



Deputy Minister  
Health and Welfare Canada

Sous-ministre  
Santé et Bien-être social Canada

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MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

AUG 31 1993  
AOUT

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93-028525

**Issue:** Update on the department's activity vis-a-vis Davis Inlet, Labrador and on the return to Labrador of the Davis Inlet children sent to Poundmakers

**Purpose:** For information only

**Background:**

**1. Original Commitments**

- o After the near-death of six youth from gasoline sniffing last January in Davis Inlet, the federal government committed to support a number of requests from the Innu of which three were focused directly on health issues: i. at-risk children in the community were to be sent to Poundmakers Lodge in Alberta for solvent abuse treatment; ii. financial and other support was to be made available for a "community resource team"; and iii. there was to be discussion on a "family and cultural renewal centre".
- o Concerning the first commitment, 18 addicted youth and about 30 adults were financed to take the treatment program at Poundmakers. The federal government accepted to pay upfront the treatment costs which, with the children's return to Labrador, will amount to about \$1.5 million. (Aftercare, the essential follow-on to this treatment, is discussed in further detail below).
- o Concerning the second commitment, we have put a number of initiatives in place. The community's NNADAP program has been doubled this fiscal year from a 1992/93 base of \$160,000. As well, we have committed \$100,000 and CEIC has added \$300,000 to support a 2 1/2 year training program through the community college at Northwest River, Labrador which will provide for the community leaders, health workers and other interested residents a solid background in life skills, community development and addictions treatment.

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- o The third commitment, which in essence amounts to funding a full-time, professional addictions treatment centre in the middle of Labrador, is being discussed in the context of tripartite negotiations on a memorandum of understanding on the federal and provincial ongoing commitments to the community. It appears that the Innu may agree to a multi-purpose centre being built as part of the community's relocation (but not with Health Canada funds) and mobile treatment programs being run at the centre on an as-needed basis.

## 2. Aftercare and the Transitional Camp

- o For both youth and adults, the result of the Poundmakers experience is very promising to-date but continued success is predicated on support from families and the community generally. In fact, the design of the Poundmakers program requires normally a supportive family and community network before clients are considered suitable for release.
- o The aftercare program for the youth in Poundmakers since February is critical for their continued recovery but also because of the length of treatment and separation from families; these were accepted as part of the collective decision last February. The children, in reality, have to be reoriented to the traditional way of life in the community. This is complicated by the fact that work is only now getting underway to address many of the factors which contributed to the children's problems (eg. through the extensive training program) and is further complicated by the disclosures of sexual abuse on the part of many of these children.
- o A detailed series of negotiations over a number of months has now made it possible to begin, under Innu design and management, a program of emergency repairs to houses and improvements to water delivery, sanitation and fire protection. More importantly, the community has been involved in an extensive and interactive assessment of its present condition and future prospects which will be accelerated by a series of training sessions, over two and one-half years, to help leaders and the community resource team develop skills to restore normal social functions for individuals, families and the community. An occupational skills training program is also under way tied into the emergency upgrade of houses and related services.

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- o As a result of the above, the Innu, the Province, the federal government and the Poundmakers Lodge chose to design a transitional camp at Sango Bay which will serve to complete the children's program of treatment, reunite families, reintroduce the children to Innu life and give Governments more time to affect changes in the community.
- o The objective of aftercare is to provide ongoing support to the children but to shift gradually the involvement of Poundmakers staff to parents and the community. Six Poundmakers counsellors and four Alberta elders will return with the children for at least one month; the progress of ongoing treatment and the transfer of care to Innu parents, elders and counsellors will determine whether the camp should last a possible two months duration.
- o It is very promising that the Mushuau Innu have decided to design, set up and run the camp according to their traditional practices. Apart from a common meeting area, the focus will be on individual shelters for family living. The preference of the federal government would have been a completely temporary facility but the Innu have chosen to provide basic wooden floors and walls to be roofed by canvas which they will fabricate. The construction wood is from a stockpile which they own and which has been at the Sango site for some time. The wooden platforms are now under construction and the other materials including food are on order or in transit. It is expected that the facility will be ready for the children's return on September 1. The Department has provided a budget of \$80,000 to the Innu for the set-up and operation of the camp and is expecting an expense of up to \$300,000 for the programs in the camp provided by Poundmakers.

### 3. Additional Issues

- o In the context of the above, the following points are important to note:
  1. It is probable that the media will be present for some events associated with the children's return and may interpret the adequacy and success of the camp as an indicator of the federal government's concern for the welfare of the Innu.
  2. Poundmakers staff are prepared to work with the Innu to ensure that the objectives of a traditional Innu camp work well with the program objectives required by Poundmakers.

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3. The Province of Newfoundland is expressing displeasure with studies undertaken around Sango Bay which resulted from negotiation for emergency services and community planning such as the hydrographic survey and site exploration for a landing strip. While these are not related to the transitional camp, the Innu's decision to erect permanent structures (platforms and walls) adds to the Province's concerns. In fact, the Province has now decided not to participate in further discussions on relocation claiming the insufficient consideration has been given to other alternate sites for the new community. (It will, however, continue to discuss interim emergency measures at the present site.)
4. An outcome of the successful healing and return of the children could be requests for the treatment of several other children and adults. Given the experiences of the past months, the Department should be in a position to provide this treatment close to the community using a variation of mobile treatment (with Poundmakers staff if required) centred around a practical and affordable multi-purpose facility located some distance from Sango Bay but accessible on foot or by all-terrain vehicles or snowmobile or boat.
5. The release of the report and recommendations sponsored by the Human Rights Commission can be expected to have additional impacts on the nature of discussions involving the Innu, the Province and the federal government.

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