WHAT'S INSIDE:

Message from Mary Carlson Executive Director                             2
NITHA Annual General Meeting                                               3
Smoking Cessation Mobile App                                               4
NITHA Janitorial Training Conference                                       5
The Gift of Giving and Farewell                                             5
Physical Activity Bingo                                                     6
NITHA Health Careers Scholarship Fund                                     7
World TB Day                                                               8
The Refrigerator                                                           8
A Message from NITHA Mental Health: Seek CALM to Reduce Stress             9

Cover Photo: Elders, guest speakers, students, and NITHA and Partner staff hold up banners during the Smoking Cessation Mobile App Launch. (Story on Page 4)

Teco's Journey to Wellness
Greetings to you on behalf of our Leadership, NITHA Board of Chiefs, Executive Council, Elders and staff of the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc. Our 2nd Edition of the NITHA Health Express provides a glance of some of the key activities NITHA took part in during the last quarter; held a successful AGM, launched a Smoking Cessation App, hosted training events, as well as, came together as a staff to raise funds for a deserving family at Christmas. These are only a few of the many activities we coordinated.

With spring in the air, it seems only natural that people tend to move in the direction of healthier eating in anticipation of summer. This next quarter, one of the areas NITHA will focus on is Nutrition and incorporating exercise into our daily lives. Be sure to read “Teco Bird’s Journey to Wellness” the inspirational story that proves hard work and dedication to living a healthy lifestyle improves quality of life, not only to the individual but to their loved ones.

I give to you, the 2nd Edition of the NITHA Health Express.

World TB Day is March 24th

The theme of this year’s World TB Day is:

"Unite to End TB"

World TB Day, falling on March 24th each year, is designed to build public awareness that tuberculosis today remains an epidemic in much of the world, causing the deaths of nearly one-and-a-half million people each year, mostly in developing countries. It commemorates the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch astounded the scientific community by announcing that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus. At the time of Koch's announcement in Berlin, TB was raging through Europe and the Americas, causing the death of one out of every seven people. Koch’s discovery opened the way towards diagnosing and curing TB.

In some NITHA Communities Tuberculosis is still a significant problem. We are working hard with these communities and other TB stakeholders in the fight to END TB in Northern Saskatchewan First Nations. Stay tuned… More information will be coming before the big day!
NITHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

October 20th, 2016 provided another opportunity for NITHA board of chiefs, staff, and community members to attend the NITHA Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM began with a pipe ceremony led by Elder Mike Daniels, an Elder from Sturgeon Lake. The pipe ceremony prepared the area and the participants for a day filled with wisdom from the elders, leaders, and community members, as well as, celebrations of past year’s achievements and setting goals for the future.

The Master of Ceremonies, Meadow Lake Tribal Council Vice Chief Dwayne Lasas, led the proceedings for the day and provided comic relief during the meeting. NITHA Executive Director introduced NITHA staff and provided an overview of the NITHA structure and its role to the Partners (Prince Albert Grand Council, Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band). Reports on the Public Health Unit and the Community Services Department were then given by the Manager of Public Health, Jackie Valois and the Manger of Community Services, Val Fosseneuve, respectively.

This meeting was a great opportunity for attendees to bring up issues that they would like to see addressed by NITHA. Throughout the discussions, it was clear that a children/youth strategy was needed to address some issues in the north. NITHA assured attendees that it will fast track initiatives to strategize on children and youth.

Also during the meeting, 20 NITHA communities were recognized for achieving an immunization rate of 90% and above for children 12 months and under. NITHA MHO Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka and Public Health Nurse Carrie Gardipy awarded the plaques to the communities courtesy of NITHA. The awards will continue on an annual basis.

