This past year has been both extraordinary and unprecedented. Yet, through it all - the pandemic, flooding in Fort McMurray and downturn in our economy, our great region continues to muster the strength to overcome these challenges together.

After a year unlike any other, 2020 is coming to a close. With that comes the holiday season; streets, businesses and homes donned with Christmas lights and décor to warm our hearts.

Typically at this time, our Community Relations team is in full swing planning annual community holiday celebrations throughout the region. Despite being unable to gather in person this year, our team is working hard to bring holiday cheer to our friends and neighbours by purchasing over 800 turkeys to gift.

On behalf of the Syncrude Executive Leadership team, I wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Warmly,

Doreen Cole
Managing Director
Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Christmas Turkey Giveaway
Times and Locations:
Tuesday, November 24
9:30 a.m. Conklin Multiplex Centre
12:00 p.m. Janvier Multiplex Centre
2:30 p.m. Anzac Recreational Centre
4:15 p.m. Petro Canada Gas Station (Hwy 881)

Wednesday, November 25
4:00 p.m. Fort McKay Band Hall

Saturday, November 28,
12:00 p.m. Fort McMurray Métis

Celebrate the joy and wonder of the season.
Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday from our herd to yours.
A CLOSER LOOK AT WOOD BUFFALO

Syncrude, in conjunction with FuseSocial and the Oil Sands Community Alliance (OSCA) members supported a Canadian Index of Wellbeing study in 2014. Since that time, the region has experienced the 2016 House River Fire and an economic downturn. As a result, the OSCA Community Indicators Task Force set off to update the survey in 2019.

Researchers from the University of Waterloo wanted to understand what makes residents happy, healthy and fulfilled. The survey also compared the results from both data set years. The survey’s focus is to identify where the community is thriving and where people are experiencing challenges.

“The results of the survey were not surprising, given everything that has happened in the region over the last couple of years,” says Kara Flynn, Syncrude’s VP of Government and Public Affairs. “However, we are confident that residents will come together during these challenging times. Wood Buffalo is a community known for working together to overcome great challenges.”

The 2019 survey results revealed three urgent issues regarding wellbeing in Wood Buffalo: social isolation, mental health, and financial insecurity.

“With the onset of COVID, and the flooding event in the spring, these three issues remain a top priority,” adds Kara. “However, the survey also recognized some very positive aspects that ranked above average for wellbeing in regards to life in Wood Buffalo.”

- **Environment:** Residents are mostly satisfied with the environment domain, especially within their neighbourhoods as a place to live, its environmental quality, and access to parks and recreational opportunities.

- **Community Vitality:** People in Wood Buffalo volunteer more; have a higher number of close relatives, close friends and neighbours they know well enough to ask for a favour; have a higher sense of belonging to a community; are less socially isolated; feel safer walking alone after dark; have higher needs fulfilment.

To see a copy of the full report and synopsis of comparison from 2014 to 2019, please visit FuseSocial’s website: at https://fusesocial.ca/ciw-wood-buffalo/

THE GIFT OF GIVING BACK ...2020 UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

Giving back to the community comes in many forms. It could be monetary, through the donation of items, or volunteering your time for a good cause. It means different things to different people. There are many reasons why people give, and just as many benefits to both others and ourselves as a result.

Syncrude’s United Way campaign concluded on November 2, with Syncrude exceeding the 2 million dollar goal set by the organization. Congrats to all who participated, contributed and volunteered for this worthy cause.
Our Indigenous workforce of over 450 First Nations, Métis and Inuit people represents around 10 percent of our total employee population. In 2018, over seven per cent of our leadership and seven per cent of all new hires were of self-declared Indigenous descent.

We strive to ensure our workforce reflects the Indigenous representation in the Wood Buffalo region (6.7 per cent according to the 2018 census) and have an enterprise-wide inclusion approach to maintain strong levels of Indigenous hiring. It includes a dedicated Indigenous recruitment strategy, our rotational employment program for Fort Chipewyan residents, and our participation in events organized by Indspire and Indigenous Works. We also support education and trades training programs that develop the next generation of Indigenous entrants to the workplace.

Syncrude has now made a change to our identification process. We no longer require proof of status.

“We want to ensure that our workforce as a whole understands the Truth and Reconciliation and what it means to us as a company and what it should mean as Canadians. This is why it’s important that we recognize the Orange Shirt Day initiative,” she says.

Started by Phyllis (Jack) Webstad, whose new orange shirt was taken from her when she was six years old, started the growing movement. While it’s mainly observed at educational institutions, corporate sponsorships to mark the day are beginning to take off with support coming from companies such as MNP, Vancity, and Tolko.

“It is part of Truth and Reconciliation and as a socially responsible company we should also make sure that we’re doing our part to support this day,” says Lana.

