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GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
P.O. BOX 8700

Office of the
Deputy Minister

ST. JOHN'S
A1B 4J6

1992-07-06

Mr. Ray Hawco
Assistant Secretary to Cabinet
(Native Policy)
Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat
Executive Council
Box 8700, Confederation Building
St. John's, NF
A1B 4J6

Dear Mr. Hawco:

This is to respond to your correspondence dated 1992-06-18 and the accompanying Report of the Innu Inquiry Commission Gathering Voices: Finding the Strength to Help Our Children.

As you are aware, I and other officials of the Department have held discussions with the Innu surrounding community control and participation in service delivery. I am confident that this process will continue. This will no doubt prove to be challenging and perhaps a "risky" process. I believe we can encourage greater community control and participation in a reasonable and responsible manner. We are perhaps closer today than ever before in achieving a major transformation of service delivery involving our native people.

In regard to the dependence created by Social Assistance and Unemployment Insurance, there must be opportunity to explore other ways of providing financial security which would be less demoralizing to the Innu. We can no longer continue to view economic development and independence in our terms. Somehow, we have to build programs in line with the Innu culture and value systems.

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The report highlights the plight of the children. As an outside service provider, we tend to treat the victim and not the problem. While we are now fully aware of the symptoms which have led to the serious problems faced by the Innu, we have not been very successful in effecting change. If the circumstances of Innu children are to be improved, it is critical that solutions to the problems be found. We must be prepared to promote, support and facilitate a process allowing community participation and control to the fullest degree possible.

At this point, alcoholism is perhaps the major problem to be overcome. The community has to be encouraged and supported in their efforts to address the alcohol issue. As the report indicates, the children and youth see alcohol as the major issue. A resolve to the alcohol issue may well lead to many other issues being resolved over a short time span. The present Band Council seem to have a vision and strength which may bring about change. I see our role as supportive and being prepared to enter into processes which will create new methods of service delivery.

The response needed to deal with the serious problems faced by our native people will require a co-ordinated government response. At this point, I am not sure that much trust is placed in dealings with government and it may be necessary to create a "middle ground" or form of interpreter. This could come in the form of utilizing Memorial University resources or establishing a transition team of native resource people from another province. I am convinced that while individual government departments struggle to provide services and try and effect change in light of the current environment, success in resolving the major issues facing the Innu will remain slim.

Overall, I was very impressed with the quality of the report and with the honesty and sincerity demonstrated by the Innu of Davis Inlet in portraying the path from independence to the tragedy of their lives today. Whatever the future holds for the Innu, it is clear that the major decisions will have to be decided by them alone.

Hoping this information is beneficial.

Yours truly,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

E. BRUCE PECKFORD
Deputy Minister

/mo'r

cc: Mr. Wayne Penney

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GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Labrador Regional Office
215 Hamilton River Road
c/o Elizabeth Goudie Building
Happy Valley/Goose Bay, LB
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FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION MESSAGE

DATE: 92.07.02

TO: J. Stapleton
Director Child Welfare

FROM: Wayne Penney R.D.
Labrador Region

RECEIVING FACSIMILE NUMBER: _____

TRANSMITTING FACSIMILE NUMBER: (709) 896-9698

SUBJECT: Income Inquiry

COMMENTS: Originals forwarded this date

ORIGINALS TO FOLLOW BY MAIL: YES () NO ()

WHEN THIS TRANSMISSION IS COMPLETED, YOU SHOULD HAVE 3 PAGES, INCLUDING THIS COVERING TRANSMITTAL.

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GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Labrador Regional Office
215 Hamilton River Road
c/o Elizabeth Goudic Building
Happy Valley/Goose Bay, LB
AOP IEO

1992-07-02

Mr. T. Stapleton
Director
Division of Child Welfare
Department of Social Services

RE: Innu Inquiry - Davis Inlet
"Gathering Voices - Finding Strength to Help our Children."

I offer the following comments in respect to the above noted report.

First of all, I was quite impressed with the quality of the report in general and as well with the honesty and sincerity demonstrated by the Innu of Davis Inlet in portraying the misery of their present situation. The seriousness of the situation is certainly not overstated and I believe in principle they have identified perhaps the key factor for a better future; community control. There are no easy answers to this very complex situation. However, if history has taught us anything, it should serve to remind all involved that there certainly does not exist any outside solutions. Whatever their future holds, it must to the largest degree possible be decided by the Innu people themselves. They have to be allowed the opportunity to solve their own problems and answer to their own actions.

Regarding Social Services, I am very pleased that we are continuing our discussions with the Innu Nation regarding ways and means of effecting real change in the delivery of our services. We are collectively striving towards greater community control and participation. This will no doubt prove to be challenging and perhaps a "risky" process. However, if we as a system are not willing to take the necessary risk and pass along the control and involvement to the community, then we must accept responsibility. I believe we are able to encourage this greater community control and participation in a reasonable and responsible manner and we are closer to this today than ever before.

Specifically, I offer the following:

- In regard to the dependence on Social Assistance, UIC, etc. I believe we must pursue some other form of income

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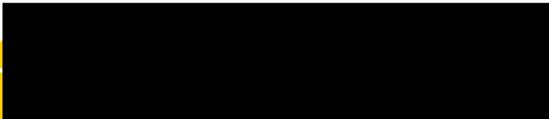
security which would be more clearly understood and less demoralizing to the Innu people and as well not require people to stay in the village. We continue to view economic development and independence in our terms. Somehow we have to view this more in line with the Innu culture and values.

- Child Welfare and Youth Corrections. We are pursuing ways and means of encouraging and facilitating greater community control and involvement. This has to be very much a crucial element in the future of both these programs in the community. The report highlights the plight of children. Our systems merely addresses the symptoms and as outsiders this is all we can really expect to address. If the circumstances of children in this community are to be improved, it has to be primarily initiated and guided by the Innu people themselves. We must be prepared to promote and facilitate this process.

- Alcoholism is the key issue at this point. Greater community control of all matters relevant to their lives may positively influence this. Again, the community has to be encouraged and supported in their efforts to address this. I am hopeful that the present Band Council will have the vision and strength to pursue ways and means of limiting alcohol in the village. As the report indicates, the children certainly see this as the major issue. If this issue is not addressed, many others will go unresolved.

I do hope the above is helpful.

Yours truly,



Wayne Penney
Regional Director

WP/de

cc: Mr. B. Peckford



INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS SECRETARIAT
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



P. O. Box 8700
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J. Stapleton
Please coordinate
a response with W. Penney
92-06-19

June 18, 1992

Mr. Bruce Peckford
Deputy Minister
Department of Social Services

Attached for your information and review are copies of the Executive Summary of the Report of the Innu Inquiry Commission. Entitled Gathering Voices: Finding The Strength to Help Our Children, this report resulted from an inquiry carried-out by the Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council pursuant to the tragic February house fire in which six children lost their lives.

Native Policy has been directed to develop a response to this report so it would be appropriate for departments to develop reactions to pertinent sections and forward the same to my attention on a priority basis.

Should you require further information or clarification, please contact either myself or Mike Samson at 729-6062.

Ray

RAY HAWCO
Assistant Secretary to Cabinet
(Native Policy)

/st
Attachment

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PETER PENASHUE

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0 Copy to DM's - Exec. Summary + Part. and Sections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GATHERING VOICES: FINDING THE STRENGTH TO HELP OUR CHILDREN

REMEMBERING THE DEATHS OF SIX CHILDREN

In February, our community lost 6 children in a house fire. This is still a very painful time for us. This is not the first time that our community was struck by tragedy. Everyone here has been touched by tragedy in our lives. Since 1973, we have lost 50 people in our community through alcohol-related deaths.

