

CHIEF'S MESSAGE updated 4/22/20

Dear Tribal Citizens,

As always, I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and healthy. I want to begin by acknowledging the loss of three of our citizens recently and to offer my sincere condolences. The loss of a loved one is always difficult, but to experience this during a crisis such as this pandemic is even more heartbreaking. While



we cannot gather yet as a community to celebrate their lives, we will have a ceremony at the appropriate time. My thoughts and prayers are with their families and our community.

Since my last update, the numbers of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Maine continue to climb. There are now 888 people who have been diagnosed, and unfortunately, 36 people have died. The number of confirmed cases in Penobscot County also continues to rise and now stands at 46.

I share these numbers to emphasize the critical need for us to remain steadfast in our commitment to adhering to the Tribal workplace and community restrictions; these measures the Tribe has instituted are for the safety and protection of the community. Despite our sincere hope that we would be able to begin to lift these restrictions by the end of April, it is clear that the Nation must, in fact, extend them until **May 15th**. This means we must continue to **Shelter in Place** and continue to **prohibit visitation** by non-members. This decision is consistent with the State CDC recommendation and is an exercise of tribal sovereignty, we will take all necessary actions to protect the members of our community. We are continually gathering information and monitoring this situation, we will continue to make adjustments to meet the needs of our community and Tribe, and I will continue to provide regular updates.

I understand the frustration; we are all feeling it, but it is important that we stay focused and continue to follow the community restrictions to protect the health and safety of our community, especially our most vulnerable elders and those with health issues. It is only through our own combined efforts that we will succeed in protecting our community. Although no one knows when this pandemic will end, we know it will end; and we are already making plans about what safety practices we will continue to follow when we lift the Tribal workplace and community restrictions.

I want to acknowledge and thank our innovative and dedicated team of staff, partners and volunteers. Through their hard work and dedication, the Nation has been able to obtain onsite testing equipment so we can test people exhibiting symptoms quickly and based on our own priority system. Although we are limited in the number of tests we can run, having this ability will help us manage this pandemic more effectively, hats off to our amazing clinic staff. Also, our Emergency Management Team identified the need for us to be prepared to provide care in alternative sites outside of the clinic; they worked with the clinic to coordinate with FEMA and obtain approval for two sites.

Further, we have successfully obtained additional personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to help keep our workers and people safe and enough supplies for a well-stocked food pantry. Through our advocacy efforts and the hard work of our staff in finance, the Tribe has recovered a significant amount of resources, and we expect to recoup more during the coming weeks. I wanted to share just a few examples of the incredible work and accomplishments of our entire team in keeping our community safe, especially our public safety, social services, and health clinic staff.

Thank you for remaining patient and diligent in following community restrictions for the health and safety of us all. Remember you are not alone; we are in this together. Thank you and I wish you all the very best.

In Brotherhood,

Kirk E. Francis, Chief

Penobscot Nation