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Apr/May 2023 Newsletter

1. The Highlights of this Edition

The month of May has seen much progress on a number of fronts, all of which will be covered in this edition of what for many years was a monthly Newsletter, but which has become more intermittent as we progress towards fulfillment of our ultimate aim of opening our long-awaited cultural centre. On May 5th we held a groundbreaking ceremony on the building site, and that will be described with many photographic images in a special edition that will be circulated in the very near future. This edition will cover the rest of the progress we have made since our last edition in March 2023.

2. Our Funding Situation

In our last edition we reported that we are the grateful beneficiaries of an additional \$1,236,000 from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. When added to the \$4 million it had already granted us and the \$300,000 that the Northern Development Initiative Trust has granted us, it covered the up-to-date January 2023 budget prepared by our construction management company Alfred Horie Construction Ltd. To the surprise of no one who is conversant with what is taking place in the BC construction industry at this time, the bids that were received in late April and early May, came in approximately \$550,000 over that budget, and has led us to decide to proceed with the original scope of work, realizing that in the absence of still further funding, we will be unable to complete the interior finishing of the building.

In the meantime, our application to the Canada Cultural Spaces Program for an additional \$300,000 remains under Ottawa's consideration, and regardless of the eventual outcome of that application, we will continue our search for the construction shortfall as well as for the much larger amount we will need in order to complete the exhibits.

Also, as we reported in our March edition, 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

Construction is finally underway as we compose this edition, and on the basis of several contracts with subcontractors that have already been awarded, excavation was begun during the week of May 15th, with First Nations members from the Canim Lake Band



monitoring the work for possible evidence of archaeological items. Much preliminary work had already been completed, including the obtaining of permits and the efforts to acquire temporary power to the building site that was facilitated by the generosity of Telus, which has agreed to allow us to tap into its nearby power supply. Our full Board of Directors will be involved going forward, with monthly Zoom meeting updates coordinated by our construction manager, and more immediate oversight will be provided by our secretary, maintaining contact with our architects and construction manager in Vancouver, and with our President Irene Gilbert and Director Alana Dixon overseeing the actual building site on a regular basis.

4. Our Business Plan

Suzanne Denbak of Cadence Strategies who had compiled our original Business Plan in 2014, completed her update at the end of March, and has provided printed copies of her report which have already been distributed to all Society members and by the time this edition of the Newsletter has been published, will have been distributed as well to our Band Administrators.

5. The Exhibits

David Jensen and his team of Kathy Curry and Debra Bodner did complete its final exhibit content report for SXFN at the end of April, and copies of that report were in the process of being printed for distribution at the time of composing this edition. They will be distributed as soon as they have been received. A final Activities Report has been submitted to the Department of Canadian Heritage which will allow the Department to release its next \$150,000 grant funding. As mentioned in section 2 of this edition, that funding will permit David and his team to start work at Esk'et in the near future.

6. The Groundbreaking Ceremony

A wonderful ceremony was held at the site on Friday, May 5th, organized by our President Irene Gilbert, and attended by many dozens of Northern Secwepemc First Nations members. Attendance at the ceremony was essentially limited to the leaders of our member First Nations and to their community members, although we will be planning a much more elaborate ceremony for the grand opening of our building in early 2024. As was noted above, a separate edition devoted exclusively to the ceremony, will be published in the very near future.



Notes to the Reader

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