WHY WE GATHERED VOICES: THE PEOPLE'S INQUIRY

In March, the Innu Nation and the Mushuau Innu Band Council decided to hold a People's Inquiry to gather information on why we have had so many tragedies in Utshimassit. We decided it was time we stopped and looked at why these accidents and violent deaths are happening to our people before it happens again. Too many people have died.

THE MINISTER SAID NO

The Innu Nation asked the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Tom Siddon, to call for a public inquiry into this fire. The Minister said no, so we decided to do it ourselves.

OUR MANDATE

We wanted to hold this Gathering Voices:

1) to look at what has happened to us in the last 30 years and why these tragedies are happening in our community. To encourage people in our community to talk about these things in order to help them understand what is happening. To examine how the various outside agencies and institutions have affected our lives.

2) to look at alcohol problems in the community; why people drink, the problems caused when they do, and what is being done or not done to deal with them.

3) To provide means for people to talk about their problems which would be a healing process for the community.

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4) To identify steps and actions the community could take to address problems and to put an end to these tragedies, as well as recommendations for changes needed from government and its agencies.

5) To gather information we need for our plans to relocate the community.

A TOOL TO HELP US SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS

We have put together this report from the words and stories we gathered. This gathering of voices tells the history of our people at this point in time. We see this report from the Gathering Voices as a tool to help us to solve our problems, on our road to recovery.

A BUILDING-BLOCK TOWARDS SELF- GOVERNMENT

It will serve as an important building block in our future block in our future discussions towards self-government. The report states clearly to governments what we want. The report also tells the various institutions - the school, the church, social services, the police, the store and health services - the things we need to tell them.

It provides recommendations for both short-term and long-term changes we feel are required.

HOW WE GATHERED VOICES

The Innu Nation and the Band Council held a meeting of elders and a public meeting during the first week of Gathering Voices to get input from elders and the community on how the Inquiry should be carried out.

THE COMMISSIONERS

At the public meeting, a committee was formed to direct the Gathering Voices. It was made up of two people from the Innu Nation Board, two from the Mushuau Innu Band Council, and two people from the community at large. Four commissioners were appointed by the Committee. The committee and commissioners worked together in developing the agenda, the schedule and planning the work of the Inquiry. Commissioners recorded the contents of the various events and forums of the Inquiry throughout the six week period that it was held.

THE REPORT WAS WRITTEN FROM THE TRANSCRIPTS

Of the 168 adults in the community, we gathered the voices of 85 adults. Thirteen of these were elders. We also reached 45 children in our school workshops. In all, 142 people spoke to us. This report was written from all the

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FEBRUARY 1992

transcripts of notes recorded by the four commissioners in meetings, workshops and interviews.

WHY THESE TRAGEDIES HAPPEN

People die in our community and over the last few years many of these deaths have been alcohol-related. We have all been touched closely by these tragedies.

Virtually every time a person dies, it is from alcohol. There are suicides and accidents because of alcohol. Our elders drink too much also because we don't care and we don't listen to them. We don't hear them because we drink too much, and we don't look after our children.

These kinds of problems are very new to us. When we were in the country, we never had these problems. People always took care of themselves. In the old days, people didn't used to drink like they do now. Many Innu have died from alcohol since we moved to this community.

THE FIRE AND DEATHS WERE ALCOHOL-RELATED

Like many other deaths and suicides in the community, the February fire was alcohol-related. Parents drink and the children drink too. Children see so much from their parents. It is a cycle. If we start drinking, there is a good chance that our children will drink too.

WE COULDN'T STOP THE FIRE

There was nothing we could do to stop the fire. We have no fire hoses, no fire equipment. Even if we had this equipment, we have no water in the community. If we had water, we might have been able to stop the fire.

The type of houses we have catch fire very easily. Other houses have started on fire, but people managed to put out the fire before it spread through the whole house. The night of the fire, there were high winds and the house stood alone.

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN

Gas sniffing and alcohol are big problems. Young people start drinking at a very early age. Some children are sick from alcohol and gas sniffing. Children don't like to be at home. They run away from home and they do some gas sniffing. They don't listen to their parents. When the parents are drinking, they don't take care of their children. When kids are left alone, they might play with matches; this is how fires start.

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WHY WE TURN TO ALCOHOL These tragedies happen because of alcohol. But many of us believe the alcohol is a symptom of other problems. These things happen to us because we don't look after ourselves. We have too many personal problems. We don't care about ourselves any more. We have changed too much. There are too many divisions in the community. Many of us no longer practise our culture and spiritual beliefs. The animal spirits are sending us signals that they are upset.

People turn to alcohol also because of community problems. There are health problems and poor living conditions, poor housing, no water and sewage, no jobs, poverty, no recreational facilities and isolation to the mainland so we can't go hunting for a good part of the year. Elders are sick from the stress.

WHO IS TO BLAME

Some of us blame white society for the way our lives have changed. Some of us think we need to take responsibility ourselves. Others think there is blame on both sides.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR CHILDREN?

This tragedy has made us ask ourselves what is happening to our children these days. In the past our children were not having these problems. We never saw children doing things like sniffing gas. After moving here, children started to change. Children are more likely to be hurt than anyone else. They have witnessed most of these tragedies. We are seeing the children in this community are upset, sad, lonely and many feel neglected all the time. They see and are affected by all the problems in our community. Children here need to be loved, cared for and happy. Without these things, children are crying within their hearts and slowly losing confidence and pride in themselves. Our children are having lot of problems. They need our attention and our help. We need our children and they need us.

OUR CHILDREN ARE UPSET WITH US

Our children are upset with us because we are drinking too much. They are seeing too much in their homes - fighting, and physical abuse. They are doing things to make us see them, always getting into trouble like vandalizing buildings, breaking windows, stealing and break and entry.

Some of our children are not getting enough food to eat. That is why some of them are getting sick and getting skin infections and rashes.

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PETER PENASHUE

SOME ARE LOSING HOPE

Some of our children don't care any more. They are losing hope. These are some of the things they said when we asked them what we need to do so we don't bring our problems with us when we relocate.

THE NEED FOR CLEAN HOMES

We should look after our children. If our children lived in clean homes with running water, they would be happier. There is nothing to do for the children in this community. They need recreational activities. The Youth Council is helping with this because they open the hall at nights and the gym on weekends.

CULTURE LOSS: THE INFLUENCE OF TV AND SCHOOL

Some of our children don't know their own culture and history. Television is changing our children. It is making them lose their culture. They believe what they see on TV. That is how some of the trouble starts. Children also get some of their ideas from school. They learn a lot of things from books, see and hear a lot from white people. Some of our young people are good hunters but they don't follow our ways.

THE GOODNESS OF COUNTRY LIFE

In the country, people live in tents. The floor is covered with boughs. All the children are in the tent, and there is always enough wood. In the country, children eat good food and there is always enough food. The children help their parents like fetching water. When we are in the country, we feel healthy. We love to be in the country where we always help each other. There the children always want to help the elders. This is a wonderful way to live.

WE MUST FIND A WAY TO HELP OURSELVES

It will be very hard to stop these tragedies in our community. But many of us believe that if people could stay sober, things would look much better. Even if we have 50% of our people sober, we can do things. Other people will want to stop drinking. And the best way to do this would be for us to run our own school, and the government agencies like the store, social services and the clinic.

LIFE BEFORE WE WERE SETTLED

A number of elders told the commissioners that, in their younger days, they used to spend their time on the George River. They survived mostly on country food. Traders used to bring food for the Innu into the country. That is because they did not want the Innu to sell their furs to other

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traders. When people would get a few furs, they would trade them for food. They didn't mind just eating wild foods. The only problem was when they ran out of tea or tobacco. Whatever the people had, they always shared it with others who needed it.

