



P.O. Box 553
108 Mile Ranch, B.C. V0K 2Z0
tel: 250.791.7267
fax: 250.791.7297
email: grahamleslie@shaw.ca

May/June/July 2021 Newsletter

1. An Explanation for the Missing Months' Editions

Because the events of the past several months have been moving at a bewildering pace – making it extremely difficult for your editor to provide an account of our activities that would not be overtaken by fresh events before it reached you – so much time has elapsed since the late April circulation of the last edition, and so many readers have raised questions about it, that it seems necessary for you to be brought up to this date – July 11th – with all that has happened during the interval.

2. The Easy Part – David Jensen's Exhibit Design Development Project

At last report we were expressing optimism that the Ottawa headquarters of the *Federal Department of Canadian Heritage* would approve its Regional Office's recommendation to fund our project, and we subsequently learned that our optimism was warranted. An agreement has already been executed and a work plan approved, and David Jensen's team – more about it in a later edition – will hold the first of its three planned community meetings at Canim Lake in early August. The \$154,000 funding will be divided between the Canim Lake project – to be carried out this year – and the SXFN (Canoe Creek Band) project to be carried out next year.

3. Possible Construction of our Centre

10 weeks ago we left our readers to share our sense of sadness that after all the time – 17 years and counting – and the dedication of our five member Bands, it appeared that we were about to lose our eligibility for the \$5.4 million grant for which we had applied last October. Our disappointment was compounded by the fact that the *Northern Trust (NDIT)* departed from its standard practice, and approved our \$300,000 funding application, subject to us acquiring the remainder of the required amount.

Then the most amazing thing happened. Two of our member Bands – Canim Lake and SXFN – expressed their determination that all the years, financial contributions and devotion to the project, by each of them undertaking to contribute \$150,000 in order to retain our eligibility for the Canada Infrastructure funding. Their hope was, and remains, that the other three Bands will eventually make their respective \$60,000 contributions, but the two awesome Chiefs and their Band Councillors were not willing to wait for that to happen. What a demonstration of commitment to our project!



While all that was taking place, we learned that the *Federal Department of Canadian Heritage* has another program for which we are eligible, and we have made application for \$300,000, hoping that if successful, we will be able to relieve our member Bands of the financial burden that two of them have so helpfully assumed. That application is currently under review without any firm date established for the Department to make its decision.

4. What if we Succeed with our \$5.4 Million Application?

When we submitted our application on October 1, 2020, we had assumed that the two Governments – Canada and British Columbia in partnership – would make their funding decisions close to the end of their common fiscal year – March 31, 2021. We subsequently learned that the time for announcing their decisions is slated to be “the summer of 2021” – i.e. any day now.

The funding program in question is very flexible as far as the use of the funding is concerned, and approved projects have several years in order to reach completion. We had intended to carry out a good portion of the construction work – including site preparation and site development – in the current year, and to proceed to the actual building construction next year. We may certainly make a start to the construction project this year, e.g. selection of a construction manager if the Society opts to proceed with one; modification of the construction documents in order to accommodate some minor changes required for the display of the exhibits; and the preparation of a final construction budget. We would also plan to commission Cadence Strategies to update our 2014 business plan during this year. The bottom line is that if we receive the Canada Infrastructure funding we have applied for, we may be looking at the spring of 2024 to open our Centre, although an earlier opening is not yet out of the question. In any event our timetable will provide David Jensen’s team with ample time to finalize and construct the exhibits and the programs to be displayed and offered at the Centre – hopefully built and operating within the foreseeable future.

5. The Thousands of Indigenous Children in their Unmarked Graves

By this time of writing, the discovery of the unmarked Secwepemc graves at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, has been accompanied by so very many more across Canada. The initial news reporting focused on the Kamloops First Nation (KFN) since it was assumed that all the children had been taken from their KFN parents. While all Canadians are grieving the tragic circumstances that gave rise to this situation, your editor wants simply to draw the attention of his non-indigenous readers to the fact that while most of the Northern Secwepemc children who were snatched away from their parents, were taken to the St. Joseph’s Mission Residential School near Williams Lake, some of them were taken to Kamloops and may be lying among those unmarked graves. It has become trite to say that our



thoughts and prayers are with the families directly affected by these events, but it is hard to conceive of what else to say or to do other than to redouble our efforts to bring about a true reconciliation between our various cultures.

6. Some Happier Thoughts with which to Conclude

In its June 17, 2021 edition the 100 Mile House Free Press Cariboo Connector featured the carved wooden entranceway to the Peter Skene Ogden Secondary School and its Canim Lake Band carver Jerome Boyce. It's a wonderful piece of work that celebrates local First Nations heritage and welcomes everyone to the school, and our readers are urged to take a look at it when next in 100 Mile House.

The second item of interest – we hope – also involves the 100 Mile House Free Press which in its regular weekly issues, features items from its archives – 5, 10, 15 and 20 years ago. In its April 29, 2021 edition, the 15 years ago item was a summary of the “progress on opening a First Nations museum adjacent to the 108 Mile Heritage Site”. The item reports that the project was off to a slow start, but that “the task of procuring the funding for the project which had started in February 2004, was a slow but steady process”. No truer words could have been said.



Notes to the Reader

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