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Innu Round Table Meeting #20
October 12th, 2017 The Westin, Ottawa, ON

Parties in Attendance:

Innu: Grand Chief Gregory Rich, Innu Nation
Deputy Grand Chief Etienne Rich, Innu Nation
Chief Eugene Hart, SIFN
Chief John Nui, MIFN

Canada: ADM Valerie Gideon, HC (afternoon only)
William McGillivray, HC
Chris McDonnell, INAC/Indigenous Services

Province: Michael Harvey, NL/HCS
Susan Walsh, NL/CSSD
Judy White, NL/LAAS

Note: a complete list of participants is attached

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The IRT Sec Executive Director and Chairperson for the Meeting, Natasha Hurley, was unavailable due to illness. Acting Chair, Steve Joudry convened the meeting @9:10.

The Acting Chair welcomed newly elected Grand Chief Greg Rich and Deputy Grand Chief Etienne Rich to their first IRT meeting in their new positions.

It was reiterated that this was organized as a “Principals Meeting” with an agenda focused on the main/priority issues of immediate concern. This includes the FSR appointment, CYFS and Renewal of Health Funding. Other regular business items will be covered at the next regular IRT Meeting.

All parties were present (see list attached).

2. OPENING COMMENTS

Gregory Rich stated that as the Grand Chief, his top priority at the tripartite table would be Child & Family Services. He has observed too many tragedies, and the ongoing operation of the child welfare system seems to be providing financial “benefits” to non-Innu families and communities rather than providing resources to Innu communities and families to help with local solutions. While he is aware of progress through the IRT process, he also thinks there is urgency for more action. He encouraged all parties at the table to work together and make concrete plans. He mentioned that the next major step will be a federal response to the *Public Inquiry into the treatment, experiences and outcomes of the Innu in the Provincial child protection system* being established by the Province and Innu. He further stated that it would be important for Canada to respond to the joint correspondence from the Premier of NL and Innu Nation Grand Chief of July 12, 2017, to the Prime Minister, (requesting Canada’s support and participation in the Inquiry) before the Prime Minister’s planned visit to Labrador in late November. Without a response on the issue, the Prime Minister’s apology for residential schools, will have little credibility for Innu.

Note: The federal response on the inquiry has been communicated to the Innu leadership by telephone and a written response is pending.

Chief Nui spoke of the priority issues affecting the Innu communities and the MIFN challenges with developing proposals and requests for help to respond to a crisis. He would like to see more effort being taken to address the causes of social issues/problems beforehand and more investments in preventative measures.

Chief Hart spoke of the outstanding requests, correspondence, and funding proposals that have been submitted, but while the Innu wait a response, the struggle of front line workers continue. He would like to see more solutions, answers and actions.

Deputy Grand Chief (DGC) Etienne Rich spoke of the need for more action instead of just meeting over and over about the same issues.

Chris McDonnell acknowledged the government’s responsibility to provide timely responses to the Innu letters and requests. He indicated a reply on the Inquiry would be provided within a week. He confirmed that the two INAC ministers were not available to meet this week, but hope to visit Labrador soon. They would also like to meet with the Innu leaders at a later date. He indicated that he has made a detailed plan to address the MIFN issues with the Council. He expressed an interest for a community visit/meeting in Sheshatshiu as well. He agreed that a crisis shouldn’t be necessary for improvements to happen. He advised that the renewal/restructure exercise inside the INAC Regional Office was in the final stages and that Tom Keegan will be the important contact. He reiterated the INAC commitment to reform Child Welfare and expressed enthusiasm about the group home work in Sheshatshiu. He was also happy to receive the proposal from MIFN for the EPH facility in Natuashish.

William McGillivray acknowledged the ongoing needs in the two Innu communities for community-based health programs supported by the Labrador Targeted Health funds. They will be participating as an official in the CYFS working group committee and are examining new models of service delivery to re-establish the Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve and daycare facilities in Natuashish. HC committed to participate as an official working group

member going forward to ensure alignment between HC preventive programs and community goals. This commitment was made after the Innu indicated that constructing a group home for displaced youth in both communities is a priority for leadership and they expressed an interest in exploring preventative strategies to limit the number of children in care. He stated that HC/FNIHB is aware the renewal processes every few years isn't the best approach and HC is working with the Innu to explore more flexible funding arrangements. Assistant Deputy Minister, Valerie Gideon will join the meeting in the afternoon and speak more to that. He knows that it takes communication to understand needs clearly and generate action. He confirmed that FNIHB is transitioning to operate within the new dept. of Indigenous Services. More details will be provided in the future.

Judy White said it is encouraging to sit at the tripartite table and see what work that has been done and agrees that it shouldn't take a crisis to get action. She is looking forward to working together.

3. REVIEW AGENDA/SCHEDULE

Agenda was accepted with no changes.