In the past, Innu lived in teepees with an open fire in the middle. The caribou hides were used to cover the teepees. It was hard times, but we didn't mind because it was part of our culture. We were safe in our teepees; we never had to worry about fires. Now, we live in houses and we are always worried about fire.

HARD WORK

When people were in the country, we were always healthy and strong because we were eating country food. The man, his wife, the children would work very hard. A woman used to work as hard as a man. That was before we had dogs to pull the sleds. The wife would travel with the small children, pulling the sled with all their belongings.

CARIBOU HUNTING

If her husband killed caribou and they thought they had enough food, they would stay in one place and he would do some trapping. Sometimes, the caribou was nowhere to be found in the country, like today. Porcupine was the main food then.

PRESSURE TO TRAP

The Hudson's Bay Company used to supply food and steel traps for the Innu. One thing the HBC did to us was to try to force us to only trap. It was very hard for us to trap and hunt at the same time. When someone wanted to go to the country, the HBC would not give people any credit. The only people who would get credit were those who would get a lot of furs. Other people used to make moccasins or snowshoes to sell. This is how we survived.

MEETING OTHER INNU IN THE COUNTRY

Mushuau Innu used to meet up with other Innu from other territories like Uashat (Seven Islands) and Sheshatshit. There was no boundary between Quebec and Labrador. The land belonged to the Innu. We were always very happy to meet. Those groups of Innu would have a lot of food, tea and tobacco. Sometimes we would meet settlers on the coast. They would give our children clothes to wear like shoes.

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WE USED TO HELP
ONE ANOTHER

We always used to help each other. If one family had a short supply of food, other families had to share the food. Today, we live very differently. In the past, people were free, but now the government is controlling our lives. We used to respect each other. We were poor but we were always happy, proud of our culture and the way we lived.

HOW DID WE END UP IN
DAVIS INLET?

Today, most of us think that we never decided to settle here in Utshimassit ourselves. We believe it was the government and the priests who made the decisions in those days. This was during the Smallwood government. Joe Rich was the chief at the time we were settled in the community. The priest chose him to be our chief. He seems to have been part of this decision. But, today, thirty years later, it is not clear how these decisions were made. However, most people feel we did not have enough say in this decision that would change our lives forever.

AFTER THE MOVE

After we moved here, some families stopped going to the country. Some people were happy with their houses and they thought things were okay. Maybe they thought this was the best thing that ever happened to them. They didn't know we would have all kinds of problems in this community.

WE CAN'T REACH THE
MAINLAND DURING
BREAK-UP AND FREEZE-UP

Some people continued to go into the country with their dogs to the barrens to make a living. Some would just go hunting and bring their traditional food back to the community. But we couldn't always go to the country to hunt like we used to.

WE CAN'T REACH THE
MAINLAND DURING
BREAK-UP AND FREEZE-UP

We, now people of the island, have a very difficult time during break-up and freeze-up. In the fall, it takes 2-3 months for the rattle to freeze up. We can't go to the mainland because it is too dangerous. In the spring, people are afraid they will go through the ice. We are stuck on this island for months.

LOSING CONTROL OVER
OUR LIVES

As the years went by, more and more people began to spend the whole year in the community. The church, school, Social Services, clinic, store, and R.C.M.P. began to really change our lives. We had depended for years on the priests who had taken control of our lives, and then they stopped taking responsibility. But we no longer had

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the control. We began to depend instead on the government agencies. Our troubles got worst when we saw that the government wanted to rule everything. He wanted to take away our rights and our land.

CONTAMINATED WATER

Water was always a problem. As early as 1969 the water problems started; the water was contaminated. The government has spent thousands of dollars on studies. Some of the houses even have toilets and bathtubs. What good is a bathtub when there is no water? We thought the government must be crazy to send those bathtubs. They knew there is no water in this community. All different kinds of diseases began to spread in the community. It was the water that was to blame. We were drinking contaminated water and many people were getting sick.

GOVERNMENT CRAZY TO SEND BATHTUBS

TUBERCULOSIS

People also didn't have much wild food. Most of them ate store food. We started getting sick. T.B. hit the community and quickly spread. Adults and children were sick. Many of us were sent to the hospital in St. Anthony.

PROMISES WEREN'T KEPT

The promises that were made to us were not kept. In this community we live in very poor conditions. Our houses are not fit for families to live in. There is a lot of garbage and bad smells around each and every house in this community. Most of us do not have enough money to live on. For many, there is no work, nothing to do.

LIKE LIVING IN A DUMP

Some of us feel that living on the island is like living in a dump. People wander around, looking for something to do, and end up doing dirty work. Why can't the government look at us and see what happened? Why can't the government do something? They're just using our land, which doesn't belong to them. The government owes us a lot of things.

THE GOVERNMENT TSHEUTSHIMAU - The Big Boss

In the past, the Innu never met with the government. We hunted and trapped and looked after our own affairs. Now the government controls our lives. We have become very dependent on governments and their agencies like the school, social services, the clinic, the police and the store. We were given these agencies without consultation with us first.

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THEY WANT TO RULE EVERYTHING

The government makes too many laws. It has implemented a lot of hunting regulations like permits and licenses. They don't know anything about our culture but they want to rule everything, our lives and our land. We have lost control of our lives and this has created a lot of social problems in our community, for example, family violence, poor housing, alcoholism and solvent abuse.

HOW THE INNU BECAME HELPLESS AND DEPENDENT

The problem with the government agencies are their policies. They are not working for us. We have to follow white man's rules and laws. This is how the Innu have become helpless and why we suffer. It is time we made our own laws. It is the only way we can solve our problems.

THE FUNDING IS FROM OUR RESOURCES!

We always hear the governments saying they give a lot of things to the Innu. But we know the funding from government comes from the developments of our land and resources. For example, some of us have been to Schefferville and seen the iron ore mine. We ask ourselves who owns that mine and who has benefitted? We know the iron ore belongs to the Innu people. We also pay taxes.

THEY DESTROY OUR LAND

Once the Europeans came, they took from the Innu and destroyed a lot of hunting and trapping territory. Governments have destroyed the land and water, polluting the environment. The government has built dams and flooded land that belongs to aboriginal people. We have seen the land destroyed in Wabush and Schefferville. When we are in the country we are noticing that the land and the water is polluted as well, because of so many low-level jets training over our land. They are using our land as a playground.

DEVELOPMENTS WITHOUT OUR APPROVAL

Any developments can go ahead without our approval. They don't even bother to discuss them with Innu people. They just go ahead like they own the land. The government is out of control. Some people say the government did not make the land. God did. It does not have permission from God to take over the land.

WE DEPEND TOO MUCH ON GOVERNMENT

We used to help ourselves before we started to get government funding. Now if a person works, they have to get paid, and if they get a low salary, they might quit. Some of us think we are spoiled by the government with all

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the money that is given to the people. People are given houses without spending any money. They think things don't cost money. They don't have to spend one cent on their houses when they get them. Also people now want to buy everything. People depend too much on social services, the band council, the church and the clinic. Politics and government funding has replaced our way of life.

OUR OWN GOVERNMENT

We need to work on our own government. The Chief and Band Council in Utshimassit were set up by the white government. They make all the decisions. But before them were imposed upon us, we all used to decide things for ourselves.

But more and more of us ask how long more we can wait to help ourselves instead of listening to government, and wasting away our lives for him? It is time to change and do things our own way. The governments have made too many mistakes. It is the government's turn to listen to us. We need to be heard. We want self-government.

WE HAVE RIGHTS

Both governments are still not recognizing Innu rights, and they are still saying the government owns the land. We know we own our land and ourselves. The government has forced us into land claims negotiations. We will never give up fighting for our rights. We have to stand up to the government. If we don't fight, governments will never listen to us. More land will be destroyed. Sports hunters will build cabins, and more fish camps will be seen on all the rivers. If minerals are found in our area, developments will go ahead without our approval.

