

Information Note
Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat

Title: Innu Round Table

Issue: To provide an overview of the 04 October 2012 meeting of the Innu Round Table

Background:

- On 04 October 2012, the Innu Round Table (IRT) convened as scheduled for its second meeting. The IRT has been supported in principle by NL and Canada, and succeeds the Labrador Innu Comprehensive Healing Strategy (LICHS). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Innu-proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) and the status of IRT subcommittees.
- The Province was represented by senior officials from the Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (IGAA) and the Departments of Advanced Education and Skills (AES), Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), Health and Community Services (HCS), and Justice (JUS). Canada was represented by senior regional officials from Health Canada (HC) and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), and the Innu were represented by councilors and advisors from Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, as well as the Innu Nation's newly-elected Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief.

Current Status:

- The Province identified several concerns with the draft ToR, including: (i) the commitment to form five subcommittees (three "new") prior to development of their mandates; (ii) the call for Ministers to be "invited" to IRT meetings; and, (iii) the inconsistent assignment of administrative support responsibilities for the IRT and each of its subcommittees. Innu officials suggested the ToR could be adjusted, as none of the proposed changes were objectionable. The Province was the only party to raise specific concerns with the ToR at the meeting, but all parties undertook to submit written comments by mid-October.
- The two subcommittees that will carry over from the LICHS are Income Support (IS) and Child and Family Services. In respect of the former, the Innu have worked with AES to develop a demonstration project proposal for IS delivery by Innu in the Innu communities, with oversight and auditing by AES officials. That proposal is currently under consideration by the Minister of AES, but is hoped will facilitate devolution of IS program administration from NL to the Innu (Canada will remain responsible for funding). In respect of the latter, the Innu have revised their approach and will now focus on CYFS's Labrador Service Delivery Model (LSDM). Although the LSDM arose independent of the IRT, its progress has been significant and the Innu are looking to seize its momentum to progress towards devolution.
- The LSDM, which began in 2010 as a multilateral forum to discuss service delivery in Labrador, included the Labrador Innu, the Nunatsiavut Government (NG), and the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) in an effort to design a model appropriate for application in Aboriginal communities. That process has led to three draft Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) among CYFS and each of the two Innu communities and the NG (an MOU with the NCC is not appropriate, as the NCC has no role in service delivery for its members). Each MOU provides for information sharing regarding children and youth on CYFS caseloads in the applicable CYFS zone, and establishes a Planning Circle comprised of

officials from CYFS and the appropriate Aboriginal organisation, to discuss caseloads, best practices, and opportunities for early intervention and prevention. The Planning Circles will also enable longer-term, strategic planning for the delivery of services in the respective Aboriginal communities,

- In respect of the three “new” subcommittees (Capacity; Health and Healing; Justice and Policing), NL and Canada continue to await Innu proposals for the terms of reference or mandate of those subcommittees.
- Several Mushuau Innu First Nation (MIFN) councilors raised the issue of MIFN’s financial situation, noting that there was a deficit of \$7-8M. The MIFN noted these financial difficulties were precluding MIFN from purchasing gasoline for Natuashish for the winter, and asked federal officials whether any funding was available. AANDC officials noted they had been working with the MIFN constantly over the preceding weeks to identify the cause of the financial difficulties, and to develop accountability measures to ensure such financial distress could not recur. However, AANDC officials noted funding was available. The parties convened an Innu-Canada side table during the lunch hour to discuss the issue further, and the parties later reported back to the IRT that agreement had been reached to conclude new financial accountability measures and continue to work to address the financial situation, and for AANDC to provide funding to the MIFN to facilitate the requisite purchase of gasoline.
- Provincial officials noted the meeting was very productive and positive, with Innu leadership expressing the need for accountability within the community, as well as community-driven solutions to problems suffered by the Innu, with the support, as necessary, from Canada and the Province. This is consistent with the Province’s approach to the IRT itself, as well as to other social challenges, such as recurring solvent abuse in Natuashish.

Action Being Taken:

- IGAA will assemble all NL comments on the ToR for submission to the Innu by mid-October.
- The next meeting of the IRT is scheduled for 05 December 2012 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

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Date: 10 October 2012