

Speaking notes for Ms. Yvonne Jones
Parliamentary Secretary for Children's Interests
Dept. of Health and Community Services

Issue: Presentation to the International Grenfell Association RE: Innu Children

Background and Update on Sheshatshiu Children

- On November 15, 2000 Chief Paul Rich publically requested the apprehension of children from the community of Sheshatshiu who were gas sniffing and felt to out of control and no longer manageable by their parents or their community.
- In November, 2000, the Department hired a number of community monitors to ensure children seen sniffing gas were directed to the community's healing centre, where they were offered food and a safe place to rest. Six social workers and six community services workers, working in teams, assessed 39 children deemed at risk. It quickly became apparent that many of these children could be accommodated through existing community resources and supports, and did not need further intervention by Child Youth and Family Services at this time.
- On November 21st, 2000, a group of 21 children/youth were removed from the community by warrant from the court and placed in military barracks in Goose Bay a undergo detoxification from solvents.
- Within 10 days these children had completed the initial detox process and were placed in houses in the Goose Bay area the art were staffed on a 24 hour basis by Innu and White staff hired by the Health Labrador Corporation.
- On December 20, 2000, the Director for Child, Youth and Family Services, Health Labrador Corporation was granted a six-month order for temporary custody of 19 of these children under the age of 18, through the Child Youth and Family Services Act.
- Currently, of the 19 children, [REDACTED] has been remanded into youth custody (Whitbourne), [REDACTED] are now living in a total of three houses/apartments that are fully staffed on a 24 hour basis by the Health Labrador Corporation. [REDACTED] are in country options with a view to moving into foster care; [REDACTED] are in foster homes in Sheshatshiu; [REDACTED] have returned to their birth families; [REDACTED] has gone to British Columbia with her family for intensive addictions treatment; and [REDACTED] have entered the Charles J. Andrew treatment centre in Sheshatshiu.
- The Health Labrador Corporation continues to work with an interagency committee in Sheshatshiu to explore options for the appropriate care and treatment of these children

Background and Update on the Davis Inlet Children:

- On November 30, 2000 Chief Simeon Tshakapesh spoke with the Minister of Health and Community Services and advised that the Innu were interested in accessing the Grace Hospital as a placement option for gas sniffing children from their community. Other alternatives were explored but were considered unacceptable to the Innu.
- On December 7, 2000 Minister of Health & Community Services issued a statement to the House of Assembly committing the Province to respond to the needs of the children.

- He noted that community monitors had been hired at the request of the Davis Inlet Innu. He also announced the Province had begun the process of re-commissioning the former Grace Hospital to receive the Innu Children for their detoxification and medical and psycho-social assessments.
- Full cooperation across government departments, the Health Care Corporation of St. John's, Health and Community Services St. John's, and Health Labrador Corporation resulted in a comprehensive plan for the preparation of the former Grace hospital. Two floors were renovated to accommodate up to 50 children. In addition, the Grace nursing residence was prepared to accommodate parents and staff from outside St. John's, including Innu staff.
 - During the month of December negotiations were ongoing with the Innu and the Federal Government to come to an agreement on an appropriate plan for the removal, care and treatment of children from Davis Inlet. In early January a total of 35 children were transferred from their community to the Grace Facility with the consent of their parents through voluntary care agreements under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act.
 - There are a total of 34 children now at the Grace facility. 30 children/youth of the original 35 and [REDACTED] who joined these children for detox in mid-February. These children range in ages from 10-18 years. [REDACTED]
 - Most children/youth are doing reasonably well; however there have been incidents of aggression which continue to be monitored and dealt with immediately as these incidents occur.
 - All 34 children at the Grace Facility have completed a detoxification process from solvents and have undergone a wide array of medical and social assessments by a multidisciplinary team. From these assessment an individual treatment plan will be completed for each child by the end of March.
 - These children will then be ready to move on to Phase- 2 - which will be an intensive treatment program to deal with their solvent abuse problems, their family and social issues and begin the reintegration back in to their families and community. At the same time as the children are in treatment- the it is anticipated their parents will enter in to a treatment program which will move towards long term healing strategy has been developed for their community.
 - Health Canada has agreed to take the lead role in planning suitable treatment options for the children of Davis Inlet. The intent is to transfer the children from the Grace facility back to the Goose Bay area for ongoing solvent abuse treatment. A tentative date of March 31st, 2001 had been set for the return of the children however plans are not yet in place and a final date for relocation has not been determined. The planning team continues to work on these detail so the children can be moved back to the Goose Bay area as quickly as possible.

Suggestions of how the IGA may be able to assist the Innu children in Labrador:

- It is important to remind the members of the IGA that although you can provide them with suggestions, their primary discussion should take place with the people of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet. (ie. The Innu people take exception to white people

speaking on their behalf).

- **Projects you may wish to discuss with the IGA:**

- A health promotion campaign around the dangers of drinking during pregnancy. Providing a 'coordinator position' to develop campaigns in both communities- including pamphlets, presentations, video materials- all culturally sensitive and in the Innu language.
- Work with the schools/communities to establish a social centre/program for young people in both communities and provide the communities with additional resources to equip such a faculty.
- The establishment of a child care centre or family resource centre in the community of Davis Inlet or within the new community of Sango Bay (These services are already available in Sheshatshiu)
- Develop a safe house/women's shelter in Davis for women and children in violent situations.(This resource is already available in Sheshatshiu).

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