

FEB 18 '94 16:16

TOWNHUGB

386 P02



Ottawa could very well be on the verge of making a multi-million dollar mistake.

After Halifax meetings with Davis Inlet band council chief Katie Rich, the feds have decided to relocate the tiny troubled island community for a mere \$80 million.

The problem here doesn't lie with the concept, but rather the chosen site - Shango Bay.

The Innu have been crying for help ever since the world first started paying attention to their plight last winter. Scenes of Innu children snuffing gas in an unheated shack, shook the emotions of thousands of people all over this country and others.

Shortly afterwards, the Innu developed a seven-point plan, one which, they say, would lead them out of despair and into a modern world. Now it seems Ottawa is ready to follow the step-by-step program.

Its decision to begin work on moving Davis Inlet is, quiet frankly, surprising. I never really thought government should succumb to the Innu's demands.

Obviously Chief Rich has convinced Indian Affairs Minister Ron Irwin that the shuffle will ultimately change the social and economic conditions of the Innu for the better.

It's time now for Chief Rich and Ottawa to convince the tax-paying Canadian public of the same.

Not since Canada, as Brian Peckford would say - "Sold the Shop" - has such a decision held such possible potential crisis for this province and nation.

Indeed the people of Davis Inlet do need proper services in its community; better housing and more modern living conditions. But Shango Bay doesn't seem to be opening its arms displaying such luxuries.

Instead, I picture Shango Bay a "DAVIS INLET II" - a cold isolated mound of rock far away from "the real world". A place where the Innu can survive as they have - away from white man civilization, but not its influences.

Can the Innu expect to move their troubles out of Davis without carrying them to Shango? I don't think so. I believe whatever the Innu plan to dump along the way, or leave behind, will eventually come cre-

aping back.

I believe the evils which possess children to sniff gas, parents to drink excessively and abandon children will not disappear because they now have a toilet that flushes. There's no proof Shango Bay can provide the spiritual healing as well as the physical healing for the people of Davis Inlet.

Ottawa must have its reasons for believing otherwise, although the province apparently knows nothing of it. I'm anxious to learn more about the agreement and to find out just where Mr. Chretien's financial experts expect to find \$80 million in next Tuesday's budget.

I know my pockets have already been picked to death.

After all, in 20 years time, if I'm correct and the social despair does come lurking back, there may not be any money left in the pot for another move.

Surely we can find a better home for the native people of this land. Surely a move closer to reality would be more beneficial to their future.

For CBC Labrador Morning, I'm Kelley Bragg.

Kelley Bragg is a writer/editor for Robinson-Blackmore newspapers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

240-14-2

DSCD

H3425