The recipient communities were as follows:

- Black Lake
- Fond du lac
- Grandmothers Bay
- Hall Lake
- Kitsaki
- Birch Narrows
- Sucker River
- English River
- Flying Dust
- Waterhen
- Cumberland House
- Hatchet Lake
- Montreal Lake
- Red Earth
- Shoal Lake
- Wahpeton
- Deschambault
- Pelican Narrows
- South End
- Stanley Mission

Shoal Lake Community Health Nurse, Georgina Quinney (2nd from the left), and Shoal Lake Health Director, Ruth Bear (right) receive plaque from NITHA Medical Health Officer Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka (2nd from the right) as NITHA Public Health Nurse, Carrie Gardipy looks on.
SMOKING CESSATION MOBILE APP LAUNCH

NITHA has a new tool to help you quit smoking. The Breathe Easy Mobile App (Breathe Easy) (Picture), was developed by the Northern Saskatchewan Breathe Easy which is a commercial tobacco reduction initiative implemented by NITHA and Partners. The app project was funded by Health Canada through the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy.

This smart phone app provides basic information about commercial and traditional uses of tobacco. It also pairs tips and methods for quitting with a fitness and health tracker to help guide users on their path to kicking the habit. The app is available for free download at iTunes and Android app stores.

Use this app to:

- Learn basic facts about tobacco
- Learn about benefits of quitting
- Develop your quit plan
- View your monthly progress
- Learn about strategies for quitting
- Calculate how much you will be saving by quitting
- Fill out a weekly report

The app was officially launched on Friday, October 21st 2016, at the Travelodge Hotel with attendance from select youth from the NITHA communities. The guest speaker for the day was Michael Linklater, who is currently ranked the number one 3 on 3 basketball player in North America. Michael is from Thunderchild First Nations in Saskatchewan. He provided insight to the youth on how culture shaped his life.

“I urge you to listen to your elders not because they are always right, but because they have enough experience of being wrong” said Mike.

Also in attendance was Marcia Mirasty a motivational speaker from MLTC and 5 elders from NITHA communities who delivered powerful motivational speeches and shared their stories about tobacco. A total of 70 people were in attendance.

The app launch provided an avenue to teach youth of the risks associated with commercial tobacco while passing information on the traditional cultural uses of tobacco.

Download the app today and start your journey towards quitting commercial tobacco!

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Guest Speaker Michael Linklater
NITHA Janitorial Training Conference

On January 25 and 26, 2017, NITHA held its annual training Conference for janitorial staff in Partner Communities. The focus of the training was Infection Control. This year 26 attendees participated in the conference representing all 4 Partners. Health Canada created a new educational package for Janitorial Cleaning in the latter part of 2016 and was used for this training. The new training is very easy to follow with lots of videos and real life pictures and scenarios. The new program was well received and the participants enjoyed the many learning activities.

Presentations from two reputable chemical companies, Enviroway and HVL (formerly ZEP) were included in the training. The participants had an opportunity to learn about new products and ask questions about facility specific concerns. Time was spent discussing the importance of proper dilution of chemicals to ensure communities were sanitizing properly but also not wasting chemicals. The simplest way to ensure this, is for facilities to have a wall mounted dispenser that pre measures all chemicals so human error cannot occur.

The conference was led by Adeshola Abati, Infection Control Advisor and Treena Cottingham, Environmental Health Advisor for NITHA. Treena and Adeshola appreciated the assistance and expertise of Charles Bighead, the NITHA eHealth Advisor and Jeanette Villeneuve the Public Health Units' and the Community Services Unit Program Administrative Assistance, without whom the conference would not have been a success.

The Gift of Giving

Each year, around the holiday season, NITHA employees come together to help a family in need. This year, NITHA staff put together a Christmas Hamper and presented it to Neil Cook on December 14, 2016. Mr. Cook was nominated by the Queen Mary School as he is the main caregiver for his grandchildren and adult children in the home. Despite his health issues, he manages to walk his grandson to school regardless of the temperature.

Mr. Cook was very happy to receive the Christmas Hamper and gift certificates from NITHA.

Farewell

NITHA would like to bid farewell to the following staff: Jackie Valois and Ali Mirzaei. Both Jackie and Ali left NITHA to pursue further education. NITHA would like to wish them all the best in their future endeavours.
TECO’S JOURNEY TO WELLNESS

Are you able to walk comfortably for 50 metres? Do you enjoy sitting in a booth at a restaurant? Can you fit in an airplane seat on any plane? These may seem like normal activities to you but they were dreams to Teco Bird at some point in his life.

