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P.02/11*Background
History***BACKGROUNDER****THE INNU OF DAVIS INLET****History:**

The Innu are Montagnais-Naskapi Aboriginal people of Labrador, Newfoundland. Numbering about 1500, they primarily live in two communities, with roughly 500 Naskapi Innu at Davis Inlet and 950 Montagnais Innu at Sheshatshui.

Historically, the Innu of Davis Inlet were Nomadic hunters, living on the land for about 6000 years. Closely involved in the fur trade in the early 1700s, the Innu had a tendency to congregate at trading posts where communities began to emerge.

By the mid-1940s, living conditions had grown harsh in Old Davis Inlet on the mainland. Residents were starving. In 1948, following the closure of the store at Old Davis Inlet due to lack of trade or money, the Newfoundland Commission government moved 74 Innu to Nutak, 250 miles north, in search of new and better hunting grounds. The Innu, while supplied with tents, new clothes and food supplies, nevertheless, returned to Old Davis Inlet in 1949. Here, living conditions remained desperate as there was a serious depletion of fur bearing animals and other wildlife and game.

New Davis Inlet Community Profile:

The population of Davis Inlet numbers roughly 500. There is a Roman Catholic Church, a school with an enrolment of 188 students, a powerplant, a nursing clinic, a social services office, two stores, a wharf, an airstrip and terminal, two oil storage facilities,

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a Band Council Hall and garage as well as office buildings, two duplex housing units and 74 single housing units.

Living conditions are difficult, and health problems are chiefly due to the lack of an adequate supply of potable water and proper sewage disposal. Houses are in poor condition and not capable of accepting water and sewer service without major improvements and retrofits. Overcrowding has occurred as a result of a high population growth.

Government:

Davis Inlet is not incorporated as a Municipal Government under the Newfoundland Municipalities Act.

The Innu population elects its own Band Council and Chief. Katie Rich was elected to a two-year term as Chief on March 31, 1992.

Along with the Innu of Sheshatshui, Davis Inlet residents are also represented by the Innu Nation. On August 31, 1992, the vice president, three male and three female directors were elected from Davis Inlet to two-year terms.

Health and Social Care:

In terms of social care-givers, Davis Inlet has:

- 13 school teachers
- 2 permanent nurses
- 1 social worker
- 2 Native Administrative staff

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- 1 doctor who visits on a bi-weekly or emergency response basis
- 3 Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NADAP) counsellors
- 1 Mennonite Church solvent abuse counsellor
- 1 Alcoholics Anonymous branch run by the Roman Catholic Church
- 2 tribal police officers
- 5 RCMP officers located in Hopedale, Newfoundland and who fly in on regular patrols (They police four communities)
- 1 community health representative
- 1 Priest itinerant

Relationship with Governments:

The federal and provincial governments cooperate in the provision of programs and services for the Innu. The Innu are not registered Indians under the Indian Act and have no desire to become registered. They do not live on-reserve. The Innu have indicated that they wish to deal directly with the federal government as an Aboriginal people. The Innu, while not wishing to be registered, wish to obtain the same services and funding levels as status Indians resident on-reserve.

Canada has advised the Innu that it is prepared to address their request for self-government negotiations, which Canada is prepared to undertake parallel to an Innu land claim. Such negotiations would have to include the government of Newfoundland. Canada believes the outcome of such negotiations would result in a land base for the Innu over which they will have clearly defined self-government powers.

Newfoundland has also indicated a willingness to address self-government issues within comprehensive land claims negotiations or through a parallel process.

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Funding:

The federal-provincial expenditures (1990-1991) on Innu, break down as follows:

	<u>Federal</u>	<u>Provincial</u>	<u>Total</u>
	\$	\$	\$
Fed/Prov. Agreement	2,939,000	330,000	3,269,000
Social		1,880,000	1,880,000
Education	51,000	1,844,000	1,895,000
Economic	100,000		100,000
Health (1)	200,000	360,000	560,000
Totals	<u>3,390,000(43%)</u>	<u>4,414,000(57%)</u>	<u>7,805,000</u>

- (1) This excludes the Federal Share under a Federal-Provincial Health Agreement for all Aboriginals in Labrador.

Of the \$7.1 million total, about 40 per cent or \$2.8 million is provided to Davis Inlet.

Canada and Newfoundland participate in three federal-provincial agreements, which cost-share programs and services for the Innu and the Inuit of Labrador. Figures on the cost of the administration of justice are not available as of this date.

During the last 10 years, a significant amount of the money under the Canada-Newfoundland Labrador Agreement (approximately \$10 million) has been spent on priorities identified by the community of Davis Inlet.

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Recent Developments:

Realizing that isolation was a problem in Davis Inlet, an airstrip costing \$3.0 Million was constructed in the mid-1980's.

In 1991, governments agreed to a plan to improve community infrastructure in Davis Inlet. A total of \$4.0 million was allocated to begin Phase 1 of a water and sewer system and to construct a new health clinic. In light of the wish to relocate, the community did not want these projects to proceed.

In response to the tragic Davis Inlet fire of February 14, 1992 which claimed the lives of six children, the federal department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the provincial department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs undertook to assist the community in improving fire protection capabilities. The Governments of Canada and Newfoundland have now approved making \$80,000 available for the purchase of basic fire fighting equipment.

The federal and provincial governments also undertook a comprehensive study to discuss options for the supply and distribution of water to the people of Davis Inlet. The study also reviewed the option of relocation and assessed the economic and social benefits of such a proposed move.

Following the development and approval of the terms of reference by the Davis Inlet Chief and Council, the government of Newfoundland and the Government of Canada, the study began in August 1992.

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The consultant's report was received by all parties on December 21, 1992. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Premier of Newfoundland have assigned the highest priority to development of a response.

Children in Crisis:

Late Tuesday evening, January 26, 1993, six children from Davis Inlet were found by Native Constable Simeon Jacobiah, five girls and one boy between the ages of 12 and 14, sniffing gas in an unheated shack at the community's government wharf. The children were expressing suicidal intentions. The children were then taken to a heated building, and the next morning were flown to Happy Valley-Goose Bay where they were taken to a Social Services Group Home in Sheshatshiu to be cared for. Medical reviews were carried out on each child. The children will remain in the Sheshatshiu group home until decisions are made by the provincial and federal governments in association with the Innu community about treatment programs for the children.

On Sunday evening, January 31, 1993, the Native Constable was informed that another five children were sniffing gas under a house in Davis Inlet. The Native Constable, in consultation with the Social Worker, decided to bring the children to the Alcohol Center in Davis Inlet. However, the Native Constable found the kids and spoke with them. The Social Worker was advised that the children had all returned home. The Social Worker is following up with these children, four boys and one girl between the ages of 8 and 12, and their families today. Four of these children are known to have abused solvents in the past. The Social Worker is consulting with the Sheshatshiu District Office and the Group home for the transfer of two of these children to the Group Home. Other children will remain with their families while in consultation with the Social Worker until a treatment program is in place.