



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
 Department of Health and Community Services
 Office of the Minister

FEB 23 2007

Mr. Daniel Ashini, President
 Innu Nation
 P.O. Box 119
 Sheshatshiu
 Labrador, NL
 A0P 1M0

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Dear President Ashini:

I am writing in response to your letter of January 15, 2007 to the Honourable Tom Osborne, former Minister of Health and Community Services, relating to Child Youth and Family Services in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish.

First, I must assure you that the safety, health, and well being of all children in our province, including the children of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish is a priority for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The *Child Youth and Family Services Act* and related policies promote providing support to children and families. When removing a child from parental care to protect the child's health, safety or well being is necessary, the legislation and policies provide for culturally appropriate placement of children, with relatives when possible. Removals of children from their parents are subject to an order by the court and the Labrador/Grenfell Regional Health Authority has set up a Custody Review Committee that reviews the plan of care for children in continuous custody on an annual basis. This committee must have community representation.

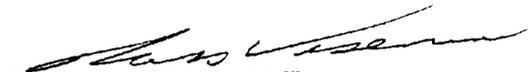
It is my understanding that too often children and youth from Sheshatshiu and Natuashish have to be placed in residential settings outside their communities and outside Labrador because there are not enough placements locally which are able to meet their needs. The Labrador/Grenfell Director of Child, Youth and Family Services for Sheshatshiu and Natuashish wrote to the Chiefs of both communities several months ago requesting that they appoint a committee of Innu representatives to look at placements in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. This could be a step to assist in reducing out of community placements, however, appointments to the committee have not been made by the communities.

Over the last several years, the Department of Health and Community Services has participated in a Child, Youth and Family Services Sub-committee co-chaired by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) and the Innu concerning devolution of the responsibility for the delivery of Child, Youth and Family Services to the Innu communities. In 2003, Government authorized the Department of Health and Community Services to enter into discussions that would facilitate the setting up of a Provincial/Innu Board as a first step to full devolution of services to the Innu communities. In 2004, the Labrador/ Grenfell Regional Health Authority hired an individual to manage the delivery of Child, Youth and Family Services in the two Innu Communities. The *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* was subsequently amended to allow the Labrador/Grenfell Regional Health Authority to appoint this individual, who is a long time resident of Sheshatshiu, as the Director of Child, Youth and Family Services for the two Innu communities. The Labrador/Grenfell Regional Health Authority has also hired a qualified social worker who is Innu as the Manager of Child, Youth and Family Services in Sheshatshiu.

While there has been progress, movement to full devolution has been slow. However, the Department of Health and Community Services is willing to continue to work as a member of the Child, Youth and Family Services Sub-committee of the Main Table to address concerns and to work toward devolution. It may be helpful for you to meet with this sub-committee to get an update on the status of Child, Youth and Family Services in Sheshatshiu and Natuashish and its activities relating to devolution. Mr. Bart Jack Sr. and Mr. Mark Davis are co-chairs of the committee.

Following your meeting with the sub-committee, I would be available to meet with you to discuss these matters which I know are of concern for the Innu Nation. Please contact my office to set up a time for this meeting.

Sincerely,



ROSS WISEMAN, M.H.A.
Trinity North District
Minister

/db

cc: Honourable Tom Rideout
Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs
Chief Anastasia Qupee
Chief Simon Pokue