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March 2023 Newsletter

1. The Roller Coaster's Soft Landing

We should all be getting used to the ups and downs of this approaching 20-year journey, and during the past three months since our most recent edition, we have experienced several more twists and turns. Their several outcomes are explained in the following sections.

2. Our Funding Situation

First the disappointing news. Our application to the BC Destination Development Fund for the \$1 million we hoped would – when added to CIRNAC's \$4 million and the NDIT's \$300,000 – permit us to complete the construction our proposed building, was not accepted, thus leaving us in the same position we described in our December Newsletter. We had considered our application to be so well qualified in terms of the listed criteria, that we were stunned by the decision. The only explanation we received was that the fund was seriously oversubscribed, and the funds had been allocated with strict attention to an equitable geographic distribution.

Our disappointment was quickly alleviated by CIRNAC's decision to allocate an additional \$1,236,000 to the \$4 million it had already granted us. Together with the \$300,000 that the NDIT has agreed to let us carry forward into this upcoming 2023/2024 fiscal year, we should have sufficient funds to complete our building.

Our application to the Canada Cultural Spaces Program for an additional \$300,000 remains under Ottawa's consideration, and we hope to hear positive news about that one in the fairly near future.

Finally, with respect to our exhibit development projects, we learned in late March that we have been granted \$150,000 under the Museums Assistance Program which will allow David Jensen's team to carry out work with the Esk'etemc First Nation, as well as to have some of that funding left over to devote to further exhibit development.

3. The Building Project

Much of the preliminary work has been completed, including finalizing of the drawings and other specifications, acquisition of the necessary permits, and publication of the tendering documents. Everything is on track for ground to be



broken and excavation to commence as early the beginning of May, and we continue to anticipate the building being completed by the end of the year, ready to be opened for business by May 2024.

4. Our Business Plan

Suzanne Denbak of Cadence Strategies who compiled our original Business Plan in 2014, was engaged last year to update it. She was delayed in starting her work until fairly recently when we had become more confident about the direction in which our project was moving, but has already produced a comprehensive draft of the updated plan, and is expected to submit her final report by the end of this month of March.

5. The Exhibits

We are expecting David Jensen and his team of Kathy Curry and Debra Bodner to complete its final exhibit content report for SXFN before the end of April, a month later than originally planned, but with the extended deadline approved by the Museums Assistance Program officials. As mentioned in section 2 of this edition, we have secured the funding that will permit David and his team to start work at Esk'et immediately after they complete their SXFN report – probably by May of this year.

As Society members, we are thrilled to know that we will have the contributions of the Band members from three of our member First Nations, all of which will provide us with the input necessary for construction of the eventual exhibits and programs to be featured in our Centre. We still need a lot more funding in order to allow David and his partners to create the actual exhibits, but we have many friends and admirers in high places, including senior ministers and officials in the BC Provincial Government, our local MLAs and members of the NStQ treaty negotiating team. With their help and encouragement, we hope and expect to discover further funding sources, even if the amount we need will probably come in relatively small amounts.



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