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AUGUST 2015 NEWSLETTER

For reasons that will be explained below, we failed to publish a Newsletter for July – the first such occasion since we started in January 2014. In the intervening two months, there have been some significant events that will now be described.

1. BUSINESS PLAN

As was mentioned in the June 2015 Newsletter, we were already aware that the Soda Creek Band Council had made a decision regarding our request for a five-year funding commitment to support the operations of our proposed centre, but we were not informed of the decision until July 1st. Most unfortunately the Band's decision was negative, leaving the overall project with a major dilemma since our chances of obtaining funding for the Centre's construction and exhibits are dependent upon our ability to demonstrate our capacity to finance the ongoing operations.

The reason we didn't publish a July Newsletter was that we didn't want to disclose our dilemma until our members had an opportunity to consider the new situation, and it wasn't until August 21st that we were able to convene a meeting.

Several options were considered by the representatives of the other Bands, and the outcome happily was that the four remaining active Bands are determined to forge ahead with the project, realizing that they will have to find the Soda Creek share of the operational funding from some other sources than their own Bands which have each already committed \$125,000 for the first five years of operation.

In the meantime, and so as to maintain some momentum for the project, the Society will pursue a handful of mini projects. Among the prime candidates are the planting of trees and shrubs along the southern property line in order to screen the Telus building from view; the construction of the earthen mound that forms a part of our architects' conceptual plan for the site; and the preparation of the final drawings by our architects.

We have already raised a portion of the money needed for one or more of these mini projects, have already applied to the Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition for a contribution, and will be making applications for additional outside funding in the days and weeks ahead.

The Society has asked to meet with the Soda Creek Band Council for the purpose of determining if and when that Band might be in a position to pick up its share of the operational funding, and also to ask the Band to continue its membership in the Society and its association with the project. We hope to have some positive news to report in our September issue of this Newsletter.



2. OUR WEBSITE

We are in the process of updating our website, and will be inserting a new page dedicated to the Bridge project, thus giving us the opportunity to recognize on a permanent basis the many generous contributors who made it possible to construct the bridge at this time.

3. THE EARTHEN MOUND

Our objective from the time we first met our architects in 2013 was to incorporate a monument to the memory of the victims of the residential school system, and the earthen mound that they have conceptualized is designed to do just that. We will in the near future establish an advisory committee made up of members of – we hope – all five Bands whose task will be to suggest the most appropriate and effective way of communicating the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which produced its final, scathing report earlier this year. We have been in touch with

UBC's Director of its First Nations House of Learning for more than 18 months, and intend to create a direct link to the University's new Centre, and an indirect link to the new National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg. Their advice will also be incorporated into our final decisions.

Regarding the funding for this mini project, we have made initial contact with staff of the Department of *Canadian Heritage* and appear to be eligible for funding under its *Canada 150* program. We will be submitting a formal application to the Department before the end of September.

4. A MOOD OF OPTIMISM

It is more than 11 years since the overall project was first conceived, and the Society and the many people who have represented its five member Bands along the way, have encountered numerous obstacles and disappointments, all of which have been overcome by their patience and perseverance. So much has been accomplished in those 11 years, and the project is so close to completion that the current members – all of them strongly supported by their Band Chiefs and Councilors – are optimistic that they will find a solution to their dilemma. Please stay tuned and supportive.