It is just another step forward towards reconciliation and showing that support recognizing that we are at a place in time where we want everybody to feel and to understand that Every Child Matters.

For more information on Orange Shirt Day and to learn about Phyllis’ story go to https://www.orangeshirtday.org

SELF-IDENTIFICATION ENCOURAGED

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If employees know they are of Indigenous ancestry, but do not have supporting paperwork, we encourage you to self-identify.

Self-identification helps:

- **Improve and enhance Indigenous programming and services**
- **Improve connections with Indigenous Communities**

Self-identification is voluntary and confidential, and you won’t need to produce any documentation. All collected information is confidential and will not be shared, as outlined in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The information will only be used to help us provide relevant support, services and resources.
A need to solve monitoring mysteries for Base Mine Lake prompted one Syncrude researcher to turn to medical equipment and the results have been great.

Barry Bara, a senior technical specialist with the Mine Closure Research Team needed to measure the bitumen and gases on the surface of the lake. He also wanted to locate mats – deposits of bitumen formed after tailings were placed into the lake bottom – so they could be removed.

The lake is a former mine pit now reclaimed as an aquatic landscape feature that sequesters the tailings material underneath the water layer. Researchers have conducted extensive monitoring and testing to check the progress of the lake since 2012. One important but difficult measurement is the amount of bitumen and gas in the lake. But the team discovered you could find those elements in the ice that formed on the lake during the winter.

Last winter, Barry and his team harvested 200 ice cores 60 to 70 centimetres thick from the lake. The cores may contain gas and bitumen, which rise to the surface. During the winter, they are frozen into the ice. Barry says they want to get an idea of what is coming up in different areas of the lake and repeat the process year after year to identify areas that need remediation. With the use of a computed tomography (CT) scanner – a medical imaging machine – Barry and his team were able to find out from the samples how much bitumen came to the surface.

In collaboration with Coanda Research and Development, Barry pursued another piece of medical imaging equipment to locate bitumen mats at the bottom of the lake. Ultrasound machines use sound waves to see inside the human body. He saw an opportunity because ultrasound works the same as sonar-based fish finders used by recreational anglers. Syncrude bought a commercial sonar unit and Barry hopes it can identify bitumen mats.
SYNCRUDE SURPASSES 11 MILLION TREES PLANTED

More than 11 million trees and shrubs have now been planted at Syncrude reclamation sites since the process began. This year alone, more than one million seedlings were planted leading to the current record.

Eric Girard, Vegetation Specialist, says despite the challenges the season presented with a global pandemic hampering work in various areas and industries, the program had to continue.

“To continue reclamation is the right thing to do,” he says. “It was tough to do this work during the pandemic, however safety has always been a top priority at Syncrude and we had the protocols in place to ensure everyone’s health and safety. While some activities were stood down to maintain health and safety protocols, tree planting activities were able to continue because physical distancing was not a challenge.”

Tree planting began May 20 with 22 people working on the program, 16 of whom were tree planters and the rest support crews who supervised and transported trees to various spots located north of Syncrude’s North Mine. Towards the end of the season, the tree planting crew grew to about 30 to ensure that the program was finished by June 21.

More than 400 hectares were planted this year and the remaining area placed with soils are planned to be covered in the spring of 2021.

Balsam Poplar, trembling aspen, white birch, jackpine and white spruce were among the species of trees planted this year while the shrubs consisted of green alder, river alder, red osier dogwood, rat root, Saskatoon, buffaloberry, honeysuckle, willows, roses, Labrador tea, bog birch, snowberry, pin cherries, lingonberry, twinflowers, crowberries, sedges, Low bush cranberries, blueberry and hazelnuts.

As in previous years, Little Smokey Forestry Services provided professional tree planters and the required support to make the 2020 program a success despite the unique season.
SIGNIFICANT BISON SKULL UNEARTHED AT AURORA

A foreman with North American Construction Group spotted something white in the dark reclamation material being salvaged at Aurora.

Sheldon Aylward inspected it closely and realized he had spotted something important. "I do a lot of hunting and fishing and I figured it might be a bison based on the skull. It was sticking out of the material. We had a lot of rain at that time. I figured the rain would have washed away the material covering it."

He alerted Syncrude’s mine operations, who sent out Geologist Patrick Dunbar to investigate the discovery while the North American crew taped off the area to protect what they found.

"After carefully removing material from around the skull, it was very exciting to pull it out of the bank and see a complete skull with both horns, all of its bones and even almost all of its teeth still intact," says Patrick.

Patrick carefully documented the finding by taking photographs before speaking with Chris Jass, the curator of Quaternary (Ice Age) palaeontology at the Royal Alberta Museum about preserving the skull.

"We take the utmost care to preserve any fossils or artifacts found on our leases," says Patrick, who joined Syncrude in 2017. "Syncrude has put protocols in place to ensure these finds are protected."

