



Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council

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Lynn Spracklin

FACSIMILE COVER LETTER

DATE June 27, 00

TO (COMPANY): Dept of Justice

FAX NUMBER: 709-729-0469

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING PAGE(S) TO: Lynn Spracklin

NAME: Lynn Spracklin

FROM: Janet Gregoire

TRANSMITTING TOTAL PAGES INCLUDING COVER SHEET: 15

MESSAGES: For your information

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June 27, 2000

Ms. Lynn Spracklin
Deputy Minister
Department of Justice
P. O. Box 8700
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1B 4J6

Dear Ms. Spracklin,

I am attaching materials for tomorrow's meeting, as requested by Mr. Mike Samson.

For your information, the following people will attend the meeting:

Chief Paul Rich, Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council
Peter Penashue, President, Innu Nation
Frances Nui, Nukum Munik Shelter
Germaine Rich, Child, Youth and Family Services
Allison Haggerty, Child, Youth and Family Services
Lyla Andrew, Sheshatshiu Interagency Committee Coordinator
Lynne Gregory, Charles J. Andrew Youth Restoration Centre
Anastasia Qupee, Executive Director, Health Commission
Tom Keagan, Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs

The meeting will be held at the Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council office in the Council Chambers.
Please do not hesitate to call me at (709) 497-8522 if require any further information.

Sincerely,

Janet Gregoire
Executive Assistant

Overview

In April 2000 following a day long public meeting and a subsequent workshop gathering of all the community workers in the human services, the Sheshatshiu Interagency Working Group was formed.

This grass roots working group has representatives from all the organizations and agencies in the village. A list of the working group's members is attached.

The interagency group was formed to give an organized voice to common concerns and issues in the community, especially with regard to families and the serious problems experienced by many parents, children and adolescents. The group is working to build more effective communication at all levels and to foster ways to address common concerns and try and promote strategies for healthy change.

The working group has met weekly in Sheshatshit since April. As well, sub groups have been formed to deal with specific concerns. A case conferencing group meets weekly for example. Frontline workers from across the programs and services discuss situations of particular concern with a view to organizing the collective help and support as resources for families and individuals. Also this group is readily able to pinpoint specific gaps or concerns with service delivery that weaken our ability to provide the most effective services.

Over the course of the last three months the interagency working group and sub groups have identified three critical issues that continue to be raised and discussed. These three issues are:

- * no after hours on-call system or resources to deal with children and adolescents acting out and or without supervision
- * very few/no alternative placements for children and adolescents in need of child welfare apprehensions
- * parents in need of immediate treatment services and the treatment programs are closed for summer break

Consensus was reached that we had to move from continually discussing these issues, including blaming, and propose constructive ways to address the issues. The following document outlines brief proposals requesting resources to address these needs.

Although each of these proposals could be viewed as "stand alone", it is our assertion that they be seen as integrated. We are learning through this interagency work that in order to try and deal most effectively with the very serious problems that we face in Sheshatshit, the services must be integrated and complimentary.

To this end we would emphasize that there is a great deal of interagency cooperation already built into these proposals. Existing community facilities and staff will be used wherever possible to make these proposals work. The genuine concrete contribution made by many agencies in the community is the most visible sign that we are very serious about sharing the responsibility and making these proposals for service a reality.

After Hours On-Call Services

Rationale

It is a sad reality that in Sheshatshit on any given night, especially during the warm summer months, there are many children and adolescents out unsupervised all night long. Many of these children are involved in substance abuse, most specifically solvent use. Most of these children are well known to the community workers.

Workers know that there are chronic difficulties in the relationships between these children and their parents or caregivers. The most obvious symptom of these chronic difficulties is that the accountability of the parent for the child is often non-existent. The child experiences this as feeling completely unwanted and the resulting behavior is very self-destructive.

If children and adolescents are seen about the village acting in self-destructive ways and it is during office hours, most people know exactly how to respond. They will call workers at Child, Youth and Family Services or other workers in the counselling agencies or the RCMP. There will then be a response most likely in relation to child welfare concerns.

However, outside regular office hours in Sheshatshit, there is no one or no process in place to respond to the need these children are presenting. Band Council security workers are the individuals who see these children every night and other than calling the RCMP when criminal activity is involved, they have no other resource to help respond to the needs of these children and adolescents.

It is self-evident that the needs of these children are not restricted to office hours. In fact we know the numbers of incidents of children being outside parental or other responsible supervision and subsequently acting out are greater at night and in the early morning hours.

Goal

To develop and implement an after hours on-call system to respond to acute situations with children and adolescents abusing solvents

Objectives

To create opportunities for paid workers to respond after work hours to the needs of children and adolescents whose safety is at risk

To offer an organized response from 4:30 pm to 8:30 am and throughout the weekend

To identify and train three full time and one casual relief worker

To pay workers minimum wage plus double time for each hour of actual response time

To arrange for two on-call workers per 8 hour shift because of the known difficulties in dealing with intoxicated children/adolescents

Workers' Responsibilities

The on-call workers would use beepers to be made aware of situations where they must respond. On shift, they would be expected to remain in Sheshatshit and ready to respond to a call.

