

Innu Healing

Issue: Update on issues being addressed with the Innu Healing Strategy for the communities of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet.

Background:

- Representatives from the federal and provincial governments and Innu Community leaders met on November 26, 2000 to discuss the ongoing solvent abuse crisis and family healing needs for Davis Inlet and Sheshatshiu. The federal and provincial governments agreed to work cooperatively with the communities to seek appropriate treatment options for the gas sniffing youth.
- The federal and provincial governments agreed to work together with the Innu to fully explore the many long-term initiatives needed to repair the cultural and social fabric of the community.

Update:

- The Province continues to work with the federal government and the Innu Band Councils to assist with developing long-term healing strategies. The social issues in these communities are complex and have developed over a long period of time. Therefore, the strategies will have to focus on long-term solutions to have any real impact.
- The Province purchased Lobstick Lodge and transferred ownership to the Sheshatshiu Band Council to be used as a family treatment centre. The Band is seeking provincial funding for snow clearing at Lobstick Lodge; Health Canada covered this cost last year.
- In Davis Inlet, a family treatment program funded through Health Canada, is operating out of Metchim River. Health Canada also provided funds to implement a country treatment program for several residents of the community.
- In November 2001, the federal Treasury Board approved a Health Canada healing strategy for the Innu of Labrador. This strategy provided funds to hire professional staff situated in Happy Valley - Goose Bay to deliver mental health/addictions, community/public health and community development programs in the Innu communities. Health Canada has established an office in Happy Valley - Goose Bay and are in the process of hiring professional staff.
- The federal government is contributing \$153 million to relocate the Mushuau Innu to Natuashish (Sango Bay). The move to the new community is set for December 14, 2002.
- The federal government has confirmed its commitment to register the Innu under the Indian Act and establish reserves of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. The federal government is working with the Innu towards the completion of registration. It is anticipated that this will be completed by late October 2002. The reserve in Natuashish is expected be established by the end of the year. Due to problems with land titles it is forecasted the Sheshatshiu reserve will not be established until August 2003. Clean up of contaminated provincial properties is an outstanding issue.

- The Province continues to work with the federal government and the Innu on the creation of reserves and related issues, specifically in the program areas of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), Income Support and Education. A bi-lateral agreement for CYFS has been signed between the Federal and Provincial governments and a subcommittee is working on a transition plan. An agreement for Education is currently being negotiated. The Province is also working towards an arrangement on income support programs and services.
- The Innu are pressing to take over the schools in September 2003 regardless of whether they have demonstrated capacity to do so. They have also tabled a proposal for a new \$12,95M school in Sheshatshiu for 380 students. Governments are reviewing the proposal mindful that a new school in Happy Valley is being built for 900 students for only \$10.23M.
- Negotiations are continuing with the Province, federal government and the Sheshatshiu Innu to reach a Community Tripartite Agreement on Policing Services for the community of Sheshatshiu.
- The Innu have established the Innu Healing Foundation for the purpose of raising funds for recreational facilities in both Innu communities. The estimated total costs to fund the project is \$12.5 million. The Province has provided a total of \$1,000,000 towards this project.
- The Sheshatshiu Innu Healing Committee met on September 11th and are scheduled to meet again on November 6th in that community. A meeting for the Davis Inlet/Natuashish Innu Healing Committee was tentatively set for September 10, 2002 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This meeting was cancelled and no date has been set to reschedule.
- In the November 2000 meeting, the Federal and Provincial governments had committed to establish a detoxification center in Labrador for aboriginal people. Since that time several discussions have occurred between all parties concluding it would be more beneficial to have safe houses with detoxification capacity in the communities. Health Canada has agreed to commit funds to the safe house, provided all parties agree this would be considered the equivalent to the commitment made during that meeting. A letter has been sent to the Sheshatshiu Innu with the Province agreeing to this approach.
- The Province committed to reinvest legitimate savings arising for Registration and Reserve Creation into infrastructure in the Innu communities. The "Leave on the Table Money" commitment is subject to appropriations, and limited to five years. A cabinet submission is being prepared to seek direction on how to fulfill this commitment being mindful of the Innu debts for housing and hydro and other financial liabilities.
- Chief Simeon Tshakapesh of the Mushuau Innu wrote the Premier on September 25, 2002 outlining several funding priorities, including housing, bakery, laundromat, additional storage and warehouse space, environmental assessment of the proposed Kamistastin Hydro project and a road between Voisey's Bay and Natuashish.

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