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## December 2023 Newsletter

### 1. The Highlights of this Edition

Since the time of our last edition in May 2023 which featured an account of our groundbreaking ceremony early in that month, there has followed enormous and exciting progress towards fulfillment of our ultimate aim of completing and then opening our long-awaited cultural centre. That previous edition brought our readers up to date with the progress we had made during the previous several months, and this edition covers the seven months that followed.

### 2. Our Funding Situation

In our May edition, we acknowledged the extraordinary financial assistance of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada which has now contributed \$5,236,000 towards our construction budget. That was added to by the Northern Development Initiative Trust's \$300,000 grant and a grant of \$300,000 from the Department of Canadian Heritage which came on the heels of our May Newsletter. That total left us \$550,000 short of our budget, but the earlier decision to proceed with as much of the building as could be constructed with that amount, was reaffirmed by all the funding agencies. Then, learning of the shortfall, the Department of Canadian Heritage provided a further \$550,000 that will allow us to complete the building, including its interior finishing.

It's hard to find the words adequately to express our gratitude to all these agencies for their long-standing support of our project and for their determination to find the means for us to complete construction. Our project has certainly over the years caught the imagination of numerous contributors to the funding we have secured in addition to the financial and many other contributions of our member First Nations, but the way in which the two federal government departments reacted to our shortfall, was extraordinary.

Also, as we reported in our March edition, we have been granted \$150,000 under the Museums Assistance Program which has allowed David Jensen's team to carry out story development work with the Esk'etemc First Nation which is well underway, as well as to have some of that funding left over to devote to further exhibit development. We have an application in to the Museums Assistance Program for a further \$145,000 intended to support for exhibit content development work with the Williams Lake and Xat'sull First Nations in the event they decide to participate.

We have also made application for a further \$250,000 from the BC Gaming Branch that, if successful, would enable us to divert some of the federal grant money to the construction and erection of some outdoor signage. We anticipate learning the outcome of that application before the end of December.

### 3. The Building Project

Construction was delayed soon after it started in May 2023 when the Provincial Archaeology Branch placed a stop work order that wasn't lifted for a full two weeks. Notwithstanding that interruption, and with the help of an unusually mild Fall, construction has proceeded steadily and extremely efficiently under the



management of Alfred Horie Construction Ltd. who, along with our outstanding architects from McFarland Marceau, have been an absolute delight to work with. We have been particularly impressed by the manner in which they have sought and obtained cost savings without compromising the quality of the construction. It is anticipated that the project will be completed within budget by late March or early April 2024.

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

As mentioned in section 2 of this edition, funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage has permitted David Jensen and his team of Jennifer Pantel and Kathy Curry to start work at Esk'et, and that project got off to a great start a few weeks ago. We have been forced to accept for some time now that we haven't yet raised the funds to enable David to convert the wonderful stories and ideas that have already been volunteered by community members at Canim Lake, SXFN and Esk'et, into the actual world class exhibits and programs that we are aspiring to create. We have, however, been engaged with the BC Government for some time now in the hope of persuading it to make the significant contribution of funding that we need. The delay in acquiring that funding makes it certain that our new cultural centre will open in the Spring of 2024 without those exhibits, and we will be aiming to make use of the space in a variety of ways that will include exhibits 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 Planned Opening Ceremony**

Although planning has not yet started, it is certain that we will hold a grand opening ceremony once the Centre has been completed. We have already compiled an initial guest list which includes many dozens of those who have been involved in the creation of this wonderful building that will be a source of such pride for the members of our First Nations communities. In the hope of not overlooking anyone who has contributed to this project, we have invited our members to contribute their suggestions, and expect to start making firm plans once we are certain of when the building will have been completed.

#### **6. Christmas and New Year Greetings**

One of the motives for producing this edition of the Newsletter at this time, is that gives us the opportunity to wish you all and your loved ones a very enjoyable Christmas holiday and a safe and happy New Year.



#### **Notes to the Reader**

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