The first priority for the workers would be the safety of the child or adolescent. The worker would be expected to remain with the child and find a responsible adult, starting with parents, to assume responsibility for the child. Should no responsible adult be available, the worker would stay with the child until Child, Youth and Family Services could be contacted during the work hours.

The on-call worker would be expected to keep a log of "response incidents". At the end of each night or weekend shift the worker would turn these incident reports over to the child welfare and community service workers who would be expected to

follow up with these reports. In situations deemed necessary, child welfare apprehensions would follow.

On- call workers would take training through the interagency committee to undertake this work.

Role of Child, Youth and Family Services

This agency has the mandate to provide child welfare services in Sheshatshit. However, the collective wisdom of all who have knowledge about this is that adequate child welfare services cannot be provided day and night by this agency as it has operated in Sheshatshit for the last twenty years. The case loads are far too high for the few staff who work the regular office hours. The community is aware that the agency has difficulty with maintaining adequate day time staffing, far less trying to have those same workers doing after hours work as well.

Also the difficult nature of the child welfare work being done in Sheshatshit adds to the complexity of the work of the regular staff. Innu eimun is the first language of the public in Sheshatshit and social workers must therefore work most closely with the Innu who have positions as community service workers. Also there are many unique aspects about Innu culture which are not at all similar to western European culture and can be problematic in trying to work through child welfare concerns with Innu parents or guardians. Given the very difficult work of the staff during the day hours they cannot be expected to respond to the nightly call outs as well. If they did, they would be unable to work the regular office hours.

This being said, it is seen as the responsibility of Child, Youth and Family Services to provide the resources for this on-call service. On-call systems are in place in other communities, albeit organized around social workers being on call. This would not be workable in Sheshatshit even if it were available here which it is not. We need a unique response tailored to our unique needs and to this end, other community agencies will work in direct partnership with Child, Youth and Family Services.

Child Welfare Placements

Rationale

There are too many children in Sheshatshit at risk in dysfunctional unsafe family situations because there simply are no adequate safe alternative placements for them.

To address this long standing problem, the local office of Child, Youth and Family Services has made efforts to recruit foster families but with almost no success. There are significant reasons for this which are quite specific to Sheshatshit.

First, children who for most of their lives have experienced little structure, few limits, poor physical care and inconsistent affection are at a very early age already becoming socially and emotionally disabled. They are angry and untrusting and often their behavior is self destructive. Abusing inhalents is evidence of this. The end result is that these particular children do not do well when placed in regular foster homes. They need more structure and attention than could possibly be offered in foster care even by the best foster family.

Second, while there are numbers of stable, caring families in Sheshatshit, few are willing to provide foster care. This seems to be the case because even these families experience that facing the challenges of raising their own children in this village is as much responsibility as they can successfully manage. The stress of trying to bring an undeniably needy child into the family could very well "tip the balance" and few want to take this risk.

As a result, child welfare workers often make a difficult judgement call to leave a child in a situation and to try and provide supervision to the family. If an alternative placement was available, placement of the child outside the home would be the preference. This is especially the case in those family situations of chronic difficulties where it is being stressed to the children themselves under what circumstances they should ask for intervention.

In many of these situations it is a struggle on the part of community workers to try and hold parents accountable. Parents have learned that in an emergency

children may be temporarily placed with relatives. This alternative has been taken advantage of by some parents who know that relatives find it difficult not to take the children in temporarily but where this regularly happens with no changes in the parents' behavior. Parents also know that children will not be removed from the community because we have come to understand that this would be punishing the children for circumstances that are beyond their control.

As a community, we need to be able to show parents that there is agreement that parents will be held accountable for their parenting responsibilities. In order to do this we need the resource of a safe house with twenty four hour staffing where children could be placed for temporary periods of time. There would also be collective agreement that this was the best alternative for the children. This would then allow community workers to put the onus on parents to take steps to undertake changes in their own behavior so that plans could be made to work to reunite children with parents.

While a dual designation is being requested for the young offenders home in Sheshatshit in order to accomodate some child welfare placements we would view this as placement of last resort. The Family Shelter facility and program is preferred as it would be more normalized especially for children younger than twelve years of age because it is a family shelter now and the needs of women with young children currently are the focus. The shelter would also be able to meet any security needs for children and staff in relation to those instances where parents would be tempted to act in anger. The interagency group will be united behind the efforts of the family shelter to work to provide child placements and will send out the message that anger directed at the staff, children or facility will not be tolerated.