Teco had struggled with weight issues most of his life and about three years ago on September 11, 2013, he decided enough was enough. His first step was to see a doctor to determine his suitability for bariatric surgery. At the time Teco weighed 543.7 pounds, with a Body Mass Index of 74. Upon visiting the doctor, he was ironically informed that he was too obese to qualify for bariatric surgery. He needed to be at a BMI of 70 in order to qualify for this surgery. This motivated Teco to begin a journey that has changed his life in many ways.

Teco was born in La Ronge and was raised by his grandparents, Hector and Virginia Bird on the trapline about 32 kilometres south of La Ronge. Growing up on the trapline, he was always active. Although he was an overweight child growing up, he gradually developed poor eating and physical activity habits until his teenage years. His diet consisted of high carb foods and junk food. Physical activity was just another phrase found in dictionaries and on the internet. He did not own a home weigh scale that was able to weigh him (most home scales only go to 260 pounds) and so when he jumped on a scale at the doctor’s office, he was shocked to find out how much he actually weighed. He lived a poor quality of life. He was embarrassed and did not like the fact that he could not even qualify for surgery. He also did not like the fact that he could not fly as he could not fit into a normal airplane seat, he could not sit in a booth at a restaurant or any typical chairs, he even struggled to walk from his car to the office (approximately 50 metres), he could not enjoy normal things like camping as he was dependant on a sleep apnea machine and needed a steady power supply in order to breathe properly at night. He could not even do regular activities with his children. He was ultimately afraid that if he was to die, his family and friends would not be able to carry his coffin. These reasons inspired Teco to begin a wellness journey that has seen him lose 273 pounds in two years.

Life to get to where he is has not been easy. He used to eat lots of processed food, high Carb foods, and no breakfast (If you skip breakfast, you are likely to compensate with high sugar and fatty snacks during the day). He started his journey by making small changes in his life. The first thing he did was meet with his family and discuss changes they would all be making together. Next was to get rid of all the junk food in the home and introduce new healthier eating habits for the family. In addition, he started eating three meals a day and read food labels from all the foods he bought. On the other hand, he was highly sedentary and watched television or played video games. He decided to embark on an exercise journey that may seem simple to many but was not at all to Teco. His goal was to walk for a total of 15 minutes each day. The walk was done around his house and his neighbours (who happened to be his grandfather). He would walk in the evenings because he was embarrassed to have people view him when he exercised.

An example of Teco’s food log entry

“I put chairs around the houses so I could take a break whenever I couldn’t walk anymore as my back would have spasms from carrying all that weight. I was just tired of living the way I was and I did not want my family and friends to be unable to carry my coffin in case I passed away” said Teco.

In his first month exercising, Teco mentioned that he faced a number of obstacles that threatened to interfere with his journey.

“I pulled my calf muscle after the first week, then again one week later after stepping off a curb while waiting for my daughter at karate practice. I did not let this stop me or change my exercise routine. If I did, I wouldn’t have continued with my journey. My back was very sore for the first month of exercise but I kept on going. After a month I took two days off to rest, after that there was no pain in my back at all and it hasn’t come back since. I also had a backpack I used to carry sometimes while exercising. I called it the ‘Excuse Backpack’. This was for those days I did not feel like exercising. The backpack had items, such as, a poncho for cold days, mosquito masks and bug repellant for summer days, a water bottle, and a power bar in case hunger kicked in. Whenever I had an excuse not to exercise, I just reached for my backpack to eliminate those excuses.”
Changes started as early as the first week he lost 23 pounds and dropped his BMI from 74 to 70. He started a Facebook page he calls “Get Off Your Ass Diet” (https://www.facebook.com/tecosdiet/) to document his journey and help people who may be just like him who want to lose weight but do not know where to start. He made his weight loss journey interesting by having weekly competitions where he would give a t-shirt to any person who would guess his weight to the closest pound. This competition was open worldwide to whoever followed his journey.

He kept on improving every month and with that, he kept on adding a different exercise routine to his program. He also used an app, MyFitnessPal, to input his caloric consumption, as well as, caloric output. After two years, he had lost over 200 pounds through diet and exercise. He underwent bariatric surgery to keep his weight off as per the recommendation of the Canadian Obesity Network.