4. IRT SEC WORKPLAN/BUDGET

The Chair reported that Virginia Collins and Etienne Rich are two new members of the IRT Sec Inc Board. Steve confirmed the full Board had met on Oct 10th and reviewed the first audit of the IRT Sec Inc as a separate financial entity. The 2016/17 financial statements received an unqualified audit report and the statements are under review by both INAC and HC along with various reports on programs and projects. The 2017/18 Workplan is on target and the outstanding matter of Directors Insurance will now be addressed, as the audit was a requirement for the insurance policy.

Steve reviewed the 2017/18 financial forecast and noted - total revenue for the fiscal year (INAC, HC and NL-CSSD) is \$3.8M and the Secretariat is planning expenditures for a balanced budget. The year- to-date consolidated revenue/expenditure report shows a remaining balance of \$2.4M. The Income Support Program is projecting funding requirements of over \$1M.

The 2016/17 Audit, 2017/18 Workplan and financial reports will be posted on the IRT Sec Website.

5. FEDERAL SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

The Chair reviewed the current situation with the FSR position that has been vacant since Mar 2016. He confirmed that the Innu have raised the issue of a new federal appointment on several occasions over the past 18 months. Formal correspondence has been sent to Minister Bennett in Feb 2017 and again in July. A response is pending.

GC Rich said it is a crucial time to get attention on major Innu issues and it would be useful to have a FSR to help communication with political representatives.

Chris McDonnell said there has been discussions with the Minister regarding this matter and the Minister responded in July advising that the INAC RDG and MP Jones would be their contacts.

Note: Upon review of the record of correspondence, it appears that the correspondence from Minister Bennet on July 24th, 2017, replied to the Chiefs Feb 2017 letter. However, the letter was mailed and was in transit when, the second Innu letter was sent on July 26th. Consequently, the Innu's request for a specific FSR appointment remains an outstanding question. It was also noted that Premier Ball provided a letter to Minister Bennett on July 5th, 2017, supporting the Innu request for a replacement FSR.

Action Items

- ***Innu Chiefs will follow up to Minister Bennett's July 24th letter to reiterate their request for a new appointment to the FSR position.***

6. CYFS

As an introduction to this agenda item, Steve led the presentation "Keeping Innu Children Closer to Home" (Attached). He covered statistics on Innu Children in Care, an overview of the Innu Agenda for Change, Review of the history and objectives of the Labrador Innu Prevention Initiative, and an Update on the Placement Planning/Funding for Capacity Building and placement implementation plans.

Highlights included:

- About half Innu population is under 20
- Average of 164 children in care over past 6 years. 60% are under 9 years of age.
- As of Aug 2017, 165 Innu children still in care. Almost half in out-of-community placements.
- Over past 5 years, INAC has spent an average of almost \$10M/year for Innu children in care by NL
- Min Bennet recently said: "too many Indigenous children are still being taken from their families" ... "Ottawa must change the current design of the system to ensure funding goes towards children, family and communities rather than lawyers, agencies, and non-Indigenous foster families" ... "Indigenous children and youth have a right to be raised in their language and culture".
- National Truth & Reconciliation Commission showed how the impacts on individuals are profound and life-long. Courts can never compensate, in any amount, for the loss of family, community, identity, language and culture.
- Highlights need for placement resources in the Innu communities.
- Innu agenda for change is an approach to strategically link plans for implementation of the Working Relationship Agreement, Prevention Services, Placements being developed with professional partners, using the Innu Care Approach, while advocating for legislative change and seeking reconciliation through a Public Inquiry.
- Child Welfare League of Canada initially engaged to develop practice framework for the Innu Care Approach, but no funding approved to complete the work. Being advanced with internal resources and help of MSW student.

- Innu Prevention Services unit operational, with one Social Worker position still to be staffed in Natuashish.
- Five Innu placement facilities now planned in a phased approach over 2-3 years. Partial funding from INAC in 2017/18.

Michelle Hawco and Melinda Wellsman from Bluesky Family Care, presented an update on the progress with the SIFN Group Home Transition Plan. (Presentation attached). The work is on track for the re-profiled Group Home to be operational by April 1st, 2018 as a level 4 facility under a provincial service agreement. The team will be negotiating the service agreement funding with the Province in coming months. A proposal for establishing an Emergency Placement Home (EPH) in Natuashish EPH has been developed and a funding request for 17/18 has been submitted to INAC, the home has been identified, and a major renovation is being planned. The plan is to use an existing 4-bedroom home, leased from the owner/occupant. The implementation plan in 2018/19 is being developed to complete the capacity building and other preparations, for the EPH to be operational by September 30th, 2018.

Chief Hart reported that he receives regular messages (mostly on Facebook) from Sheshatshiu Innu children in care facilities on the island of Newfoundland and out of Province, wanting to come home. Given the number of Innu children in care outside their communities, isolated from their families, language and culture, he wonders if the child protection system is creating the circumstances for more apologies and settlements in the future. Something needs to be done.

Chief Nui requested that more needs to be done to bring Innu children home.

ADM Susan Walsh said the Province is also very concerned. The CSSD department is committed to working together with the communities to find local placements. Many community members have stepped forward to become Foster Parents and CSSD officials apply as much flexibility where they can. She noted that CSSD has observed good success with families that can access help through community social health and treatment services such as "Apenam's House" in Sheshatshiu. In these cases, families may be able to have children returned much faster. This frees up other placement resources.

