

NOV-14-00 12:45 From: DEPT OF INDIAN & NORTHERN AFFAIRS

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Mushuau Innu



Mushuau Innu First Nation

Box 107 • Uluhmasait • Labrador

AOP 1A0

"People of the Barrrens"
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FAX	
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Phone - 902-661-6349

November 9, 2000

Mr. Bill Montour
Regional Director General
Indian & Northern Affairs
Box 100
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3

Dear Mr. Montour:

I would like to thank you for meeting with me on such short notice on Saturday, November 4, 2000 in your offices in Amherst, NS. As the elected Chief of the Mushuau Innu, I firmly believe that we must work cooperatively to ensure that the pressing health, social, housing and economic conditions in my community are addressed on an urgent basis.

During our meeting, I outlined for you and Mr. Ian Gray, some of the recent sad history of our peoples. My great-grandparents enjoyed a healthy nomadic life on the barrrens of Labrador living in a sustainable productive environment. Attempts to colonize our people by governments and churches have had a devastating impact which continues to plague us today. I recounted for you examples of the abuse we suffered and showed you new evidence of the substance abuse that exists among our youth today.

Healing in our community remains an elusive dream. The promises of healing have been hollow as the recent Auditor General of Canada's report points out. We have been victims in a bureaucratic game of "hot potato" as responsibility for our plight has been passed among federal departments and back and forth with the province. It's time for that game to stop. We have a commitment from the Minister of Indian Affairs to register Innu and to create reserves and this puts responsibility for Innu primarily and clearly in the hands of your department, Indian Affairs. In that regard, I requested and you agreed, to take the lead role in coordinating federal departments with respect to all dealings with our community - including healing.

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During our meeting you asked me, "What can we (Indian Affairs) do?". I told you that I am prepared and open to working with you and indicated further my personal respect for you as a First Nation person. I advised you that I have spoken to the key leaders in our community and have a pledge from each of them to work cooperatively to end the in-fighting that has hurt our community and given governments the opportunity to divert the blame for lack of progress to us. In this regard, I requested that you give me, as the new Chief, the opportunity to set the governance and administration in our community back on track. You agreed and I appreciate your confidence in me as indicated by your concurrence to allow me until June 2001 to demonstrate our capacity and resolve to address the financial and administrative problems in our community.

As a follow-up to our meeting in Amherst, it was agreed that we would proceed with a meeting on November 8, 2000 in Goose Bay between Mushuau Innu Band Council, our senior staff, and federal departments. I am writing to confirm commitments concluded at both our meeting in Amherst and the follow-up meeting in Goose Bay which was attended by Indian Affairs, Health Canada, and Human Resources Development Canada. We appreciated the efforts of Ian Gray in chairing the meeting, but were very disappointed that Al German from Health Canada and Sterling Payton from ACCA did not attend although they had previously confirmed they would.

The following represents our understandings:

1. **Band Administration & Management**

It was agreed during our Amherst meeting that Mushuau Innu would have the opportunity of making required improvements in our Band administration and management without the need for co-management. We set a timetable of June 2001 over which period this transition will take place.

A key first step is the appointment of a senior manager to oversee the management and administration of Band Council programs and services. In this regard, I am pleased to advise you that Edgar Branton has agreed to move back to Devils Inlet and assume the senior role we discussed. You and your staff are familiar with Edgar's excellent reputation and past work in our community. Not only does he have the requisite professional qualifications, he has a deep understanding of our people and our culture. Most importantly, he enjoys the respect of all our leadership and the people of our community.

We will be developing a job description for Edgar over the next several weeks and would welcome your input.

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2. *Remedial Management Plan*

We agreed that a Remedial Management Plan (RMP) will have to be put in place to detail the steps and actions that will be taken by Band Council and our administration to stabilize our spending and address the deficit. In that regard, we agreed that the current mid-year audit being undertaken by Coombs and Gardner, will be updated until the end of October 2000. You agreed to pay for this interim audit.

Based on this audit, an RMP will be developed for our joint approval. We expect Edgar to have the lead role in the development of the RMP but agree to utilize professional accounting and technical support as may be required. It is our goal to have a first draft of our RMP by the date of our next meeting, December 12, 2000.

