

# THETIS ISLAND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

## FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT 2020



## Fire Chief's Annual Report - 2020



### 2020 MEMBERS

Fire Chief Jeannine Caldbeck  
Deputy Chief Peter Luckham Capt. Dave Tarris  
Capt. Chad Kerr  
Lieutenant Christian Zinser (resigned Sept. 2020)  
Lieutenant John Gall  
Sr. FF Tom Miliken (resigned June 2020)  
Chris Fordham  
Michael Marini (resigned Sept. 2020)  
Mindy Thorne (resigned Feb. 2020)  
Dano Cutts (resigned May 2020)  
Mark Lauzon (resigned Sept. 2020)  
Mike Ellis  
Brian Morita  
Chris Call (resigned Aug. 2020)  
Johnny Cullen-Keidann (joined Feb. 2020)  
Pierre Henry (joined Feb. 2020)  
Yuka Saito (joined Feb. 2020)  
Marjan Jackman (joined Sept. 2020)  
Julian Jackman (joined Sept. 2020)  
Grant Mottershead (joined Oct. 2020)  
Jr. FF Quin Nonay

## THETIS ISLAND VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT FOR 2020

2020 was a chaotic year for our fire department and our community, as well as Provincially, Nationally and Internationally as we all wrestled with the far-reaching effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a community we came together to meet the new challenges and adjusted our lives and activities to support and assist the Province in reducing the number of deaths and illness from the global virus.



The first two months of 2020 saw normal fire department activities take place. We chipped Christmas Trees in January for the public, held a Blood Pressure Clinic at The Portal (the Community Hall was still under construction), and had a cement berm placed around the diesel tank at the fire hall to prevent large spills. Graeme Shelford built an emergency spill kit compartment that was placed beside the berm.

The newly renovated fire hall requires more maintenance than occasional fire fighter work parties could handle, and the Improvement District Trustees stepped up and formed the TIVFD Building Maintenance Auxiliary. This Auxiliary team meets periodically to clean eaves, cut back weeds, touch-up paint, clean, repair, and generally look after the great new fire hall they were instrumental in obtaining for the community.



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Cement-bermed diesel tank and spill kit



February 2020 - among the last of the maskless work parties, clearing the way for the concrete apron around the new Fire Hall.

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In March of 2020 the Covid-19 precautions became Provincial and WorkSafeBC regulations and social distancing, increased hand sanitization, and mask wearing indoors and during training were introduced. New Operational Guidelines for conducting the business of the fire department were put in place, and a new Exposure Control Plan for the department was written. Physical training at the hall was put on hold until safety information from the Province became more readily available. For several months fire fighters met weekly via webinar meetings until it was deemed appropriate to train outdoors in very small groups, wearing appropriate PPE and sanitizing all equipment used after the drills terminated. PPE prices skyrocketed and became exceedingly difficult to source. The TIVFD Safety Committee kept abreast of new regulations and procedures to keep our members healthy and able to respond. A Pandemic Business Plan was created and put into place for the possibility of Covid-19 affecting several active members at once, who would then not be able to respond to emergencies. Chemainus Fire Department agreed to respond to structure fires on Thetis via the ferry, if this scenario occurred.

Trustee Graeme Shelford and Fire Chief Caldbeck were successful in procuring grant funding for a Structural Protection Unit project in 2020, and the equipment purchased through the grant allowed the department to configure five sets of sprinkler protection equipment that can be stretched to protect approximately twelve to fifteen structures ahead of a wildfire front. Chief Caldbeck was also able to procure a used HD 2000 Ford 4x4 pickup truck donated by the Municipality of North Cowichan, The TIVFD Fire Fighters Society, a registered charity that collects donations for needed equipment and supplies for the fire department, purchased a used aluminum compartment canopy to carry the SPU Pumps and equipment on the 4x4 truck.



Utility vehicle with SPU canopy



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Other purchases of note for 2020 are the installation of a 5600 imp. Gallon water storage tank at the end of Plateau Road, the replacement of a roof ladder, new fire hose to replace decades old hose, and hydraulic extrication tools. Small hand tools that relied on porta-power were switched out for good quality battery operated tools, making vehicle extrication safer and more efficient.

Training, while difficult during the pandemic restrictions, carried on throughout the year and many NFPA 1001 qualifying exams were written by members as they worked towards Interior Fire Fighter certification. Fire Chief Caldbeck achieved

Above:  
Prepping one of five Structure Protection Unit kits to go into the SPU truck.

Right:  
July 2020 - setting up the new water storage tank on Plateau Road



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NFPA Fire Officer IV certification, graduating from the Justice Institute of BC. The department was able to borrow the large and extremely heavy "forcible entry" prop from the Duncan Fire Department and several drill nights were dedicated to learning how to get through various configurations of locked doors and windows during rescue attempts at structure fires. Fire Chief Neil Rukus of Lantzville facilitated a public fire extinguisher training and inspection workshop at the fire hall in August.