GC Rich stated that the problem in many Foster Homes is limited space. In many homes, additional bedrooms could be added but families and communities are being told there is no money for that. Out of community placements provide a place to eat and sleep but they come back with long term problems and their mental, emotional, and spiritual needs have to be considered. Parents need more support to better themselves.

Chris McDonnell stated the communities have a solid commitment from INAC to get the first two facilities in Natuashish and Sheshatshiu up and running. INAC is also willing to look at other facilities in future years.

It was noted that the implementation of the placement facilities takes a considerable amount of time and effort. The Group Home in Sheshatshiu (6 bed capacity) is scheduled

for April 2018, while the EHP (4 bed capacity) in Natuashish is planned for Oct 2018, subject to INAC funding for the capacity building. Given the number of children in out-of-community placements and the importance of bringing Innu Children closer to home where language and culture can be maintained, the Innu may consider options for an interim plan for 2 years while the community placements are being established. This will be discussed internally.

It was also noted at the CYFS Sub-Committee that most Innu foster homes are currently Level 1. Foster Homes could receive additional funding by completing PRIDE Training offered by the Province. (PRIDE = Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education). The 2-day training is required for foster homes to be designated as a Level2 Care Facility/Foster Home by the Province. Susan Walsh reported that the Province will be organizing training sessions in both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish. It was suggested that the two management trainees in Natuashish could assist provincial trainers in coordination of the training.

Action Items

- **Community representatives to assist with coordinating PRIDE training sessions.**
- **INAC to respond to the proposal/funding request from MIFN on the capacity building plan for the EPH in Natuashish.**
- **SIFN and the placement planning team to provide a full project update and status report on the Group Home Transition Plan to NL/CSSD and INAC by mid-Jan 2018.**
- **Placement funding proposals for 2018/19 to be submitted in Jan/Feb 2018.**

7. HEALTH PROGRAMS

John Higham provided a background presentation on the history of the Labrador Targeted Health Programs and the need for renewal of the program funding beyond March 2018.

SIFN Community Overview. Chief Hart and Shannon Tobin presented a general community background on Sheshatshiu (attached) and current priorities and issues. 50-60 babies are being born a year, with the population over capacity for the school already. 20 homes needed per year to keep up with growing families, but SIFN hasn't had homes funded by INAC in recent years. Apenam's House (treatment facility) has been very successful. Community need better access to justice services. Long term care home needed for elders as very isolated at homes in Goose Bay.

MIFN Community Overview. Chief Nui gave a presentation on community background of Natuashish (attached) and current priorities. Overcrowding is a real issue with large families living in small homes. He spoke to the importance of an EPH and the need for a daycare (the current facility is not running). The community has been in Co-Management for 9 years. Security and safety is an issue in the community. There is a need for home care for better care of elders. The renewal of health funding is extremely important.

ADM Valerie Gideon thanked the chiefs for the information on the communities. She said she hopes to visit the communities in Labrador soon. The transition of FNIHB in

Indigenous Services Canada will be helpful. Minister Philpott is now in a position to help with many issues affecting the communities. She explained that the government has a different approach to renewing the health program funding going forward. Min Philpott wants to continue the devolution of program funding to Innu control and increase budget flexibility to include year-to-year carry over of funding where possible. With the project reports, data and other information provided by the Innu, the department has sufficient information on the Labrador Innu Targeted Health Programs to seek renewal through the 2018 Budget rather than a separate renewal process. She assured the Chiefs that they have no reason for concern about losing health program funding in 2018/19. The new funding announced under Budget 2017 for HCC and Palliative Care are forthcoming. Raising the issue of housing a priority for both communities to Minister Philpott. Valerie also agreed to brief Min Philpott about the FSR role.

Michael Harvey mentioned the Province is also providing new resources in mental health and addictions.

Chris McDonnell agreed to check into possible dates for a Ministers meeting and mentioned it would be best if Min Philpott could go to the communities.

Action Items

- ***HC representatives to keep the chiefs advised on progress with renewal of funding for community-based health programs beyond Mar 2018.***
- ***The parties will try to coordinate a new dated for the Chiefs to meet with Minister Philpott.***

8. NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the IRT Meeting #21 will take place on February 8th in Goose Bay, NL. Pre-meetings will be conducted on February 7th.

Note: Hotel North 2 has been booked for the IRT Meetings 7/8th Feb 2018.

Prepared By: Alicia Penashue

Reviewed By: Steve Joudry

Approved by: Natasha Hurley

ATTACHMENTS:

Agenda

List of participants

IRT Sec Operational Workplan and Budget 2017/18

Innu Children within the NL Provincial CSSD System Power Point

Overview of Innu CYFS Agenda for Change (Presentation: Keeping Innu Children Closer to Home)

SIFN Group Home Progress Report Presentation

SIFN Community Update Presentation

MIFN Community Update Presentation

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