Goal

To assist children in acute need of shelter and supervision with a safe, temporary place to live while child welfare concerns with their parents/guardians are being addressed

Objectives

To provide the necessary resources to the Nukum Monique Family Shelter in Sheshatshit to adequately maintain 6 child welfare placements in the facility

To work in conjunction with the existing Family Shelter program and staff to identify the challenges and needs of child welfare placements in the facility and implement ways to address these challenges and needs

To provide additional staffing and training as required for 24 hour safe supervision of up to six children

To work in cooperation with other resources in the community to prepare plans for reunion of children placed in the shelter with parents/guardians whenever possible

To create opportunities in cooperation with other resources in the community to help and support parents to undertake the work necessary to practice healthier parenting so as to reunite with their children

To provide and or access appropriate programs and recreational activities for children while they are placed in the shelter

Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Centre Family Program Summer 2000

Rationale

Health Canada has generously provided funds for the operation of the Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Centre, a 12-bed youth treatment centre. The centre is in the Innu community of Sheshatshiu, Labrador and will provide treatment opportunities for youth from all across Canada but especially Labrador.

Youth and their families are in severe distress. Gas sniffing is at a epidemic scale. Threats, as well as realized suicides, are becoming almost normalized in the minds of our children. We have 24 security in place primarily to "control" the personal destruction so many of our youth are partaking.

The Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Centre is an excellent beginning towards addressing the needs of youth who are abusing solvents. Efforts must be made to expand the existing opportunities for youth and their care givers in order to recreate a solid foundation.

A family component will provide opportunities to work at developing the foundation that is essential for individuals, families and communities. We need to provide the opportunity for youth and their family members to focus on the basics, their beliefs, values and culture. To create opportunity to find for themselves, what it is that is important, and then how do they begin to live their lives in a manner that reflects these values and beliefs. It is well-documented that the level of family dysfunction is of colossal magnitude within our communities.

Children as well as adults who complete treatment often return to the abyss to which their family life has sunk. Individuals are possibly more vulnerable when they return home from treatment as they are more in touch with their feelings, fears and past experiences. Children returning to our community having completed treatment "outside" have not experienced much success in remaining solvent free. Individuals, both adults and children, as well as the larger communities must work together to become strong.

Many parents themselves were not "modeled" healthy behaviors when they were children. They are then often not able to model positive behavior for their own children. The adults hurt deeply and need to be supported to become healthy individuals, good partners, good role models (parents) and contributing family and community members.

We have learned through our journey in Sheshatshiu, and there is research which supports our conviction, that the best method to facilitate the development of healthy youth is to strengthen the family and the community. Family and the community walk side by side. Many families have been encouraged to expect professionals to take over for them when they experience difficulties, and experts have grown accustomed to taking control. At this point confidence of family members in their own resourcefulness seems to be at an all-time low. Services offered should encourage and build the capacity of individuals, families and communities. A family centered approach, here in the community, would greatly contribute to increasing individual and community health.

A four week pilot program for youth was just completed at the Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Centre. Much was learned from this pilot. As youth risked sharing with staff it became very clear in dramatic fashion that so much work related to helping youth become healthy is intrinsically tied to the state of health of their parents or caregivers. This points us in the direction of needing to be very creative to find ways to work with the significant adults in a youth's life. This family program would act as another pilot for the staff of the youth restoration program. It would provide them with the significant learning experience of working along with more experienced counsellors, on a program aimed at working with parents to help them help themselves and thereby help their children.

Family Program

Goal

To assist adults and children to develop strong healthy family lives through a treatment approach designed to strengthen parenting skills and communications between children and the adults in their lives.

Objectives

To provide individuals with culturally appropriate and relevant programs to help them develop life skills and values;

To provide individuals with skills and opportunities for reconciliation with themselves, their family members and their communities;

To provide opportunities for guardians and their children to improve the communication between them;

To improve parenting skills through the implementation of a parenting program to assist adults to process their own life experiences and to develop new and positive methods when parenting their children;

To provide a supportive environment in which children and caregivers spend time together. There will be support, guidance, supervision and follow up with staff and participants to assist positive change;

Program Approach

A 28 day residential adult and youth program will be provided for approximately 5 families, 10 adults. One family will be from Davis Inlet. When possible there will be a family relationship between the adults and the youth participants in the program.

The programming will take place both at the Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Centre and at a camp site on Grand Lake. Adults and youth will have separate program times at different locations and will also have joint program activities.

The program will consist of:

Presenting a Parenting Program - " Parenting in Two Worlds"

Identification of personal issues , development and implementation of a treatment approach to address these individual issues.

Identification of family issues, development and implementation of a treatment approach to address these family issues.

Self esteem and confidence building.

Role clarification and Life Skills.

During time together clients will participate in recreational programs and family focussed activities.

Various forms of support will be provided throughout the 28 day program.
Counselling, circles, interventions.

Prior to program completion an aftercare plan will be developed.

Sheshatshiu Interagency Working Group Members

Innu Band Council Agencies:

Health Commission
Early Childhood Education
Security Services
Recreation
Mani Ashini Clinic
Public Health
Innu Uauitshitun
Family Shelter

Charles J Andrew Youth Restoration Center
Child, Youth and Family Services
RCMP
Young Offenders' Group Home
Peenamin McKenzie School
Innu Nation
Mennonite Central Committee
Northwest River Clinic
DIAND, Goose Bay office
Health Canada, Halifax office