Teco mentions that the secret to his success has been making lifestyle changes, support from his family, the team of professionals at the Bariatric Clinic including nurses, a psychologist, dietitians, exercise therapists, and doctors and most of all the determination to get up and go on a daily basis. After being on his journey for two years, Teco is no longer dependant on his sleep apnea machine and no longer needs it to sleep.

Teco feels he has a new lease on life. Since he began his journey he mentions that he has increased confidence and feels great. He has been able to fly to Las Vegas and other places as can now fit in an airplane seat. He has the freedom to do many things including not worrying about where to sit in a restaurant or even doing things he has never done before like getting on to a rollercoaster and going on his first horse ride. His goal is to get to 243 pounds (300 pounds lost) and maintain it there.

“I am sharing this story because there may be someone going through what I went through and want to find out how to start losing weight or if it is possible. I am a testament that if you set a goal and decide to change your life, you can make that change. I was 543.7 pounds and I never believed I would get to 270 pounds. My goal is to lose a total of 300 pounds and maintain a healthy and active lifestyle for life. If I can inspire only one person, I would have done what I originally intended to do.”

Teco can now run steady for over an hour. His goal is to run a marathon within the next two years.

Although the exact numbers are unknown, obesity is a health concern in First Nation communities in northern Saskatchewan. As a leading cause of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, arthritis and cancer, the condition impacts those who have obesity, their families, neighbours, health practitioners and governments. Obesity however is not just a matter of what you eat and how much you exercise. It may be caused by a number of complex factors, such as, environment, genes, emotional health, lack of sleep, medical problems or medication. In Teco’s case, a combination of genetics, poor eating habits, and high levels of sedentary behaviour were the cause of his weight gain.

It is important to identify the cause of your weight gain. If it is as Teco, hopefully his story can inspire you to make a change in your life. It is never too late to start. If Teco can do it at 543 pounds, so can you!
The Active Communities Team of the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership has launched a winter physical activity challenge. The winter challenge termed “Physical Activity Bingo” started on January 30th, 2017 and will be running until March 27th, 2017.

### A little about the Physical Activity Bingo challenge:

Northern Saskatchewan community members of all ages are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities and to record their time spent being active on a bingo card. Participants who send in a picture or copy of their bingo card on or before March 27th will receive one prize entry for each completed line. The prizes include several pairs of brand new snow shoes, as well as, a selection of gift cards for purchasing clothing or equipment to support active living. A copy of one of the bingo cards is attached provided below. Print off the newsletter and start getting active! With the unpredictable weather, you want to complete the activities as soon as possible. Hurry, the snow may not last for long!

![Physical Activity Bingo Card](image)

### Bingo Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Go Dancing</th>
<th>Walk to Work or School</th>
<th>Play Hockey with Friends</th>
<th>Go Snowshoeing</th>
<th>Collect Firewood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Have a Snowball Fight with your Friends</td>
<td>Walk/Run your Dog</td>
<td>Use a Treadclimber/Elliptical Machine</td>
<td>Build a Snow Fort</td>
<td>Go Tobogganing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Sit-Ups, Push-Ups and Jumping Jacks</td>
<td>Do Squats, Plank and Run on the Spot</td>
<td>Do an Activity of your Choice with your Neighbour</td>
<td>Build a Snowman with your Children or Siblings</td>
<td>Go Cross-Country Skiing with Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk under the Northern Lights with a Partner</td>
<td>Lift Weights</td>
<td>Bundle up for an Outdoor Walk</td>
<td>Play Floor Hockey</td>
<td>Walk/Run on the Treadmill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pedal a Stationary Bike</td>
<td>Clean the House</td>
<td>Go Skating with your Kids</td>
<td>Go Hunting/Trapping</td>
<td>Shovel Snow</td>
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NITHA HEALTH CAREERS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The NITHA Health Careers Scholarship is awarded annually to students who are a band member of one of NITHA’s Partners: PBCN, LLRIB or a band member of one of the first nations belonging to MLTC or PAGC and who are pursuing a career in areas related to health. Successful applicants must be enrolled as a full-time student in a post-secondary health related program of study such as, but not limited to: nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, lab technology, physiotherapy, dietetics, nutrition, medicine, and health administration or public health policy. The program they are enrolled in must be a minimum of two (2) academic years in length. The amount of the scholarship awarded is $3,000.