The skull represents a significant paleontological find for the museum due to its age, condition and location.

Chris says one of the biggest research questions for researchers is how did it go from an ice-impacted landscape where nothing lived in Alberta because of the presence of giant sheets of ice from 25,000 to 15,000 years ago to what you see today. "This skull doesn’t tell that story by itself but represents a piece of that puzzle. We also have not received a lot of fossils from northern Alberta because it is covered with the vegetation and the soils are fairly acidic, which can break down bones quickly. We don’t have a good Ice Age fossil record from northeastern Alberta so this is very exciting for us."

The new find is expected to help the work of researchers.
SYNCRUDE’S COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM: WORKING TO KEEP OUR SYNCRUDE FAMILY SAFE

Life as we knew it changed this year, as COVID-19 reared its ugly head in Canada and across the world. When the virus inevitably made its way to Wood Buffalo, a quick response was in order.

Synrude jumped into action, forming the COVID-19 Response Team (CRT). The CRT was tasked with implementing new protective protocols across all sites and to monitor for compliance. “As Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta guidelines evolve, one thing remains constant: Synrude’s unwavering commitment to protecting our people, communities and operations,” says Stephen Pocsai, Mgr. Projects Portfolio, Process & Business Development and CRT Lead.

The CRT is made up of several sub-groups: Compliance Monitoring, Pandemic, Communications, Operations, etc. “Our team meets regularly to review the latest pandemic statistics, assess effectiveness of our protocol and associated compliance and adapt to emerging issues and opportunities,” he says.

Many changes have been made across Synrude’s sites to protect our workers: plexiglass barriers installed, conference and lunch rooms reorganized to adhere to physical distancing, increased cleaning, additional directional signage, mandatory mask wearing and reduced transportation capacities.

Synrude has kept our neighbouring communities informed on the steps taken in an effort to stop the spread, including changes to the Fort Chipewyan Rotational Program and environmental testing in Fort McKay (to accommodate the community while on lock-down).

Listening to the needs of our neighbours has also warranted support from Synrude. With the only road in and out of Fort Chipewyan closed due to the threat of COVID-19, residents found themselves facing a food security issue last spring. Synrude’s Community Relations Team was able to secure a large order of meat to send to the community.

One of the latest developments within the CRT has been the formation of the COVID-19 Controls Ambassadors Program. COVID-19 Controls Ambassadors are available across our sites for any facility-related COVID-19 questions. Ambassadors ensure facilities are equipped to support Synrude COVID-19 controls. This includes ensuring common areas, such as lunch and conference rooms are set up to comply with physical distancing requirements. Other areas of focus include ensuring appropriate signage is in place, adequate cleaning supplies are available and sanitizer stations are filled.

“I am extremely proud of how our organization has come together to protect our workers in the face of this pandemic. The CRT will continue to monitor and assess the situation, reacting as needed to keep our Synrude family safe,” says Stephen.

To learn more about how Synrude is actively responding to the threat of the COVID-19 virus and is taking the necessary measures to prevent the spread, visit the COVID-19 Response page on Synrude.ca.
SYNCRUDE’S COMMUNITY RELATIONS UPDATE

With the onset of COVID-19 in mid-march, businesses quickly had to find a new norm in managing their business, and there were no exceptions for Syncrude.

Syncrude continued seeking approvals on several regulatory applications for key projects. However, that meant public consultation with our Indigenous neighbours needed to occur, but in a new way as face-to-face meetings were no longer feasible.

Syncrude’s Community Relations Division was still able to successfully meet and connect on regulatory files via online virtual sessions, phone calls and emails.

“During this time, we needed to adjust our approach to working with our Indigenous neighbours. It was a little challenging at first, but in the end, we were able to make the process work and receive adequacy from the Alberta Consultation Office and approvals from Alberta Energy Regulator on three applications,” says Cliff Dimm, Manager of Community Relations.

Community Relations was able to effectively consult with five Indigenous communities on two Drilling OSE programs off our Mineral Surface Lease and the MLX Dover River Offset plan, which includes creating a channel and outfall for diverting water from the MLX-W mining area.

In addition to regulatory applications requiring formal consultation, Syncrude was also able to meet to gather Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) through a round of virtual sessions. The purpose was to gather insights from communities on who use the land and utilize the animals.

“We’re looking for information in relation to culturally significant species,” adds Cliff. “Before working to enhance our Wildlife Monitoring plans for MLX, we wanted to hear local input on how species were used, how they influenced language, and what role wildlife plays in cultural practices”.

The Nations and local Métis communities worked to host virtual meetings with community members to provide their feedback. The information gathered was very helpful and will assist the Syncrude team in drafting the updated version of our monitoring plan for MLX. There are also plans to continue to engage and share our approach in the near future.