July 2020 - Several drills used the "forcible entry" prop borrowed from the Duncan Fire Department

an insulated doghouse for the colder months.

The TIVFD was called upon for many and varied public assists in 2020, and we joked that we are a 'full service' fire department. 2 homes were flooded by torrential rains in February and we supplied portable fans and a dehumidifier to assist. RCMP called for assistance for several 911 hang-ups, to set up a landing zone for a Penelakut medi-vac, and for support on police business. The Thetis Island Community Association was assisted with their drive through vote in front of the fire hall, and Elections Canada used the drill room for the federal voting poll.

Thetis Island was represented in the Line of Duty Death convoy for Sprout Lake Fire Lieutenant Ron Suits, attended by Chief Caldbeck and Water Auxiliary Team member Tony Smith (Delta FD Capt., retired) in the Command Vehicle. A rolling salute was given by the many fire fighters lining the highway at Coombs-Hilliers.

Almost all meetings were held using internet platforms such as Zoom. We all learned how to "mute" and how to keep cats off the keyboard. The Improvement District vote for Trustees was carried out as a 'drive-by' to meet covid-19 concerns, and TIVFD sponsored Annual Flu Shot Clinic was held downstairs in the open bay of the fire hall, with very stringent sanitization procedures in place. The department purchased a "fogger" for decontaminating equipment and gear after use, and after every first responder call, as well as using standard decontamination wipes and sprays, and the fogger was used for the 'Flu Shot Clinic.

Several of the Building Maintenance Auxiliary and Chief Caldbeck installed a dog compound behind the fire hall for use of members during emergency responses. All building materials were donated and the Chief built



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March 2020 - drive-by voting for TIID Trustees



October 2020 - Flu Shot clinic with all mask and spacing protocols in place



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Fire and smoke complaints increased as the weather warmed and conditions led to EXTREME fire hazard on the island. The California, Oregon and Washington state wildfires blanketed Thetis Island with acrid smoke for days, with the air quality moving into the dangerous zone. The department was called out to investigate smoke complaints stemming from these distant wildfires.



Ongoing wildfire response drills

Several Hydro Lines Down responses during the summer were also fire calls when the downed power lines sparked small bush fires. An unattended campfire call was quickly actioned but made the community even more anxious about wildfire risk here. The Office of the Fire Commissioner sent Jamie Svenson to tour the island and compile a report on wildfire risk assessment to the Thetis Island Community and it was submitted to the

TIVFD along with recommendations for community Fire Smarting of properties. The report is also a valuable pre-planning resource for wildfire operations.

Medical calls continued during the pandemic and extra precautions were taken to assure the health and safety of both responders and the patients. The community dock was closed to vehicle traffic by the CVRD due to concerns about the condition of certain structural elements, and steel bollards were placed to stop vehicles from traversing the trestle. This caused new procedures to be implemented for patient transport to the emergency water taxi, and traffic control for one-lane traffic on Foster Point Road whenever a First Responder response occurred. An aluminum box containing traffic control equipment and lighting was placed on the dock for ready response. Aluminum grid plates were laid on the trestle to facilitate stretcher travel to the boat.

The TIVFD was able to donate fire clothing and old equipment to Fire Fighters Without Borders that by regulation cannot be continued to be used operationally. The donated gear was sent to Central America where it was gratefully repurposed by several small, rural fire departments.

In October, Fire Prevention Week saw the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department as the centerfold spread in the local Chemainus Valley newspaper. Because of the pandemic safety regulations, the Remembrance Day service, facilitated by the department, was cancelled. However, the Canadian flag was lowered to half-staff and the remembrance protocols observed privately at the fire hall by the Chief and some officers.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Annual TIVFD Appreciation Dinner in November was not held, and awards and a slide show of the year's activities were given at a drill night gathering of just the fire fighters and two Trustees in the empty vehicle bays with PPE and social distancing

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protocols followed.

The department closed out the year by gathering non-perishable food items for the Chemainus Harvest House and re-instituting zoom meetings for training nights as the "2nd Wave" of Covid-19 hit the Province.

*Fire Chief J. Caldbeck : for Thetis Island Improvement District AGM, July 2021*

### 2020 TIVFD RESPONSES

FIRE CALLS	28	SPECIAL TRAINING	55
MEDICAL CALLS	54	MEETINGS	75
PUBLIC EDUCATION	14	WORK PARTIES	121
PUBLIC/RCMP ASSIST	50	DIESEL PUMPED	2,148.5 LITRES



September 2020 - group shot at drill night



December 2020 - COVID can't stop Christmas!