In October 2016, Fifteen (15) applicants were the successful recipients. Congratulations and all the best to each recipient as they continue to move forward in achieving their goals.

The deadline for applications for the NITHA Health Careers Scholarship is September 30 of every calendar year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shannon Bear</th>
<th>Joy Caisse</th>
<th>Darcy Diachinsky</th>
<th>Mellisa Hardlotte</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBCN - Deschambeault Lake</td>
<td>LLRIB - Stanley Mission</td>
<td>MLTC - Buffalo River</td>
<td>LLRIB - La Ronge</td>
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<td>Program: BISW-MH&amp;A</td>
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<tr>
<th>Laura Hrdlicka</th>
<th>Rolanda Laliberte</th>
<th>Natasha Lemaigre</th>
<th>Brenda LePage</th>
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<td>PBCN - Sandy Bay</td>
<td>MLTC - Clearwater River</td>
<td>MLTC - English River</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Program: Practical Nursing</td>
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<th>Aaron McKenzie</th>
<th>Phillip Thomas McLeod</th>
<th>Rachel Merasty</th>
<th>Kristy Mirasty</th>
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<td>LLRIB – Stanley Mission</td>
<td>PBCN - Pelican Narrows</td>
<td>LLRIB – Stanley Mission</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Program: Mental Health &amp; Wellness</td>
<td>Program: BSc Nursing</td>
<td>Program: BSc Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<th>Megan Naytowhow</th>
<th>Marie Sanderson</th>
<th>Samantha Waditika</th>
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<td>PAGC – Little Red River</td>
<td>LLRIB – La Ronge</td>
<td>PAGC – Wahpeton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program: BSc Nursing</td>
<td>Program: BSc Nursing</td>
<td>Program: BAS – Health Studies</td>
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A MESSAGE FROM NITHA MENTAL HEALTH

Seek CALM to Reduce Stress

1. Breathe—normally—focus on breathing normally. Close your eyes, sit up straight, feet planted and connected to Mother Earth. Let thoughts go while you focus on the wonder of breathing.
2. Meditate—5 minutes of daily meditation (quiet and positive thinking) helps ‘heal the brain’ and will help us cope better with stress.
3. Reach Out—ASK for help to deal with stress, from positive friends and family & other support people. Do something with them or allow them to ‘talk you through it’ - look at a pep talk video.
4. Laugh—it really is the best medicine—start a laugh and watch how it lowers the stress – fake it – compete for best laugh…
5. Exercise—a little-any kind of movement adds ‘feel good’ chemicals- reduces stress which causes inflammation and other problems.
6. Listen To Music—good upbeat music is soothing and can lower blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety.
7. Be more Grateful—Keep a list or journal of things you feel grateful about. Add to lists/drawings often, and read them often.
8. Accept that you can’t control everything - Why give your valuable time or energy to those things, or those people you cannot control.
9. Staying Positive— Change negative thoughts or thinking into positive. We can’t control others but can control what thoughts we hold onto and which we let go of. Practice the positive. It’s a gift.
10. Do Something FUN—what things do you do to be happy? Find some of those things, start an old or new hobby, learn something, explore, be inspired, start a positive group or team, give yourself or someone else a ‘pep talk’. Enjoy your life.

The Refrigerator

Carol Udey, RD
Nutritionist

NITHA staff are getting to know more about fruits.

Every week we are introduced to a new fruit. We started at the letter A for Apple and will be progressing all the way to Z. The fruit may be fresh, canned, dried or juiced. The nutrient content is posted so we all can learn more about the nutritional value of each new fruit.

Every Monday the staff are anxiously awaiting what the new fruit will be. Many of the staff have not tried fruits like jackfruit and lychee fruit before.

There have been many comments about the various fruits; this one is slimy, or this one looks like a fish eye, or it was just simply delicious!

Exposing the staff to different fruits encourages them to continue to choose these or try new fruits when they go to the grocery store.

All it takes is to make food fun! Give it a try!

March is Nutrition Month!
March 15th is Dietitian Day!