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## Spring 2024 Newsletter

### 1. The Highlights of this Edition

Once again, almost three months have elapsed since our last edition was circulated in December 2023, marking a significant contrast with what for the longest time was a monthly Newsletter. And once again, the lapse is accounted for by the steady ongoing progress of events which have made it impossible to keep up. In this edition, our readers will learn that our building is nearing completion, and much work is being accomplished in the development of story development and exhibits.

### 2. Our Funding Situation

Our previous edition overlooked the significant \$300,000 grant from the Northern Development Initiative Trust which will feature in one of our sections below. The heartfelt thanks we expressed to our other funding agents in a previous edition, is extended to include the Northern Trust which has supported our project on more than one previous occasion.

Our application for a further \$250,000 from the BC Gaming Branch was not successful, but subsequently we have submitted an application to the First Peoples' Cultural Council that, if approved, would enable us to divert some of the Northern Trust grant money to the construction and erection of some outdoor signage. We anticipate learning the outcome of the First Peoples' application by early May.

The \$150,000 grant we received earlier from the Museums Assistance Program, allowed David Jensen's team to carry out story development work with the Esk'etemc First Nation which is well underway. The funding left over from that project, will finance further exhibit development work.

We also acknowledge with gratitude an unsolicited donation of \$5,000 from the Western Financial Group that was arranged by Val Nickless of the 100 Mile House Branch. It will be used for the purchase of the major kitchen equipment in the new building.

### 3. The Building Project

Construction has proceeded as expeditiously as the weather has permitted, but completion of the building is now anticipated to be delayed to the end of April.



The loss of two full weeks of perfect weather in May of last year – the result of the stop work order from the BC Archaeology Branch – had several negative impacts that included disruption of the scheduling of the numerous sub contractors. Notwithstanding those challenges, our construction managers Alfred Horie Construction, working in close harmony with our architects McFarland Marceau and with ourselves, have done an extraordinary job of stick handling their way through, and are about to bring the project to completion significantly under budget. Those cost savings will then allow us to purchase some specialized storage units and to construct some signage – indoor and outdoor – that will tell some of the stories emanating from David Jensen’s collaboration with the Canim Lake Band, SXFN and the Esk’etemc First Nation.

#### **4. The Exhibits**

As mentioned previously, funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage permitted David Jensen and his team of Jennifer Pantel and Kathy Curry to start work at Esk’et late in 2023. That project got off to a great start, and is progressing well. David’s team will revisit Esk’et in mid April for further meetings and exposure to that community. David’s team was also enabled to carry out some additional work at SXFN by interviewing some key individuals who were unavailable earlier in 2023. The fruits of those additional interviews have been incorporated into a revised Content Development Report that was completed in late March and at the time of writing this Newsletter, was about to be distributed to all those connected with this project.

We became engaged with the BC Government several months ago, hoping to persuade it to make the significant contribution of funding that we need for David Jensen to produce the world class exhibits that we have always aspired to produce. Until recently we had been given reason for optimism that the Government was ready to make a significant contribution, but the resignation of the NStQ Treaty Negotiator who was spearheading our efforts with his BC Government counterpart, has caused us some concern. Hank Adam, acting as interim NStQ Treaty Negotiator, in addition to his duties as NStQ Treaty Manager, has taken up the cause, and we are freshly optimistic that Hank can carry our message forward to the Government.

The delay in acquiring that funding has confirmed our earlier belief that the new cultural centre will open in the late Spring of 2024 without the full array of exhibits, and we will be aiming to make use of the space in a variety of ways that will include some temporary story telling banners to be produced by David Jensen, along with artifacts and photographs from the archives of our member First Nations. We also expect to make the space available for meetings and other



functions as well as to offer for sale the art work and handicrafts of community members.

## **5. The Ceremony to Celebrate Completion of the Building**

Planning is well underway under the leadership of our President Irene Gilbert who has organized a team from the Tribal Council. We have retreated from the earlier description of the event as a “Grand Opening” in order to avoid disappointing those who might think that what they see at this time, is all that there will be to see. The Grand Opening is therefore a future event that will be held to mark the arrival and the display of the full array of exhibits and programming we plan to produce in due course.

Friday, June 7th is the date that Irene’s committee has selected for a celebration to take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. at the site of the building. Irene’s committee is in the process of sending invitations to all the First Nations individuals and groups we hope will attend, and the Society Secretary has already issued invitations to all those non-indigenous people and organizations that had a hand in financing, designing and constructing our amazing building. The many others who have contributed to the overall project during the past 20 years, will be put on notice that although not invited to this ceremony, they will be our honoured guests at a future Grand opening celebration.

## **6. The Vancouver Chinese Cultural Community**

During the last week of April, influential members of Vancouver’s Chinese Cultural Community will be hosting an intimate dinner for a small group of Northern Secwepemc leaders that so far include Kukpi7s Helen Henderson, Marilyn Camille and Rhonda Phillips. Kukpi7 Willie Sellars is unable to join the group, but the WLFN will be represented by another Band Councillor yet to be designated by Kukpi7 Willie, as will hopefully the Esk’etemc First Nation. The Chinese community has been interested in learning more about the history and culture of indigenous people for some time, and some of their number were introduced to our project in August 2023 when they visited our site and met with our President Irene Gilbert, while on their way back to Vancouver from a visit to Barkerville’s Indigenous Celebrations.

In September 2022, members of the Chinese community sponsored and organized a special concert marking the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Over the Rainbow, that was held at the Michael J Fox Theatre in Burnaby, including performances by Aboriginal and Canadian Chinese artists, and they have demonstrated a sincere interest in learning more about indigenous culture, and in forging a closer relationship with First Nations people.



The planned dinner is designed expressly as a meet-and-greet session, at which the Chinese community members intend to explain their interest in cultivating this relationship, and at which members of the respective groups can get to know each other. Although not expected to be in attendance at the dinner, the Vancouver Consul General for the People's Republic of China has expressed his own interest in meeting with Northern Secwepemc leaders in the future.

It should also be noted here that members of the group have already donated the chairs and tables that we will need in our new Cultural Centre in order to host meetings and seminars for various groups. The Kukpi7s will be able to express our gratitude to their hosts when they meet in April.

## 7. The Upcoming Easter Holiday

The timing of this edition of our Newsletter provides an opportunity to send good wishes to all of our readers for a safe and happy Easter holiday weekend, and we do so with much gratitude for all the support our project has received from so many of you over the past 20 years.



### Notes to the Reader

1. If you would prefer not to receive future monthly Newsletters, please notify us by email addressed to [grahamleslie@shaw.ca](mailto:grahamleslie@shaw.ca).
2. If you are not on our direct emailing list, but would like to be added to it, please notify us by email addressed to [grahamleslie@shaw.ca](mailto:grahamleslie@shaw.ca).