

HEART LAKE FIRST NATION IS SITUATED APPROXIMATELY 220 KILOMETERS FROM EDMONTON, ALBERTA. SIGNATORY TO TREATY 6, AND AN AFFILIATE OF TRIBAL CHIEFS VENTURES TRIBAL COUNCIL, MEMBERS OF HEART LAKE FIRST NATION ARE OF MOSTLY CREE LINEAGE. THERE ARE AROUND 375 MEMBERS, WITH APPROXIMATELY 190 LIVING ON RESERVE. TRADITIONALLY, PEOPLES OF HEART LAKE LIVED OFF THE LAND, HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING AND GATHERING FOOD AS A MEANS OF LIVING AND A WAY OF LIFE. TODAY, COMMUNITY MEMBERS DO NOT RELY ON THIS FOR SURVIVAL, THOUGH TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS ARE STILL PRACTICED.

In the heart of it all, Heart Lake First Nation is situated in close proximity to oil sands operations and as a result, has responded proactively to the opportunities in the community's back yard. Heart Lake currently has an influx of anywhere from 16 to 20 firms, that vary in scale from small discussions to very large ones.

"We have an understanding of a good partnership and what makes it fit" Tony Bagga, Consultation Director for Heart Lake First Nation, explains when discussing Heart Lakes success. "There are a lineup of companies that know the benefit of working with First Nations" Tony goes on to say. Born out of the opportunities from surrounding oil sands operations, Heart Lake First Nations Construction Limited is 100% owned and operated by the Nation. Neighboring industry partners have opportunities to seek services from Heart Lake in areas of earth works, civil and environmental engineering, paramedics and first response, camps and catering and logging.

Heart Lake companies have successfully mobilized a trade show, which they bring to Calgary once a year. The mobile



(MAIN)
HEART LAKE

(RIGHT)
HEART LAKE
ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING

AUTHOR
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SHOWCASING HEART LAKE FIRST NATION

IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

trade show allows for Heart Lake to show case their many different businesses and services that they can deliver on. This unique approach to information sharing and advertising has proven to be very successful due to its convenience for industry partners, given much of the economic business development arms are located in Calgary offices. "When we did this trade show, their eyes were opened" explains Tony, adding that many industry partners were unaware of the services that were offered through Heart Lake's business operations. Tony shares that although many of the business portfolios have been provided in past to many of the companies they deal with, the trade show offers a more intimate one on one discussion about each firm.

Tony adds that an additional element to hosting the mobile trade show is that it allows for the company representatives of Heart Lake's joint ventures to speak first handedly about services offered and share past successes, through one on one dialogue.

"And the power of our firms or joint ventures speaking for themselves. Because it's difficult at times to represent a company as a third party. You say well these are the services



we offer, what better way to do it [than by] bringing the actual company in house...not have another voice on their behalf because a lot can get lost in that too. A water hauling company, you can just say 'well this is our water hauling company' well wait a second they offer 12 or 13 other services, lets get exposure on that."

Even in the current economic times, Heart Lake has maintained strong relationships with its industry partners by continuing dialogue around ongoing partnership initiatives. Heart Lake recognizes that although opportunities aren't as plentiful as they once were, industry is still open and interested in maintaining relationships and exploring current opportunities that do exist.

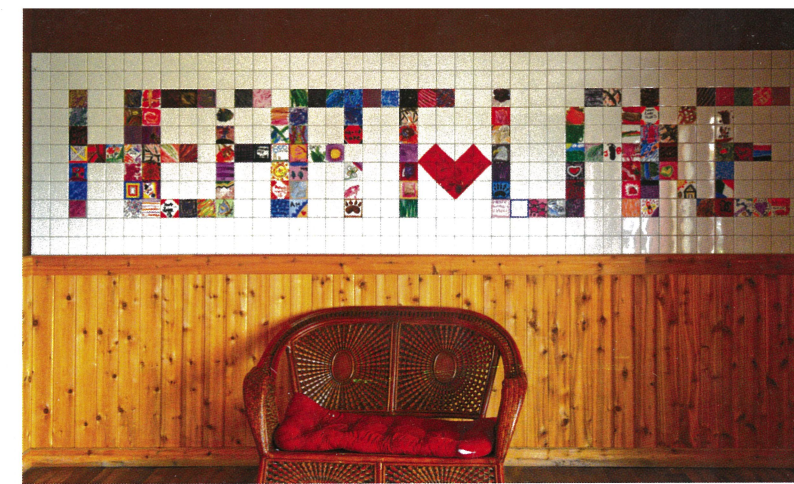
"Being with the economic climate right now, there are only so many opportunities that are available. Industry partners are still receptive to having those conversations and that goes along way. Just to have those conversations knowing that those ears are open and the industry guys were there to make the time." Tony shares.

In addition to maintaining strong business relationships with industry around contract opportunities, Heart Lake First Nation has also been very successful in ensuring that industry is fulfilling its corporate responsibility of being a good neighbor both in community enhancement projects and in meeting the community's environmental standards.

The industry operating in the area have been involved in contributing towards community development initiatives such as the recently completed community centre, which serves as a venue for larger community and social gatherings as well as a host facility for training and health programs.

Heart Lakes mandate is "to support the quality of life that factors a strong sense of community and a meaningful attachment to the land while realizing benefits from development". Despite the economic environment, Heart Lake First Nation continues to explore new and innovative ways to diversify opportunities.

"The name of the game with this economic climate is diversification so we are looking to expand even further" Tony explains. The community's drive and tenacity to thrive in challenging economic conditions are to be respected.



(ABOVE RIGHT)
HEART LAKE
COMMUNITY
ART
INSTALLATION

(RIGHT AND
BELOW)
ATTENDEES OF
HEART LAKE
TREATY DAYS
CELEBRATION



"Heart Lake has that mentality of not folding -lets find out where the opportunities still lie"

With so many different business capabilities, Heart Lake still maintains the fabric of a strong community. The community celebrates its Treaty Days every year with the next celebration coming up on June 10th to 12th and hosts an annual community pow wow with the next one being planned for August 12 to 14th.

With an amazing ability to balance business diversification, environmental stewardship and a strong community sense, it is these versatile characteristics of the community that will help it continue to thrive for future generations to come. ■



(TOP) HEART LAKE
ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING

(MIDDLE) WELCOME
SIGN TO HEART
LAKE TRADITIONAL
TERRITORY

(LEFT) ATTENDEES
OF HEART LAKE
TREATY DAYS
CELEBRATION