INTERIM PROTECTION

In our fight to get the government to recognize our land rights, we need to get interim protection so that low-level flying and any other developments will stop over Ntesinan. We also need to talk about overlapping claims with other Native Peoples and compensation. The people in our communities will get a chance to see any agreement and to make changes until they are satisfied before we will sign. It is important that our elders be there when there is a meeting with government officials.

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PETER FENNER

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The Innu have been here for thousands of years. Before we became Catholic, we had our own Innu religion. We believed in the spirits of the animals. Our spiritual beliefs were in all living creatures. The shaman was our spiritual leader and he used to speak for us. The shaman was also our healer. He had all the power to help our people.

We had our own rituals in the past, our own ways of taking care of the dead, our own ways of marrying people. These practises were abolished. We still have a special ceremony call mukushan. This ceremony is to give thanks to the Caribou God for having provided for you and your family. The Innu share whatever they kill. If we do not, we anger the Gods who will then not provide us with food.

The missionaries came and tried to get rid of this religion. The priest told us the shaking tent was evil. He said the people were talking to the devil in the shaking tent. The priest was wrong. God gave the people the power of the drum and the shaking tent.

WE ARE CONFUSED

The church made a lot of mistakes in the past. Everyone here says that. The church damaged our culture. Instead of helping us, the priests made us lose our traditions and spirituality by taking control and running our lives. We listened to the priests too much.

Since we were settled here, there has been a lot of conflict between the ways of our ancestors and the ways of the missionaries. Now, we are so confused, caught in the middle between the Catholic church and our spirituality.

We have many different feelings about the church today. We have different opinions about which religion is good, our religion or the R.C. religion. Many of our elders still respect the church, but they don't like to see it change. Some people think the church is good to have, but we cannot let it run our lives. Many young people are angry with the church for having damaged our culture. Some of us have no complaints about the church. Some of us just don't care about it. Some people feel the church is still controlling our lives.

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PETER PENASHUE

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THE SCHOOL

There are many problems with the school. The school has done a lot of damage to our culture and our children. It has really changed our lives. The school is not working as it is supposed to. The biggest problem is that our children are not learning their culture in school. They are learning the white culture. This is a foreign culture. The school has prevented us from learning our own history. Too many of our children are dropping out.

There are some of us in the community who have no complaints about the school, some who feel that the school has helped them. Some people think the education we get from the school is very important because we need it to keep up with white society. For example, we need education for land claims negotiations and for relocation. Some of us think there have been times when the school has worked better than at other times.

**TEACHING OUR OWN
CULTURE IN SCHOOL**

Our children need to learn about our traditions and spirituality, about legends, hunting, fishing, about how to read the signs and track down the animals, about animal spirits, how to clean the animals, dry the furs, and about how to take care of the bones. Our children should learn about our hunting grounds, where our grandparents used to walk, and how we used to travel in the summer and by dog teams in the winter. They should learn to make canoes, snowshoes, moccasins and other crafts. We want our children to learn how to respect our **ELDERS, OUR CULTURE, AND THE ANIMALS. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!**

**WE NEED A GOOD
EDUCATION**

We want our children to learn English as well as our own culture. But many of our students quit school because the English books are very difficult to understand or even learn. English is our second language. This is hard for Innu students.

OUR CHILDREN NEED HELP

Many children cannot listen and learn anything because they have too many problems. It is not good for the teachers as well because if the children are not listening, they are not learning anything. Children have their problems bottled up inside; they can't get it out. They have too much anger inside of them; they can't leave their problems at home and they can't bring them to school.

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FETER FEMOULL

They don't know who they can go to.

EXPERIENCED GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR NEEDED

We need an experienced guidance counsellor in the school to help the children with their problems at home or at school. The children need someone to listen to them. They need counselling, someone to keep them in school and talk with them about their problems.

WE NEED TRAINED AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

We should have qualified teachers in our school. Many of our teachers are just out of university and they have no experience in how our school works. They start teaching in our school and some of them seem just like kids too. They train here and then they leave.

Innu teachers never went to university. The principal comes to them and offers them a teacher's aid job. They don't know what to do when they enter the classroom. They are not ready.

INNU CONTROL OF SCHOOL

Our children want a better education and we want it for them too. The school is not working for us. We would like to take over control of our own school. Now we have no say in how the school is run. Over the years, we have gone to principals for help and they don't do anything. It is like we don't have the right to complain about the school. We write letters to the superintendent. He is the same. They don't seem to listen when people tell them things. We have every right to go and see what is wrong with the school. It is our school, not the white teachers' school. We should make our own decisions about how to run our school. We should decide which teachers will work there.

SOCIAL SERVICES

We have many different feelings about social services in our community. Some of us think Social Services help people by giving those who have no jobs some assistance. They sometimes help families out with their personal problems, and they give people work to get their U.I. stamps. Some of us have no complaints. But most of us see very serious problems with Social Services here in Utshimassit. We don't like the way Social Services is run. White social workers don't understand us and our culture. We think Social Services is making a lot of decisions about our lives. We feel like social workers control the lives of our families. Social Services is like all government

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PETER PENASHUE

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agencies. They are trying to control us and tell us what we should do.

THEY ARE TAKING OUR CHILDREN

A very big issue for us here in Davis Inlet is the social workers taking children from their homes. Many of us don't like how Social Services is separating families. Innu families used to stay together. We don't like to see our children taken away. If the parents are drinking, the answer is not to take their children away. We think Social services should try to work with the families, not just take the children away.

HELP FOR BATTERED WOMEN

Social Services also sends our women away to Libra House when they are beaten by their husbands. Most women run away from their husbands when they are drunk because they want to be placed in Libra House. A lot of women end up in hospital when they are beaten up by their husbands.

This is an issue we don't agree on. Some of us think the man is the problem. Others think the woman starts the trouble. Some believe Libra House is good for the protection of the women, and others think this only creates more problems. Many of us feel Social Services and Libra House are not dealing with the real problem when they send the women away.

The problem in these family crisis is alcohol. Both women and men need a big help with their drinking. Some of us think it is the right thing to do to charge men when they assault their wives.

But men are human too and they also need help. Social Services doesn't do anything with the abuser. The women and children have to leave the community. They get very lonely and miss home. When they come back, they go to the same situation. The man hasn't changed. Some people think this should be the other way around. Men should be sent out to get help.

NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE ON

Many people are disappointed with the very small amount they get for social assistance. Social Services is hard on us. They only give us a little welfare money. We have very big problems. We don't have enough food to support our

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families. The people with the large families are the ones who suffer the most. The children are often hungry.

WE DEPEND TOO MUCH ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Some of us in the community feel that we have become too dependent on social services these days. We think Social Services has played a major role in the social deterioration in Utshimassit because people can go over to Social Services and get their relief without having to work for it. Many of us don't hunt to feed our children, and some people are not interested in working. They just go to Social Services for support. We should get training and learn something to get future jobs. Now these people have nothing to do, so they drink more.

INNU CONTROL OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Innu social workers should listen to Innu concerns. They should try to explain to the government the problems we have. We want Social Services now to find the best possible way with the input from the community to spend their funds wisely. For example, people who are on Social Assistance should take training for carpentry, crafts and skills for future jobs. The government should spend Social Assistance funds on training. Social Services should take direction from us for now, but it would be really good if we could have an Innu social worker. She could really help our people. Then we would have control over Social Services and make our own policies soon.

THE CLINIC AND HEALTH SERVICES

We used to have our own medicines and heal ourselves. We had strong medicines. We had our own midwives. Now, some of our elders tell us we listen too much to the white doctors. We are losing our medicines.

