

Daily Updates

Contact tracing and messages from FDL leadership

By Zachary N. Dunaiski

During this pandemic, we have done our part to keep the virus from spreading onto the Reservation, and that is in part to the hard work that all of us do. This week, Chairman Kevin Dupuis, Sr.; Sam Moose, FDL Director of Human Services; and Dr. Charity Reynolds, FDL Medical Director delivered a PSA via Facebook live to update the community on COVID-19.

The Reservation Business Committee (RBC), FDL's Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEPs) team, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) have done so much to keep us safe. The chairman and the two directors noted that, but stated that it was the work of the employees and the community that have kept us healthy. Dr. Reynolds began by letting the community know about a common phrase that has come up lately around COVID-19 discussions.

"We want you guys to know about contact tracing. You've probably heard a lot about it in the news, but what that means is that if somebody has COVID-19, they were exposed, they test positive, everyone around them that has had close contact with them less than six feet for more than 10 minutes, that's a close contact," Dr. Reynolds said during the PSA in the council chambers. "You really should tell them 'hey I've tested positive for COVID-19.' Those are people in your

household, your family members, your loved ones, those that you live with, your roommates, so if you were exposed to someone with COVID-19 and you were a close contact of them, let your other family members know."

It's that communication with those we've been within six feet of that can help them to quarantine before they get close to others while they are asymptomatic which will help slow the spread as Dr. Reynolds said, encouraging those who think they may have contracted COVID-19 to be patient while they wait for their results.

"The reason for that is that they could have also been exposed and to let them know to stay home," Dr. Reynolds said. "Please stay home and wait for those test results. We're seeing a high number in our state, particularly those ages 20-29, so we ask that you please be careful, that you reduce your risk, and that you only go out for essentials."

Director Moose also addressed FDL's actions toward the virus, and how we've done our part to make sure FDL employees don't have to decide between work and possibly infecting others.

"I think another thing that the Tribe did with regards to really communicating with staff about being able to stay home. The Tribe had passed a couple of ordinances and policies with regards to leave, that gives an opportunity to be more flexible, make sure staff understands

that when you're sick, not feeling well, or just have a couple of questions about COVID, potential contact with someone who is COVID positive, there is additional leave for you to stay home," Moose said to remind employees. "The Tribe has done a really good job creating a policy that offers extended leave for staff to stay home when you're sick. I think it's a really proactive step and just reminding our staff that we're allowing you to, or we're thinking about your needs when you're needing to make those decisions and to help us with regards to keeping our work places safe."

By keeping people who have COVID-19, or think they have it and aren't currently showing any symptoms, that flexibility is key to slowing the spread. Moose also discussed that the most important way for us to slow the spread is personal protective equipment (PPE) and that those in need should contact the EOC.

"Our team has really been monitoring our PPE supplies. We're working closely with the EOC for supplies for other divisions and those within the community," Moose said. "We definitely want you to continue to reach out to either our PHEPs team or the EOC if you have a question, if you need cleaning products or supplies."

These three also discussed that while they've been watching the state, the nation, and others' plans closely, FDL continues to tailor our plans

to meet the needs of the FDL community.

While they know the plan is important, none of it matters if the community doesn't do its part as the chairman discussed.

"I hope that everyone is taking this as seriously as we are. It's imperative that we wear our masks, it is imperative that we maintain that social distancing, and cleaning and washing our hands whenever we possibly can," Chairman Dupuis said. "To where we are at in today's day-in-age I know that this is the first pandemic that I have ever been in and not everything is going to be perfect."

We are all learning how best to keep ourselves safe and to slow the virus. The plans change as we learn more. What was right at the beginning of this pandemic may not be right now, so our plans cannot ever be perfect. For example, at the beginning, the CDC didn't recommend masks unless you were sick. The chairman addressed those challenges and reminded everyone to stay vigilant.

"There are going to be things that are going to be wrong, things that aren't going to be right, but we're trying to do the best that we can," Chairman Dupuis said in the address. "We have to give a shout out to the employees who've done the work, and done the work from home, and not just the employees, but the community as well. To see them, when I do [see them] outside, to see

them wearing a mask makes me feel good that they're trying to protect us."

Keeping COVID-19 from spreading isn't just about any one of us, the collective community, nation, and world all need to be on the same page with the medical professionals to stop it. The chairman pointed that out, and thanked everyone for doing their part.

"It's not just about the individual. I wear a mask so that if I get infected and I don't know it, then I don't infect somebody else," Chairman Dupuis said. "I know the possibility of me getting sick is there, but it's not about me, I care about everybody out there."

With the warm weather, people have begun to get outside more, where the virus doesn't spread as easily, but the danger remains there. The chairman spoke about that with what he saw out on the lakes lately.

"Social distancing went out the window," Chairman Dupuis said of one instance when he was out. "I know that everybody wants to get out of their house and have barbecues, but please practice social distancing, wear the mask, go into the stores and have a couple of masks with you, and if you don't have one, you can get those supplies from the EOC."

If you are in need of a mask, please contact the EOC at (218) 878-7175.