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December 2022 Newsletter

1. Our 7 Months Roller Coaster Ride

Almost seven months have elapsed since our last edition of this Newsletter, and marks by far the longest gap between editions of a publication that was originally almost monthly. It is accounted for by the numerous ups and downs that occurred during that time, which explains the heading of this section, and which will be explained in the next section.

2. The Building Project

As we left our readers in May of this year, we were still celebrating the \$4 million grant from *Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)* that was in addition to the \$300,000 we had earlier received from the *Northern Development Initiative Trust*. That had encouraged us to retain *Alfred Horie Construction Co. Ltd.* as our construction manager, and in the expectation that it would be able to provide a Class A estimate, we expected to start the site preparation soon afterwards, and continue to complete the actual building by early in the following year. That was not to be, however.

The Class A estimate was assembled with some difficulty – most reputable companies being very busy – and resulted in a total project cost far in excess of our funding. A major effort was made by our architects, in consultation with our Society, to pare down the cost by eliminating as much as possible from the original scope of work. That effort nevertheless left us almost \$1 million short of what would be needed to complete the building, and would have left us with minimal funding to produce exhibits.

Our preference at that point was to seek the consent of the funding agencies for their grant money to be directed to the exhibits which, even in the absence of a building, we felt could be displayed in various other places. Based on the fact that the grants had been allocated to our project on the basis of contributing to the building, our request was denied, leaving us in a position where we would be unable to complete our building with the available funding.

In late November we learned of a BC Government fund for which we are clearly eligible, and which could fund the missing \$1 million, and in early December we submitted an expression of interest that will be assessed by early January. If given the amber light, we will be invited to submit a full application.



To its great credit, CIRNAC then agreed to permit us to expend its \$4 million, starting with the site preparation in early 2023, and erecting as much of the building as can be constructed with the funds remaining. If we succeed in accessing the BC Government funding, we will have enough to complete the building which – even without the exhibits and programs we aim to display – could house various activities and be used for various revenue-generating purposes.

Our architects and construction manager are already preparing to move ahead, and by the end of February we expect to have all the construction documents ready to tender, with every reasonable expectation of having the shell of the building completed by early 2024, and – if in receipt of the hoped-for BC Government funding – having the building completely finished by that same date.

It's taken six paragraphs of this edition to cover what occupied us for more than the six months that have elapsed since our readers last heard from us. Readers may imagine that we are ecstatic about these developments, and we hope that all our supporters and sympathizers will share the euphoria.

3. The Exhibits

Development of the exhibit content is proceeding at the Stswecem'c Xget'tem First Nation (SXFN) with a portion of the funding contributed by the First Nation, but most of it funded by the *Department of Canadian Heritage's Museums Assistance Program*. David Jensen & Associates which completed the first half of its assignment earlier this year with the Canim Lake Band, produced a fabulous report that has drawn rave reviews from all who've seen it, and aims to complete the SXFN segment of its work by the end of March 2023.

In view of the decision described in section 2 above, we are focusing our search for funding on those programs that support exhibit design, development and construction, and have identified one source within the *Department of Canadian Heritage* that looks promising, and that would enable David Jensen to carry his work one relatively small step closer to fruition.

4. Some Unexpected Support for the Project

During the summer of 2022, our long-time supporter CRD Director Al Richmond attended a function at Barkerville where he encountered Liberal MLA Michael Lee who is Opposition Critic for Indigenous Relations. Al, never missing an opportunity to promote our project, briefed Michael about it, and that prompted Michael and Liberal Lorne Doerkson – MLA for Cariboo-Chilcotin in which most of our First Nations reside – to engage in some lobbying on our behalf with BC Government ministers and officials. In late November, they arranged for Chief



Helen Henderson of the Canim Lake Band to meet the Hon. Murray Rankin, Minister for Indigenous Relations, the Hon. Lisa Beare, then Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sports, and a senior official in the office of newly-arrived Premier Eby. We thank you both, Michael and Lorne for your support.

5. Our Holiday Wishes

The members of our Society take this opportunity to extend our best wishes to all our readers and their loved ones for a peaceful and happy holiday season and for the new year fast approaching.



Notes to the Reader

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