3. *Monitoring Progress*

We welcome your commitment to work closely with us in monitoring the progress we plan to make in the management and administration of our affairs. We agreed with Ian Gray that we should meet bi-monthly to review progress and challenges. The next meeting has been scheduled for December 12, 2000 in Davis Inlet.

As well, I made it clear that given the significant expenditures that Indian Affairs has made in establishing the Goose Bay office, that we intend to take full advantage of the staff and services and do not expect that we will have to fly to Amherst or Ottawa to resolve issues as they may arise. I appreciated the commitment of Katherine Balke-Pottie to visit our community often.

4. *Brian Dorey Assignment*

During both meetings, we discussed the potential role of Brian Dorey. As we understand it, Health Canada is prepared to provide funding to employ Brian Dorey who would live and work in our community over the next year. While he would have a focus on healing, we also discussed our intention to take advantage of his knowledge of government and utilize him in a liaison role with federal and provincial departments and officials.

5. *Emergency Services Funding*

When the Mushuau Innu Relocation Agreement was signed, it was agreed that the annual funding for Mushuau Innu Band Council as detailed in the AFA, would not include major capital or housing funding given the impending relocation to Natuashish. However, it was also recognized that there were a variety of critical activities that would have to be undertaken at the current site to maintain basic services. In this regard, an Emergency Services Funding budget was established at approximately \$1.0 million per annum. This amount decreased such that the final year prior to relocation the budget was established at approximately \$400,000.

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As we both know, and as the Auditor General has pointed out, relocation is not on schedule. Now we likely will not be moving for another two years. Therefore, the budget level for Emergency Services must be restored, at a minimum, to \$1.0 million for the current and upcoming fiscal years. We can demonstrate to you that as our infrastructure and housing continues to deteriorate, our actual needs in this area far exceed even the \$1.0 million dollar budget and in large measure, accounts for the current band deficit.

6. *Release of Funding*

DIAND is currently holding funding due under our AFA agreement and consequently the Mushuau Innu Band Council is completely without funding to carry out our day to day activities. You agreed in Amherst, that this funding would be released immediately.

7. *Recreation Funding*

We showed the participants of the November 8, 2000 meeting, a video put together by our recreation director on the importance of youth recreation in our community. I cannot begin to describe to you the impact and power of this video which clearly demonstrates the positive impact that even our limited recreation program has had in our community. I urge you to view this video and to ensure that your Minister and your Deputy Minister do the same.

All government departments and officials at our meeting agreed with the need for the youth recreation program as a significant deterrent to the problems of solvent and drug abuse afflicting our young people. Officials agreed to take this issue in hand and to meet among departments, with the provincial government, and possibly with the private sector, to secure funding for recreation programs, equipment and facilities. This is an urgent situation and we expect your staff and that of other departments to treat it as such. We look forward to an update at our December 12, 2000 meeting in Davis Inlet.

8. *Tribal Police*

We discussed the inadequate level of resources for the Tribal Police services in Davis Inlet. Currently our funding is sufficient only to cover two of the five staffed positions. It was agreed that until an Aboriginal Policing Services agreement is concluded among the Mushuau Innu, Solicitor General and the Province, additional funding under the current arrangement is required. Ian Gray will be following up on this matter and providing an update at our December 12, 2000 meeting.

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9. Health Proposals

Health Canada is holding \$305,000 for health and healing programming in our community pending receipt of proposals. With the hiring of Kevin Head as healing coordinator, we expect to have our proposals completed within the next several weeks. Katherine Owen indicated that the mid-November deadline for submission of these proposals would be waived but indicated that this specific funding was only available this fiscal year.



Bill, I am not prepared to allow the conditions that exist in our community to continue and nor should you. I will take whatever steps are necessary to bring the programs and services to our community that are so desperately needed. I have given you, as the Director General of Indian Affairs, and the representatives of the other federal departments, the first opportunity to respond. I hope you do. If not however, I will take other actions as my people deem appropriate to ensure that we are heard and that our conditions and challenges are addressed. I know you understand that this is an expression of resolve, not a threat.

I thank you and Ian Gray once again for meeting with us, and I hope that together we can address the very real challenges facing the Mushuau Innu.

Yours truly,

Simeon Tehakapash
Chief Mushuau Innu

cc. Al German
Health Canada

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