Cellphone saves injured woodcutter

Keewaytinook Mobile’s cellphones are saving people, as well as providing convenient access for community members across the north.

“That’s how I survived – the cellphone,” says Timothy Apetawakeesic, whose calls for help were answered after a tree-cutting accident near Weagamow Lake late last winter.

Apetawakeesic had been cutting firewood on his own the morning of March 1, at the end of a road about a half-hour drive from the community, when a tree hit him and broke his left leg between his knee and ankle. His tibia was fractured in the accident, sometime before 10 a.m., leaving him in excruciating pain.
“I laid down on the ground for two hours and I tried to get a (cellphone) signal,” Apetawakeesic recalls. “I called everywhere.”

He remembers hearing a “ching, ching, ching” sound on the line when he called his sister’s house.

Failing to connect with anyone, he put his phone inside his jacket to keep it warm. But he kept yelling in the hope someone would be close enough to hear him. Only a bird landed nearby to look at him on the ground.

Unable to move, he felt his back getting damp.

“He has always gone out on his own woodcutting over the last 30 years,” says Eunice Kakekayash, Apetawakeesic’s sister-in-law.

This time, “He dropped his granddaughter that he is raising off at the school and he told her if he is not back by (a certain) time to tell someone,” Kakekayash says.

Fortunately, Apetawakeesic also grabbed his cellphone on the way out the door that morning. He eventually managed to get through to the community radio station, but the signal died before he could say anything.

Then on his next call, he could hear the radio manager’s voice crystal clear and told him about the accident and his broken leg.

The incident was then announced over the radio. “I was on the phone during that time with my mother … when she heard that announcement,” Kakekayash says. “And of course everybody jumped, the whole reserve.”

But Apetawakeesic was nowhere to be found.

“They didn’t know where he was calling from,” says Kakekayash. “Then somebody went on the radio and said ‘This is where I usually see his van – on the winter road.’”

Help arrived about 20 minutes after the successful cellphone call.

Apetawakeesic was medevaced to Thunder Bay later that day and has been recovering ever since.

Kakekayash, meanwhile, says the incident reminds her of the television series I Shouldn’t Be Alive.

Keewaytinook Mobile began its cellphone system in 2009 with two pilot projects, in Keewaywin and Weagamow.

The system now serves 20 communities, including Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast and the areas serviced by Dryden Mobility (DMTS) in Sioux Lookout, Dryden,
Wasaya Airways annual Red Lake golf tournament took place on Friday, July 27th 2012.

The tournament was in support of the Red Lake Shelter House and Wasaya-Wee-Chee-Way-Win

We would like to thank the following businesses and organizations for their support for our annual charity golf tournament held at the Red Lake Golf and Country Club, they are:


We would like to express our appreciation to our Platinum sponsors Noront Resources and Gold Corp Inc, our gold sponsor Wawatay News, our silver sponsors Esso Imperial Oil, Bamaji Air and TBay-Tel for their support.

We would also like to thank Dulude Taylor Inc for sponsoring our hole in one contest, and to the volunteers and staff from Wasaya Airways and the Red Lake Homeless Shelter.

FROM 5

Red Lake, Earrings, Ignace and the highway corridors linking those communities.

“We cover most of the area north of Sioux Lookout,” adds Raymond Mason, community liaison for Keewaytinook Mobile.

In developing the service, “One of the things we were looking at is the safety factor,” he says. “There have since been several serious incidents where the use of a cellphone prevented matters from getting worse.

In one case, a man caught his hand in a car jack while changing a tire on his vehicle. “He said every time he moved it, (the jack) would get tighter,” Mason says. “He had his cellphone with him, so that is how he got some assistance.”

A variety of cellphones are available for use on the Keewaytinook Mobile system, including the iPhone.

“People have bought iPhones from Winnipeg at the Apple Store,” Mason says. “They sell them unlocked.”

Keewaytinook Mobile requires the use of GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) phones on the network, which is a pay-as-you-go service.

Pay-as-you-go cards are available in $10, $20 and $50 denominations at band offices or telecommunication departments in the communities.

“You don’t get into a situation where you are owing lots of money,” Mason says. “You only pay what you use.”

The Keewaytinook Mobile rates are five cents per airtime minute for local calls and an additional 10 cents per airtime minute for long distance calls.

“When you call cell to cell in any area of the coverage area, it’s considered local,” explains Mason. “You can go anywhere in any of these 20 communities and call somebody on their cell phone and it’s a local call.”

Text messaging costs five cents per message or $2.50 per month for unlimited messages.

“When you buy your (pay-as-you-go) card and put your minutes into your account, there is an option that asks you if you want unlimited texting for a month,” Mason says, “which works well for the kids around here. It’s cheaper, and I’ve noticed how texting is more interesting for them.”

Voice mail is also available for $2.50 per month.