

BRIEFING NOTE

Confidential: For Internal Use

UPDATE: CURRENT SITUATION IN DAVIS INLET**ISSUE:**

- Mr. Al Garmen, Health Canada, contacted Labrador & Aboriginal Affairs (L&AAS) late Monday afternoon, November 8th, 1999. Mr. Garmen had been to the community of Davis Inlet November 3rd, 1999 and called to express much concern regarding the current situation. Mr. Garmen witnessed many youth sniffing gas in public without any attempt of intervention from the community. He expressed his concern that Davis Inlet was a tragedy waiting to happen.
- Health Labrador Corporation (HLC), through contact with Innu Healing Coordinator Mary Jane Andrew, learned late Tuesday November 9th, 1999 that Mr. Garmen had met with Innu representatives and both parties had collaborated to devise a short term plan to respond to the chronic gas sniffers in Davis Inlet. This information had not been shared with L&AAS during Mr. Garmen's telephone call on November 8th, 1999.

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Timely recruitment of the vacant Social Worker position in Davis Inlet.
- HLC to hold an emergency meeting with the Davis Inlet Band Council. This will mean requesting HLC initiate contact with the Band and offer immediate assistance to the community to prepare an action plan which focuses on intervention of children / youth at risk. This point is particularly relevant for the Christmas period and last year, a "Safety Plan for Children in Davis Inlet" was developed. Recommendations contained in this Safety Plan could form the basis of a longer term strategy.
- Strong provincial participation in the Davis Inlet Healing Committee. A meeting is scheduled for Wednesday December 1st, 1999. Ms. Delia Connell and Ms. Kate Gray from HLC, Mr. John Berniquez and Ms. Pam Rodgers from L&AAS, and Ms. Loretta Chard, Department of Health & Community Services will be attending.

BACKGROUND:

- In June 1999, the community forced the removal of the Social Worker and efforts to hire a new Social Worker have been unsuccessful. In the interim, a social worker and community service worker from Sheshatshiu have been rotated into the community to respond to crisis on an as needed basis.
- Davis Inlet has two Community Services Worker positions however, until very recently, only one position was filled and it was rumored that this individual was planning to resign prior to Christmas 1999. Currently, both Community Services Worker positions are filled.
- Efforts to recruit a Social Worker for Davis Inlet is a priority item for HLC. Their current recruitment strategy includes posting the position as a position based in Sheshatshiu and rotated into Davis Inlet every other week. Hopefully, this strategy will make it easier to fill the position quickly.

Doug

503.02.04

Mell

508.06.04

- Following Mr. Garmen's telephone call, HLC and L&AAS discussed the reported situation in Davis Inlet. It is HLC's philosophy that any efforts to facilitate intervention must come from the community itself with HLC supporting Innu efforts in a role that the Innu determine appropriate for HLC. However, a more pro-active approach was discussed which included HLC taking an assertive role with the Band Council by contacting them and offering immediate assistance to reduce the risk to children / youth.
- HLC indicated they would, as a starting point, contact community members to assess how the community was feeling about the current situation and determine whether any efforts by HLC to assist would be accepted. It was their intention, upon acceptance by the community, to offer to mobilize a team to go in to Davis Inlet and work with the community to devise a plan of action. Ms. Connell attempted to contact Chief Mark Nui and Healing Coordinator Mary Jane Andrew.
- Ms. Connell contacted a long-term public health nurse who was able to update her first-hand on the current situation in the community. Ms. Connell was advised that the situation in Davis Inlet had remained unchanged and was no worse than usual. The public health nurse was unaware that Health Canada officials had been to the community in the previous week.
- As HLC has been informed by Mary Jane Andrew that a plan with Health Canada is in the works, Ms. Connell intended only to contact Chief Nui and offer assistance to the community. HLC felt that the immediacy of the situation had altered since Health Canada / Innu had a plan to respond to youth most at risk. It is not known whether Ms. Connell was successful in contacting Chief Nui.
- Ms. Kate Gray, Regional Manager and Director of Child, Youth & Family Services, has been to the community to investigate an allegation of sexual assault. It is anticipated that Ms. Gray will be able to provide details / assessment of the current situation.
- HLC's philosophy that efforts to facilitate intervention must come from the Innu community itself with HLC supporting Innu efforts in a role that the Innu determine appropriate for HLC, is both understandable and appropriate. However there are concerns that a tragic event could occur in Davis Inlet at any point in time. L&AAS has taken the position that it is the Province's responsibility to ensure it is doing all it can to ensure the safety of children / youth at risk. These points of view have been discussed with Loretta Chard, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Health & Community Service in a meeting held November 29th, 1999.

Labrador & Aboriginal Affairs
November 30th, 1999