



P.O. Box 553
108 Mile Ranch, B.C. V0K 2Z0
tel: 250.706.1610
fax: 250.397.2769
email: grahamleslie@shaw.ca

April 2022 Newsletter Special Edition

1. Ceremony to Mark Federal Government's Grant

As noted in our most recent Newsletter, the Federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Hon. Marc Miller, visited the 108 Mile Ranch site of our future cultural centre on March 31st, participating in a ceremony to mark his department's \$4 million grant towards the construction of the centre.

The event was organized at very short notice, but was nevertheless attended by a large number of First Nations representatives and many other honoured supporters of our project. After an opening prayer delivered by Joseph Alexis Archie of the Canim Lake Band and drumming by a group of Canim Lake Band singers led by former Chief Mike Archie, the ceremony got underway with Northern Shuswap Tribal Council Manager of Communications Eric Sennes acting as master of ceremonies. Chief Helen Henderson of the Canim Lake Band welcomed those in attendance and gave thanks to those who had brought the project to its current stage over a period of almost 20 years and of course thanked the Minister both for the grant and also for taking the time to visit us and attend the ceremony.



Joseph Archie saying the opening prayer in company with Minister Marc Miller and Society President Irene Gilbert



Canim Lake singers opening the ceremony

Chief Helen was followed by Chief Hank Adam of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation at Dog Creek and Canoe Creek and Chief Fred Robbins of the Esk'etemc First Nation, both of whom spoke about the significance of the project, what it would mean to future generations of Northern Secwepemc people, and what it would contribute to reconciliation and a better understanding of the history and culture of their people. As an interesting – to your Editor at least – footnote, both these Chiefs held office back in 2003 when they were approached to solicit their interest in what became our project.



Chief Hank Adam of the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation addressing the attendees



Chief Fred Robbins of the Esk'etemc First Nation addressing the attendees

Our Society's President Irene Gilbert then addressed the gathering, adding her comments about the significance of our project, and expressing our thanks to Minister Marc Miller for the huge grant that in conjunction with a \$300,000 grant from the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) will allow us to start construction this year and complete our centre's building by the end of 2023, leading to a projected opening of the facility by early 2024.



A proud and ecstatic Society President Irene Gilbert of the Canim Lake Band with Society Secretary Graham Leslie



On behalf of the Cariboo Regional District (CRD) and the NDIT, both of whose boards she chairs, Margo Wagner spoke of the long-standing support the CRD has provided to the project as well as the financial support provided by the NDIT starting with a grant back in 2005/2006. She turned the mike over to CRD Area "G" Director Al Richmond who has been personally involved with the project since its inception, both as the CRD Director in whose area the building will be constructed, but also as the Chair of the CRD Board for many years immediately preceding Margo Wagner's tenure.



CRD and NDIT Chair Margo Wagner addressing the attendees



CRD Director Al Richmond addressing the attendees



The final speaker at the ceremony was the Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. The Minister was already well known to those of us who follow the news and were familiar with his regular TV appearances as the face of a Federal Government dealing with a multiplicity of issues involving Canada's First Nations. He arrived at our ceremony with a reputation for being sincere and straightforward in his approach to the many complex issues facing him and his department, and nothing in his general demeanour or in his remarks to the gathering did anything to dispel his positive image. Nobody in attendance could have doubted his sincerity about his pleasure at being with us or about the importance he attached to our project. We look forward to his attendance at our opening ceremony in early 2024, if not at some of the milestones during the intervening time.

The ceremony ended with an additional performance by the Canim Lake Band singers.



Chiefs Mike Archie and Fred Robbins leading the closing song

We are sure to have overlooked identifying all of the many other supporters of our project who were in attendance at the ceremony, but we want to name those who received special invitations that reflect the importance of the support they contributed to the application we made for the \$4 million CIRNAC and NDIT



grants, and in the cases of CRD Directors reflects the presence of Northern Secwepemc First Nations within their respective areas.

- District of 100 Mile House attending in place of Mayor Mitch Campsall: Maureen Pinkney;
- City of Williams Lake attending in place of Mayor Walt Cobb: Councillor Marnie Brenner;
- CRD Area “E” Director Angie Delainie;
- CRD Area “F” Director Maureen LeBourdais;
- Indigenous Tourism BC attending in place of Chair Brenda Baptiste: Director Cheryl Chapman
- South Cariboo Chamber of Commerce: President Donna Barnett;
- Northern Shuswap Tribal Council: Executive Director Marg Shelley; and
- 100 Mile House & District Historical Society

Other organizations that were invited but were unable to attend were:

- BC Museums Association: Executive Director Ryan Hunt;
- CRD Area “D” Director Steve Forseth;
- Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association: CEO Amy Thacker; and
- Williams Lake & District Chamber of Commerce

Last but not least, we note the attendance of three current or former directors of our Society, namely:

- Alana Dixon of the Canim Lake Band, current Director and the Society’s first President;
- Harold Duncan of the Stswecem’c Xgat’tem First Nation and our current Treasurer; and
- Chris Wycotte of the Williams Lake First Nation, our former long-term Vice President.



The Minister in the company of Chiefs Helen and Hank, Al Richmond and your Editor



A small handful of the many attendees



Notes to the Reader

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