We are sick from alcohol and gas sniffing. The foods we eat now from the store also make us sick. When we were in the country, we were always healthy because we were eating wild foods. The wild foods are like medicine.

As well, we are sick because there is dirty smelly garbage everywhere, around each and every house. People throw their honey buckets in the community. The ground gets dirty and it goes down under and the water gets dirty.

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PETER PENABAZE

*Find alternative for
new clinic in
Davis Inlet
providing relocation
services*

We have a clinic in our community. This building is very old and very small. It needs repairs. People can only stay there for one night. We depend a lot on nurses and doctors these days.

Some of us think we depend on them too much. But most of us think it is a good thing that we have this clinic. Some people have no complaints with the clinic. One participant said that medical services have improved in Davis Inlet.

But many of us have had problems with the services of the clinic, and the health care we get. We would like to see some changes. We see these problems many times in Davis Inlet, but no one complains. For example, there is a shortage of nurses here at all times. When the doctor comes to the community, he only stays a couple of days. He does not have time to do proper examinations and just prescribes pills. There are many people that are wanting to see him. The short stay is not good. Some of us ask why we can't have a doctor here instead of a travelling doctor. This community is not like other communities. We have big health problems.

NOT MUCH EQUIPMENT

The clinic here doesn't have much medical equipment. Lives could have been saved if the clinic had proper equipment. Too many people have to be sent out. People are sent out now for x-rays and blood tests. We have to go out to get checked for any diseases.

PREGNANT WOMEN

Pregnant women now have to go out of the community to the hospital for a long time. There used to be midwives and they knew what they were doing. Now it is all changed. Some women wait one or two months for their delivery.

THE POLICE AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

We live in a small community. The number of crimes here is increasing. The number of problems in the community is increasing too. In the past, we didn't break any laws. Since there has been more alcohol, a lot of people break the law. We blame the police for some of these problems. Before the police came here, not that many people broke the law. Now, many of our people end up in jail.

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We have a lot of problems with the law. We hurt each other and bring each other to court. Then we feel sorry for that. Some of us think we depend too much on the police. The police and the court don't understand the Innu, and we don't understand their laws.

Some people think it is good to have the police in our community. They think the police are here to keep an eye on the people, and to protect us. The police are here to prevent crimes and tragedies from happening. There are times when we need their help. People who hurt other people or damage other people's property should be arrested.

Some of us say that the community seems quieter when the R.C.M.P. are stationed here. The police can deal with drunks. So the R.C.M.P. are like peace officers for some people, but others say the police do not give us security and sometimes just cause more problems. Some police who come here really try to help the Innu. But others are different and they don't care what happens to us. Some of them are racist. Sometimes the R.C.M.P. do a good job and other times they make big mistakes.

INTERFERING WITH OUR HUNTING

One thing we don't like is when the police interfere with our hunting. R.C.M.P. are like wildlife officers. People go out hunting and they are afraid of the police. Sometimes people get charged for hunting for food for their families. The wildlife is Innu food. We need to eat this country food to survive. Hunting is our tradition and culture. We don't want to lose it. It seems like they are trying to put a stop to our hunting. This is not our way of life. They have no right to do that to us. The R.C.M.P. are interfering in our lives.

JAIL DOESN'T HELP

The R.C.M.P. are always taking our people to jail. Many of us think the police only send the people to jail and then forget about them. They don't care about the Innu in jail. They are not helping the people. People need help for their alcohol sickness. They are not criminals. They are not treated for the sickness while they are put in cells. People need to go to a treatment centre, not to jail.

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PETER PENASQUE

There is also no help for our children who are breaking the law. Children are taken away from their parents. When they come back, they tell other children about the group home. Children are not afraid of the police. They want to be taken away so they break the law. This is not helping our children. One time, the R.C.M.P. arrested a young boy and never even told the parents. When they found out, he was already in Goose Bay.

THE GOVERNMENT STORE

In other stores, they have everything. Here in Davis Inlet, there is hardly any thing in our store. Sometimes the shelves are empty. Every winter, the store runs out of food and other things. In the spring, the store runs out of ammunition for hunting. This spring we can't even buy candles at the store. Many of us think we are sent the garbage and leftovers. We have already complained about the store by writing letters. But the government still must not know that we don't have that much money to order everything from the outside.

FOOD PROBLEMS

There is hardly any food in the store. We are eating the same thing over and over, and we get sick of it. There is often a shortage of foods we really need like milk and baby foods.

We don't have much fresh food in our store. When we complained in the past, we were told we will get fresh food. But a lot of the food that is brought in is not fit to eat. Fresh food that is brought in on government charters is often rotten, like bananas and apples. We open cans, they are rusty or it is mouldy inside. Frozen foods are thawed and frozen again. A lot of times, the freezers and coolers break down, and everything goes bad. It takes a long time to get them fixed.

HIGH COST

Everything in the store is expensive. The government should know we are not wealthy people. The costs should be cut 50%. If you work, you have just enough money to buy food for your children with one week's pay. You don't have any other income. You can't buy clothes for your children. Most people here have low incomes or no income at all. They are on social assistance. They can't pay the bills with the little money they receive.

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PETER FERASBLE

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WE NEED MORE STOCK

There are many things the store could sell that they don't have and that we would like to buy. It is the only big store we have. It should carry everything. Now we can only get some things with special orders. These things should be in the store at all times instead of special orders. We should have some say in what is sold in the store. The only way for it to work is if we are involved in ordering the stock.

WE DEPEND TOO MUCH ON THE STORE

People depend too much on store food. They don't do enough hunting. The children especially don't eat wild foods and they depend on canned food or junk food. They eat too many sweets. This is bad too.

INNU CONTROL OF THE STORE

Many of us believe we should run the store. Governments should not be running our business in town. The reason why the store is poor is because white people are running it for us. We don't need white people to do things for us. Some of us think the store should be changed to a co-op with members having a say in how they want the store to operate. We could fill it up with fresh food. People would be able to use the freezers in the summer.

If the store is not a coop, it should be transferred to private hands. We could build our own store. If, for example, the Band Council took over the store, the money would come back to us.

REGAINING CONTROL OF OUR LIVES

We must govern and run our own affairs. We need to solve our own problems and not the white agencies. We need self-government. We have to take over all the government institutions: the school, social services, the clinic, policing, the store and so on. We should have Innu teachers, social workers, nurses, police and so on. At the moment, we don't have many formally educated Innu to take over these institutions. We must encourage our students to attend colleges, universities and other training institutions. We want our children to be well-educated in both Innu-aimun and English.

SELF-GOVERNMENT

We need to set up our own community policies, to make our own laws, and set up penalties for when they are broken. We must let the government know that we must have our own laws in our own community. We must have strong voices for the government to hear us. We should tell

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PETER PENASHEE

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the government what he has done to us. We need to make a list of all the things we need, give the list to government and tell them we need to do it on our own. We need to learn how government works, but we should be very careful what we learn from the government. In the old days, we always used to help ourselves.

WE NEED TO PRACTISE OUR WAYS

We need to learn our way of life, keep our culture, traditions, values and spirituality. We need to listen to and respect our elders. They should be our leaders and advisors. The children need to learn our culture. We want them to live as Innu. We must talk to them about the past more. They will listen and understand.

It is not even fifty years since we have been losing our culture. We can still go back to our traditional ways. There are a few old people here who remember how we used to travel and hunt in the country. Once the elders are gone, there will be no one left to tell us how we used to live. Some people say it is our fault we are losing our culture. We should encourage each other to keep going into the country and using the land.

We need to do research on our culture. We should let the elders teach us about sacred things, like what to do with the bones, the shaking tent, sweat lodge, and things that we used for medicine. We need to respect the animal spirits. That is how we are going to regain control of our lives and our culture.

