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May 2020 Newsletter

1. The Exhibit Design Process

In mid-May, we received the disappointing news that our application to the *Investment Readiness Program* to fund the next phase of David Jensen's exhibit design development work at Canim Lake, had not been approved, as the fund had been very greatly oversubscribed. There will be a second opportunity to apply – probably in September – for funding that would be available in the late Fall, and we have already received advice as to how we might strengthen our application in that future round.

We had also made an application to the McConnell Foundation earlier this year, and were again disappointed to learn in the last days of May that our application was not successful.

We will continue the search for outside funding, and in anticipation of future success will continue to work with the Canim Lake Band and the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem and Esk'etemc First Nations to prepare for the safe interchange of communication between David Jensen's team and participating Band members in the event the need for safe personal distancing continues into the future.

2. Cariboo Regional District Board Presentation

We had hoped to make an in person presentation to the CRD Board at one of its two May meetings, but the coronavirus has caused the Board to conduct its meetings remotely. The Board has renewed its invitation, and we have been pleased to accept the opportunity to make a PowerPoint submission to the Board's July 10th meeting.

3. The History of Our Project – Continued

In last month's edition, we introduced our readers to the origin of our project, and took you to the end of 2004. In 2005, the *Informal Working Group*, having obtained the requested financial contributions from the *Canim Lake, Canoe Creek and Williams Lake Bands* as well as from the *100 Mile House & District Historical Society* – thanks to a CRD grant arranged by CRD Director **Al Richmond** – engaged *Cariboo Geographic Systems* to carry out a topographic survey of the 2-acre parcel of land offered by the Historical Society. The funding also allowed the Group to engage *Terra Archaeology Limited* to carry out an archaeological impact



assessment of the land. Its report revealed that within 14 inches of the surface it uncovered widespread evidence of a First Nations presence from at least 2,000 years prior, and recommended to the B.C. Government authorities that construction should in due course be permitted to proceed in accordance with the relevant guidelines.



The *Informal Working Group* continued to meet at regular intervals throughout 2005 and early 2006 during which time the topographic survey and the archaeological impact assessment were completed, and a successful application was made to the *Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT)* for a grant amounting to two-thirds of what had been requested, subject to the Bands contributing the remaining one-third. The *Soda Creek Band* joined with the *Canim Lake, Canoe Creek and Williams Lake Bands* to share equally in the contribution required by the *NDIT*, and the architectural firm of *Busby Perkins + Will* was selected by the *Group* from among a large number of firms that responded to its request for proposals, to prepare a business plan. Following further discussion, *Busby Perkins* proposed a more comprehensive feasibility study that would entail a significantly higher cost, and the proposal was accepted, subject to finding the additional funds from external sources. It appeared that the additional funds would be provided by *Western Economic Diversification Canada*, but the Federal election of February 2006 brought in a new Conservative government that cancelled the approval we had received, and placed our request on an indefinite hold. And although we were delayed for many months, we did ultimately succeed in obtaining Federal funding, and this project did finally proceed.



In the meantime, the Working Group decided that it would be beneficial to become incorporated as a society, and in July 2006 the *Northern Secwepemc Cultural Society* was incorporated under BC laws, with the *Esk'etemc First Nation* joining the other four Bands and the *Historical Society* as participating organizations, each one entitled to appoint two voting members and to have one of those members on the Society's board of directors. Later in the year, the new Society was granted charitable status by the *Canada Revenue Agency*.

The founding members of the Society were **Alana Dixon** and **Elizabeth Pete** from the *Canim Lake Band*, **Dora Demers** and Orange Shirt Girl **Phyllis Jack (now Webstad)** from the *Canoe Creek Band*, **Chris Wycotte** and **Charlotte Gilbert** from the *Williams Lake Band*, **Teena Sellars** and **Cheryl Chapman** from the *Soda Creek Band*, and **Graham Leslie** from the *Historical Society*.

In February 2007, the *Cultural Society* amended its by-laws in order to remove voting rights from the *Historical Society* so that its representatives would not be perceived as having a conflict of interest in the ongoing negotiations between the two societies.

In next month's edition, we will trace the extraordinary progress that was made over the following several years, and that has led to the point where all that remains to be accomplished is to obtain the commitment of our member Bands to finance the anticipated annual operating deficit, and to raise the funds for the actual construction from outside sources. Formidable as the latter task might appear to be, the project has gained universal approval from federal and provincial government departments and ministries through the past 15 years, justifying a reasonable degree of optimism for our success.



Notes to the Reader

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