

Briefing Note
Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Title: Crisis Response in Sheshatshiu

Issue: Provincial response to violence in Sheshatshiu

Background:

- Protests and violence has been prevalent in Sheshatshiu since a confrontation at the band council office in March 2004. The violence escalated in May following the controversial band council election. Unrest has continued since that time.
- On August 23, 2004, Chief Anastasia Qupee wrote Minister Rideout and asked the Province to provide a crisis/trauma team for Sheshatshiu.
- The Premier advised Minister Rideout, Minister T. Marshall and Minister E. Marshall that he supports providing support to Sheshatshiu.
- A Crisis Team was deployed several years ago to deal with the high suicide issue rates in the Inuit community of Nain. Social Workers from Health Labrador Corporation provided support augmented by private consultants with expertise in trauma and crisis management.

Action taken:

- The departments of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs (LAA) and Health and Community Services (HCS) held informal discussions with the Department of Justice, Health Labrador Corporation (HLC), the Labrador School Board, RCMP, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Health Canada. All of these partners are supportive of taking action to help alleviate the situation in Sheshatshiu.
- HCS, Justice, LAA and HLC held a teleconference with Chief Qupee on Friday, September 3, 2004, to define the type of intervention the community would like and to discuss next steps. At the teleconference, the following matters were discussed:
 - The Innu asked for a review of all child welfare placements in the community. The Chief has some concerns about adults that may have children in their care. HLC invited the band to forward a list of adults about whom the Chief is concerned and HLC would investigate.
 - The Innu suggested a Forum on Innu Children be held to inform parents of the rights of children. The Child and Youth Advocate's office may be an appropriate partner. This issue will be discussed in greater detail at the upcoming interagency meeting.
 - The Innu asked the Department of Justice to consider opening a victim services office in Sheshatshiu that would employ an Innu person full-time. Victim Services will have further discussion with the Band.
 - The parties agreed to hold a meeting of service providers as soon as practicable.

LAA, HCS and Justice have agreed that Ms. Kathleen Gorman, a private consultant from Grand-Falls Windsor, would be an appropriate facilitator for the meeting.

Next steps:

- The Innu will contact Ms. Gorman to determine her suitability.
- An interagency meeting will be held in Goose Bay to develop a community response for Sheshatshiu. In addition to Chief Qupee and the Director of the Sheshatshiu Innu Health Commission, invitees will likely include:
 - Health Labrador Corporation;
 - Labrador Health Secretariat, Health Canada;
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Secretariat, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada;
 - Labrador School Board;
 - RCMP; and
 - Departments of Health and Community Services, Justice and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Prepared by: Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs

Reviewed by: Cabinet Secretariat

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