WE NEED MEETINGS

We need to have meetings, invite all the people, sit down and talk about our problems and our future in public. We need to look at the causes of our problems and find ways to solve them. If we don't discuss our problems in public, nothing will change. These problems will not go away just like that, but if we work together and talk, we can begin to solve them. When we get together at a community meeting, people should listen. We need to hear one another.

WE NEED TO STOP DRINKING

We need to stop drinking and the children need to stop sniffing gas. We must get rid of alcohol and feel like a new people. People are trying to stop drinking now. The only way we can solve our problems is if people are willing to look at their drinking and help themselves with their

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problems. If 50% of our people are sober, we can do things.

Parents and children need professional counselling. We need to go to A.A. meetings regularly. We need a lot of help with our drinking. People need to learn what alcohol does to them, how it makes them sick. We need to sit down together, from elders to small children, and discuss all the tragedies that have happened. We have to educate our children about what has happened in the past; we don't want to see this happen again. We need to hear the warnings of the Spirit. Our spirituality will help us to stop drinking.

People should talk to their relatives about their drinking. We also need to talk about our kids about how relatives, our children and people are dying from alcohol. We need to ask ourselves why we keep drinking. We need to look at the problems we are hiding from when we drink. This would help us to leave a lot of our problems on this island.

THE CHILDREN NEED HELP

The children need our help. Some of our children don't care about anything. The parents have a responsibility to listen to their children. We need to tell them how good they are. Children are so important. They are our future. We need our children and they need us too. We must show them that we care about them and that we want what is best for them.

RELOCATING THE COMMUNITY

We want to relocate before the community gets worse. If we don't move soon to another location, we will have other problems, not only in the community but also in the country. When people have better living conditions, they will change. They will be more comfortable and this will help people to stop drinking. There will be fewer problems. We want our lives to be more stable at this new location. We want to start new lives for ourselves.

We need to move away from this island so we can start off with proper housing which has water and sewer, basements and furnaces. The houses should be big enough for our families. We should must also take good care of our homes. Our village should be on the mainland.

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PETER PENASHUE

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We will never again make the same mistakes we made when we were moved on this island. We will not allow the government to make the same mistakes either. Relocation is the number one priority.

THIS IS AN INNU PROJECT

This time it is an Innu project, not the government's or the church's. We must make our own decisions and run our community the way we want to, without outside help from the government.

We should look at our problems now, while we are still on this island and try to leave the things that make us suffer here. We need to discuss these problems and try to find ways to solve them. We need to plan for relocation now, not later. It is important to plan if we expect to see this relocation take place.

We need to talk to our children about relocation. We should think about what the new community will look like. We should only build new houses at the new site. It is a waste of money to build any new houses here.

THE BAND COUNCIL IS WORKING ON A NEW DESIGN

The Band Council is now working on a design for the new community. People will be able to see this new design soon. Everyone needs to talk about this at meetings. It will take a lot of talking for people to agree. The leaders will have to explain a lot to the people. The Band Council should really try to build better houses at the new location.

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

We want to plan for the next fifty years because our population is growing fast. We want to make sure we have good sewage facilities, and that we don't pollute the water around the new community.

The Band Council must have the authority to make laws for our new community. There should be laws about things like young children driving skidoos, about killing dogs, gas sniffing, and drunk people driving. If we want to see the community dry, they should make a law banning alcohol. Many of us are saying alcohol should be banned in the new location. We need to have public meetings to talk about having a dry community.

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

We want a healthy environment. We need clean land and water. We should try not to spoil the beauty of nature where we relocate. We shouldn't dump our garbage wherever we please. We should keep our new village clean.

GOVERNMENTS NOT SUPPORTING RELOCATION?

We don't understand why the governments are not supporting relocation. We have had so much trouble asking for relocation. They should let us know soon. We all know that our homes are overcrowded and we have no place to build new houses in this village. We have no water. Nothing is changing. Our living conditions are the same. But we have to go through government. They control everything and want to rule the land. This land is our land.

Our children want a better education and we want it for them too. The school is not working for us. We would like to take over control of our own school. Now we have no say in how the school is run. Over the years, we have gone to principals for help and they don't do anything. It is like we don't have the right to complain about the school. We write letters to the superintendent. He is the same. They don't seem to listen when people tell them things. They don't care. We have every right to go and see what is wrong with the school. It is our school, not the white teachers' school. We should speak up about the school. We should make our own decisions about how to run our school. We should decide which teachers will work at the school. We should listen to our children. We need to ask them why they are unhappy with the school. Some of us think the school should be closed if we can't have our way.

Many of us don't understand how the school is run. We don't know why some teachers are fired. We wonder how much money is spent on the school? In the past, we helped our children. We were never paid for teaching the children in our culture. But now, we need more funding for our school in Utshimassit.

We need elders to teach in the school. We need to encourage our students to go to university for teacher training. Some of us would like to see an Innu principal soon. We could find someone to work with him/her. Others feel we need to have certified Innu teachers to take control of the school. We would all like to see more Innu people involved with the school. We have volunteers now coming into the school and the children really enjoy them.

We need to learn to not be scared to do things our own way.

"Now I'm old and I'm stuck in this community. As for my grandchildren, they are learning the white man's ways, not our own ways. I'm sad that our culture is fading away. Who is to blame for that? In old Davis Inlet, the children used to respect their elders and they were always ready to help their parents. After moving here, the children changed. They don't care about their parents. I really blame the school for the way they are teaching our children. Life in Davis Inlet is getting worst every year. Some of the young people are very good hunters but they don't follow our ways. They don't respect the animals. They are like white people. In my days, every part of the animal was important. The skull had to be hung on the tree. It was the same for small animals." James Pasteen

SOCIAL SERVICES
Mitshumutshimau - THE FOOD BOSS

"In the old days, we used to get relief from the store manager. We never saw a family allowance check. We had a piece of paper which we would give to the clerk in the store. We would go to the counter and take the things we needed. I don't know how much the relief was, but we could buy a lot of things. You could buy a lot

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PETER PENASHUE

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of food, gun, clothing, and blankets with one month's relief. Later, it was the priest that gave us social assistance. He handed out food and clothing.

"Once a police officer sent me to tell other people that they should come to old Davis Inlet for relief. I went and when I returned to Sango, he was there as the relief worker. He never paid me anything. He told us we should work for him, but we didn't want to. He told us none of us would get relief. I didn't know he left a message for me at the store in Zoar, halfway between Davis Inlet and Nain. The message was that I would get relief only when I was ready to go to the country." James Pasteen.

"Social Services used to come by and give us welfare, then they gave us jobs, and now they take our children away from their homes." Band Council.

Nowadays, we have many different feelings about social services in our community. Some of us think Social Services help people by giving those who have no jobs some assistance. They sometimes help families out with their personal problems, and they give people work to get their U.I. stamps. Some of us have no complaints. But most of us see very serious problems with Social Services here in Utshimassits. We don't like the way Social Services is run. White social workers don't understand us and our culture. We think Social Services is making a lot of decisions about our lives. We feel like social workers control the lives of our families. They ask too many questions when people ask for their help. Social Services is like all government agencies. They are trying to control us and tell us what we should do.

"I think Social Services is doing a good job for us. They help many people especially those who are sick and not fit to work. Social Services is supposed to look after people who are sick." Madeline Rich.

"Social Services is messing up our lives, our culture and our relationships with each other. Some social workers don't care about the Innu." Gathering Voices Participant. (John Nui)

"I thanked them for food supplies that I got when I couldn't work. I've been living on social assistance every since my husband died." (Innu elder)

"I worked for Social Services just to qualify for U.I.C. That is the only thing I like about them." Sam Mistenapeo

"People now depend on Social Services. Without Social Services, people would starve." Manuk Mistenapeo.

