hunt for a clubhouse manager, according to a community notice posted to social media.

On May 11, the club elected its new executive, which includes Kele Antoine as president, Roger Pilling as vice-president, Caitlin Blyth as treasurer and Hilda Antoine as secretary.

Currently, the club is in the process of hiring staff and renovating the clubhouse.

School carnival moves forward

Bompas Elementary School has transformed its spring concert into a carnival which was set to kick off May 25 at the arena at 6 p.m.

According to a note sent out by principal Kelley Andrews-Klein on May 20, the carnival would include activities for all ages, such as face painting, bouncy castles, a talent show, games and a gallery to showcase the work of students.

Snacks were also to be available for purchase.

On Eagle's Wings dinner

There will be a dinner on May 28 in celebration of On Eagle's Wings North, an ecumenical Christian ministry.

The dinner will take place in Fort Simpson at Calvary Chapel.

Trade show comes to town

Six businesses from Hay River will be hosting the Deh Cho Sales Event in Fort Simpson on May 28. The event runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the recreation centre and will bring in representatives from Aurora Ford, GL Workwear, Weslean Northern Sales Ltd., La Dee Dah Boutique, Monster Recreation Products and MSS Ltd.



April Hudson/NNSI photo

The mountains in Nahanni Butte. The community is looking at establishing a wellness camp for youth in the mountains depending on the fate of an all-season road to Prairie Creek Mine.

All-season road could pave way to wellness

Nahanni Butte considers wellness camp in park

by April Hudson
Northern News Services
Tthenaago/Nahanni Butte

A lack of response from the federal government is not deterring Nahanni Butte's chief and council from pursuing a wellness camp for the region, which could be established in the Nahanni National Park Reserve.

Chief Peter Marcellais said the community wants to negotiate an Impact and Benefits Agreement with Parks Canada for infrastructure investment in Nahanni National Park.

On Jan. 22, Marcellais sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressing the band's desire to meet with government representatives regarding "the timely need for investment in park infrastructure, more specifically, the use of the Nahanni National Park Reserve to establish and promote community led projects such as the establishment of cultural wellness centres."

The band followed that letter up on March 21 with an e-mail to NWT MP Michael McLeod, asking McLeod to find out if Trudeau had received their letter.

When contacted for comment, McLeod said he has contacted the Prime Minister's Office and is waiting for a response.

McLeod said Impact and Benefits Agreements are commonly signed with companies, not with governments.

"I don't know what the precedent is in terms of dealing with Parks Canada. I think there's room for some type of arrangement," he said.

"Whether they call it an Impact and Benefits Agreement, I'm not sure ... but in terms of a Parks

(Canada) agreement, I think that in itself has a lot of precedence in other areas."

McLeod said the proposed cultural wellness centre could find funding under a new government social infrastructure program, although criteria for that funding is still being established.

"I totally expect we'd be able to accommodate it ... We're really working hard to try to get programs that encourage wellness, so this would be a good fit," he said.

All-season road could get support

The band already has an Impact and Benefits Agreement with Canadian Zinc Corporation, which is responsible for Prairie Creek Mine. That agreement was signed in 2011.

The mine is accessed through a winter road but Canadian Zinc is in the process of applying to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board for permission to build an all-weather road.

Marcellais said Nahanni Butte would likely support the application but first the band would need to see more benefits from Canadian Zinc.

On March 17, Nahanni Butte passed a band council resolution authorizing Marcellais and band councillors to negotiate additions to its Impact and Benefits Agreement with Canadian Zinc Corporation to reflect the building of the proposed all-season road.

"We need more benefits going here," Marcellais said.

In particular, he said the band

will be seeking funding toward its proposed wellness camp which could be established for youth between the mountains.

"One idea is that it could be for the whole Deh Cho region," he said. "It's not just us, it would be good for the whole region."

Alan Taylor, Canadian Zinc's chief operating officer and vice-president of exploration, told the *Deh Cho Drum* the mining company is in support of the idea and has been consulting with the band over the past two months.

"We're always in favour of trying to support the community in relation to (our) site activities," Taylor said. "(The all-season road application) has a direct impact on the community, and it's our view that we should sit down with them and see how we can provide some consideration to helping them out further ... Nahanni Butte is the closest

community to the project and while we're somewhat revenue-starved right now, with the proposed operation of the mine, it would help support such ventures as youth camps and supports for the community."

The band is looking at other areas of funding as well, through the GNWT.

Marcellais said if they get enough funding the camp could even run year-round, if demand called for it.

During a community meeting with Nahendeh MLA Shane Thompson on May 17, Marcellais and the band council laid out their

plan for the youth wellness centre.

Thompson said they discussed how to enhance and develop a cultural site in the community that already has cabins in place, as well as the proposed wellness centre.

He added he has already been in touch with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and will be doing the same with the Department Justice, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the Department of Health and Social Services to see if there is funding available for the current cultural site.

As for the proposed site in the park reserve, Thompson said he was in support of the idea.

"I think this is a very positive approach, and I think if industry and the federal and territorial governments are able to work together, it would be a camp developed and made by youth for youth. That's really unique," he said.

"That speaks volumes about their commitment to youth."

Commitment to community engagement

In order to ensure the entire community has a say in the band's position on the all-season road and the Impact and Benefits Agreements, Marcellais said the band council has been mailing out notifications to all community members.

"Everyone knows what's going on," he said.

The band council has also been seeking approval from community elders, who are signing off on band resolutions.

Marcellais said the youth wellness camp will be brought up for discussion at the upcoming Dehcho Assembly in Jean Marie River.

"It would be good for the whole region."

Peter Marcellais