THEY ARE TAKING OUR CHILDREN

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PETER PENASHUE

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A very big issue for us here in Davis Inlet is the social workers taking children from their homes. Many of us don't like how Social Services is separating families. Innu families used to stay together. We don't like to see our children taken away. This is damaging our families. Too many of our children are away outside the community. It seems very easy for Social Services to take the children away. They don't listen to the parents, and don't give any help to the parents with their problems when they take the children away. If the parents are drinking, the answer is not to take their children away. When a child is taken away from parents, some of us feel it is like being sent to jail. It is true that some parents don't look after their children. The kids are getting into trouble. But we think Social services should try to work with the families, not just take the children away.

"One thing that is very new to me is that Social Services takes the children away, without even explaining to the parents why they take them away." oRrgnoRp Remasnahp12M0Yr employees.

Social workers should help parents too. They take the children away to punish the parents. This is very wrong. The children that are in the group home now will come back. Nothing will change."
Band Council

"When they remove the children, it's like babysitting for the parents so they can drink as much as they want. They just move the child to a different home. When they remove a child, they do more damage to the parents and children. When kids are removed and then returned, they don't listen to their parents. Families need help so that when the children return they can feel free and comfortable. Social Services should work with parents on problems and with children too. Parents, children, and social services should work together." Alcohol Program Workers.

"I don't understand why social workers take children away from their families. I remember in the old days, the Innu used to take care of their children themselves. Sometimes a child is abused or not looked after. I remember a woman was really mean to her little boy. She used to tie him up, and in the winter she left him outside and his feet got badly frost bitten. I was very worried about the child. Nobody could do anything about this. The husband was afraid to say anything to his wife. The mother said she hated the boy. The priest said God is with the boy, and when he dies the boy will be with God in heaven. I don't understand this. I don't know why he didn't say anything to the woman. I really missed the child when he died. The priest made me really mad when I believed him when he said it was okay for this child to die because he was so badly treated. I don't know why Innu people let this happen to the child. We listen to the priest too much. I hate to see children taken away from their homes. The Innu should take over Social Services." Cecile Rich.

"Nowadays, we are not allowed to hit our kids. But in the past,

our parents used to hit us when we got into trouble." Marie Georgette Mistenapeo.

Most of the kids that are taken away are not getting the assistance they need from the social worker. It is wrong for the social worker to separate kids from their families. Families being broken up puts a big pressure on the kids. They have mixed feelings about what is happening to them. The social worker is only doing more damage to the kids. That is why the kids do the things they do. When the social worker takes the kids when they were small, it isn't such a big problem.

But the social worker is making more problems in many families.

"They send the kids to group homes, and when the kids are brought back to their community, they are messed up. They don't listen to their parents. They want to make their own decisions." Joyce Rich. (Clinic worker)

We don't understand how Social Services makes these decisions. It seems to be very easy for them to take the children away. There always seems to be money for transportation. Some times, when a child is placed in a group home, social workers don't even bother to talk to the parents. It is like they own the children. Social services should explain to the parents why they have taken the child away. "Social Services took my family away from us. We don't understand Social Services. Why do they take my friends and family away?" High school student.

"Parents drink, but they still love their children." N. Byrne.

Some of us see the group homes as part of the problem in these family crisis. Some parents go to Social Services to take their kids because they are sniffing gas and they don't know what to do. As well, the kids are getting into trouble because they want to be sent to the group home in Sheshatshiu. Some of them are sniffing gas so they will be sent away. We know the reason children like to be in the group homes is because they get good clothing, they don't have to do any work with their parents, and they have running water. The social workers are telling the kids if they are abused they should come to Social Services for help. Some of us believe this is the reason why there is so much solvent abuse and gas sniffing going on here. The kids want to be taken away. The social workers listen to the children and they don't listen to the parents.

Sometimes we don't have enough money to look after our children. Sometimes they are bought luxuries. Some of us worry that this causes them to lose their culture and way of life. They also lose their language. They get brainwashed by this white society stuff. Sometimes when children are removed they are put in one home, and then moved to another. Sometimes these homes are not better than the ones they left, and they are not cared for properly. Foster homes are not given enough money to look after these children.

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They have to feed these kids using their own money. Also, when a worker takes a child away from his home, they also take the welfare money. It is like the worker is stealing from the people. Then when the child is ready to come home, it takes a long time for the parents to receive the family allowance checks.

"A few years ago, a social worker took my child away and put him in the group home in Sheshatshit. The social workers promised us that our child would come home every holiday, like Christmas and Easter. Since they took our child away, we have only seen him twice here in Davis Inlet. When my mother died, we thought he would be sent home for his grandmother's funeral, but he wasn't." Kateri Gregoire.

"The social worker took girls from here and sent them to Sheshatshit. They were placed in drinking homes. They are not looked after properly down in Sheshatshit. They were only brought clothes once. When their guardians were drunk, they were kicked out of the homes where they were staying. They stayed out all night on the roads. These kids are being abused a lot. They are not happy out there. One woman got a call from her daughter in Sheshatshit. She told her mother she was hungry." Construction women workers.

"Once I fostered a girl from Sheshashiu and we got only \$300/month for food and everything." Gathering Voices Participant.

Some of us believe that if social workers have to take children away from their parents, they should place them in the community with families here. They should place them with the ir relatives. Or, we should have our own group home built in the community. Some of our children are asking for this. We should help our troubled children if they need help. We should stop Social Services from taking our children away. We care about our children.

HELP FOR BATTERED WOMEN?

Social Services also sends our women away to Libra House when they are beaten by their husbands. Most women run away from their husbands when they are drunk because they want to be placed in Libra House. A lot of women end up in hospital when they are beaten up by their husbands. This is an issue we don't agree on. Some of us think the man is the problem. Others think the woman starts the trouble. Some believe Libra House is good for the protection of the women, and others think this only creates more problems. Many of us feel Social Services and Libra House are not dealing with the real problem when they send the women away.

"The social worker is trying to help abused and battered women. Even the doctors are involved when women end up in hospital. They are afraid for the women, that they might be seriously hurt. Some

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of us believe the social workers and the doctors are the only ones who are trying to do something for battered women, for the sake of the women's lives. We are not doing anything for battered women." Marie Georgette Mistenapeo.

"I have seen many women depend on Social Services, not for food but for other problems. When a man and his wife get into a fight when they are drunk, the woman can go to the social worker and tell her she has been beaten badly by her husband. The social worker calls Libra House in Goose Bay, and on the same day or the next day, the woman is sent out to stay at Libra House. The man is left behind and charged with assault. The woman takes her problems to Libra House. While she is there, Libra House piles on more problems, and she is sent home. Sometimes, the woman starts the trouble first, and it is the man who pays for it. When a husband goes to court, he has to go to jail or pay a fine. The money he spends on the fine could be spent on food for his children. I think the community should solve these problems not anyone from Social Services, the nurse or Libra House." Joachim Nui.

Some of us know this is not a new problem. We must try to remember what was happening before. Women used to go through beatings with no one to turn to. In old Davis Inlet, when women were beaten up by their husbands, they would go to the priest for help and support. Women are still being battered. We are not helping these women.

"In the old days, we were like these battered women. Older women don't talk about ourselves when we were like these battered women. We are only looking at other women who are battered. We used to be like these women. Also, we say whatever we like about these women. We seem to be surprised about what is happening. We shouldn't be because these things used to happen in the past." Marie Georgette Mistenapeo. (Gathering Voices Participant.)

The problem in these family crisis is alcohol. Both women and men need a big help with their drinking. Some of us think it is the right thing to do to charge men when they assault their wives. Sometimes the R.C.M.P doesn't do anything about these assaults. We can't let these beatings go on. Women are beaten up and that is why they leave their husbands. Men have no right to beat their women. It is a crime. Abused women make a right decision by going to the nurses when they are beaten.

But men are human too and they also need help. Social Services don't do anything with the abuser. The women and children have to leave the community. They get very lonely and miss home. When they come back, they go to the same situation. The man hasn't changed. Some people think this should be the other way around. Men should be sent out to get help.

Many of us think men and women should try to work out their problems together. Sometimes, the social workers decide too

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quickly to send the women to Libra House. Some of us wish the women would get counselling first. More questions need to be asked. It is the same for the man. The judge shouldn't send anyone directly to jail. Women can get help in our community. Social Services doesn't seem to care what happens to married couples. Some of us think they are to blame if married couples are separated. It would be better if we had a shelter for women here in the community.

NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE ON

Many people are disappointed with the very small amount they get for social assistance. Social Services is hard on us. They only give us a little welfare money. We have very big problems. We don't have enough food to support our families. The people with the large families are the ones who suffer the most. The children are often hungry. Children also need clothing, and parents need other things, not just food. Sometimes we have to wait a week for our next check when we don't have any more food. The social workers don't even help us when we are waiting for our U.I.C. They don't try to find out if people have enough food for their families. They always make some kind of excuses when people ask for money. Social workers, male or female, are responsible to give assistance to people who need relief.

"Now, we have a family allowance check. We can spend it any way we want, but things in the store are very expensive. We hardly get enough money to buy food for our families. We can't pay the light bills and we can't buy clothing for our children. People on social assistance now suffer the most." John Poker.

"The Social Services gives out \$86 every month for individuals which is not nearly enough."

"I remember I didn't have enough money to buy food. Social Services wouldn't give me money to buy food for my children. I took my son to the clinic. I was told I was starving my child." Family Violence Project.

"Before I got my old age pension, the worker took one hundred dollars of my relief, and another \$100 from my assistance. I asked him why he did that and he told me I should work. He knew I could not work because I was sick. He didn't even tell me what he was doing with my welfare money." James Pasteen.

"Sometimes people don't have food to send their children to school and they go to the social worker for emergency assistance. The social worker knows this is true and still won't give assistance. Once I asked her to come to my house to see. She said no. She only gave me \$56." Gathering Voices Participant.

The social assistance that comes to us is payment from the development of our own resources. Maybe the government thinks we don't know that. But we know. Other people think we get help from

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the government, but the money comes from our resources. This money from all over Canada comes from native peoples' land.

WE DEPEND TOO MUCH ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Some of us in the community feel that we have become too dependent on social services these days. We think Social Services has played a major role in the social deterioration in Utshimassits because people can go over to Social Services and get their relief without having to work for it. We don't hunt to feed our children, and some people are not interested in working. They just go to Social Services for support. We should get training and learn something to get future jobs. Now these people have nothing to do, so they drink more.

"Without Social Services, people could help themselves; people would survive. Social Services give people social assistance and people depend on that. If the people didn't get social assistance, what would happen to them? Would they survive or not?" Agat Piwas.

"People who have long-term assistance have no worries because help is always there when they need it. Some people are not interested in working or going into the country because they have become addicted to social assistance. People who are on social assistance have no worries. All they do is drink and not work." Simon and Marie Pokue.

HOW DECISIONS GET MADE

We wonder how social workers make decisions about things, like when they take children away. They don't have to call St. John's. They have no problems paying for the transportation. But when people are desperate for food, they can't get emergency assistance. Or when people look for work at Social Services to get their U.I. stamps, they are told there is no money. Sometimes a Social Services worker has to call St. John's before they can hire a worker. If there is money for jobs, do they have the authority to hire someone right away? Do they always have to call St. John's first.

"One time, my daughter was looking for work with Social Services and she was never hired. She was never told why not." K. Gregoire.

SOCIAL SERVICES JOBS

We have a number of other problems with Social Services jobs. Social Services gives work to people so they can qualify for U.I.C. People are paid very low incomes. They don't have enough income to support their families. Then when they are on U.I.C., Social Services can't even give out anything for people who are out of food and gas. They can't get emergency supplies. The other problem is when a man or woman are working and the other

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one goes to Social Services for a job, they don't get hired. For example, if the man works at the Band Council and his wife wants to get a job too, Social Services won't hire her because the man is working. When only one parent works, there is not enough money to buy food for the family. Then, when the kids go hungry, the social worker tells us we are not feeding our children and they want to put them in another home. Also, some of us feel that relatives of Innu social workers are the ones who get the jobs first.

"I heard one think in St. John's that concerns me. I was told that when social services employs people for short-term work, people in Labrador are making less money with these job opportunities than they make in Newfoundland." Simon Noah

STAFF PROBLEMS

There are only two Innu workers in the Social Services office at the moment. The Innu workers look after the financial assistance. There is no social worker. They come in here and stay for such a short time. This is not good enough. They should stay here permanently and help out the people who are having problems. Sometimes the social workers that come here are very young and they have no experience. They don't want to listen to us about our culture. They don't understand the Innu. They say they can make the decisions because they are the social worker. Some social workers don't care about the people in the community and they don't know what they are doing. They make decisions about our lives and damage to our families. And then they leave.

Also, there is never any training for Innu social services workers. They are told there is no funding. We don't know where they get all the money for transportation for the children. We know they spend a lot of money taking children away. Our workers don't have training but they are expected to do the work of the social workers.

"Last year, social services sent a young social worker. She came out of university. I had a real hard time with her. And she didn't know anything about being a social worker. She was supposed to train me, but I did all the training for her. I complained about her to the regional office, and they also ignored me. They didn't care and didn't want to hear our problems. They just wanted me to sit back and be an angel. We are no angels when we see problems. Let's not sit back and let it go. We have to fight for our rights.

I'd been asking them for a raise too, but then again, they said no. I worked with these people for many years. I finally got really fed up with them. They don't care about the people in the community. I remember when the regional director came in the community. He asked only, "How many people are drinking alcohol?" And he always asked if the people are still drinking. He doesn't

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care about his staff." N. Byrne

(Also here we should put the list of all the jobs the Innu workers are expected to do. Nympha, you have that list in your letter to the Minister.)

Sometimes the non-Innu social workers make Innu workers remove children from their homes.

"The non-Innu social workers are making Innu workers remove children from their homes. This is not Innu work to remove a child from his home. I will not do this to the people. I am not a social worker. That is the white social worker's responsibility.

"The work I had to do for Social Services is crazy. I am sorry for the people in the community. I feel really bad when I think about the things that the white social workers made me do to the people. I remember once I was told by a white social worker to remove a child from her home. That wasn't my job. She kept pushing me to go to the home. She said that she didn't speak our language and I'd have to go myself. I refused to do it. Then she said she would do it herself, and I had to go with her for interpreting." Nympha Byrne, ex-Social Services worker.

They only do damage to families, then they leave. The community should help the troubled children if they need help. Innu Social Services worker also have to hire the people for the work projects. They are expected to supervise them. They find that the people they hire don't listen to them. If there was a social worker, they might listen to her more. They find it just too hard when workers miss work. They don't know what to do. Some people complain that the Innu workers only find jobs for their relatives or their husband's relatives. Others complain that the Innu worker fights with her workers when she hires people. They think something should be said to her. This should not be allowed. Some people think that this worker's drinking interferes with her job.

INNU CONTROL OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Innu social workers should listen to Innu concerns. They should try to explain to the government the problems we have. We want Social Services now to find the best possible way with the input from the community to spend their funds wisely. For example, people who are on Social Assistance should take training for carpentry, crafts and skills for future jobs. The government should spend Social Assistance funds on training. Social Services should take direction from us for now, but it would be really good if we could have an Innu social worker. She could really help our people. Then we would have control over Social Services and make our own policies soon. That is the only way to make it work.

THE CLINIC AND HEALTH SERVICES