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## Summer 2024 Newsletter

### 1. Our New Cultural Centre

As this edition is being written during the last week of June, our new cultural centre is within two weeks of its completion. Its completion will mark slightly more than 20 years since the very first meeting of community members was held to discuss the possibility of what has finally resulted. And what has resulted, is in turn the culmination of endless hours contributed by so very many individuals whose dedication and perseverance over those years, saw them survive the many ups and downs that were experienced along the way. They are far too many to mention now, but in due course we intend to honour all of them.

In a separate section below, we will tell the story of how our new building got its Secwepemctsin name.

When construction finally got underway in May 2023, we had hoped and expected that the building and the accompanying landscaping would be completed by Christmas of that year. However, we had scarcely begun construction when work was halted as the result of a stop work order issued by the BC Archaeology Branch. The loss of more than two weeks of fine dry weather completely disrupted the construction schedule, and despite the valiant efforts of our construction management company to regroup, the project fell significantly behind schedule, and as noted above, is now not expected to be substantially complete until mid-July 2024.

Speaking of our construction management company, they have been absolutely extraordinarily efficient and diligent in taking care of the almost \$6.5 million budget, and have been able to bring the building as well as the landscaping in under budget. They have worked seamlessly with our architects and with our exhibit design consultants, and of course with ourselves, and we couldn't have been more fortunate in our selection of all these amazing professionals.

During the early months of this year, when we still hoped and expected to reach substantial completion of the project by no later than early May, we set a date in early June for a celebration of the completion of construction. We were careful not to advertise the ceremony as a "grand opening", as we are still lacking all the wonderful exhibits and programs that have been proposed by members of our five communities, and were reluctant to celebrate that future event prematurely. We did issue invitations for the June ceremony, but were forced to cancel them



and postpone the ceremony which is now set for Friday, September 6, 2024. New invitations will be circulated nearer to that time.

## **2. The Name of Our New Cultural Centre**

The naming of our new Centre has been the product of widespread consultations carried out by Irene Gilbert, our Society President. Extensive discussions with elders from our several communities, were followed by further discussions with a representative group of our youth, and finally, after a larger number of proposals had been narrowed down to two, those two were submitted for a vote among three senior members of each of the Canim Lake Band, SXFN and Esk'etemc. The majority of those votes were cast in favour of

### **Ckultenellcw – our culture of long ago**

which was felt by those who proposed it and by the majority of those who voted, to express best the overall purpose of the exhibits and programs that will eventually be displayed in the centre.

Our thanks to all those who participated in the selection process, especially including those who voted for the excellent alternative that was included in the final vote.

## **3. The Exhibit Development Project**

Having completed similar projects with the Canim Lake Band in 2021/2022 and with SXFN in 2022/2023, our exhibit design consultants have been working with the Esk'etemc for the past year in identifying the stories and programs that community members wish eventually to share with visitors to the Centre. A final report is expected in the very near future and will be submitted to the community and its leadership as soon as it has been completed.

## **4. The Cultural Centre When it Opens**

Thanks to the funding that we obtained from the federal government's Museums Assistance Program, which has financed the exhibit development project at Esk'et, and which had been earmarked for similar work at Xat'sull and at the Williams Lake First Nation, we have been able to cover the cost of our exhibit design consultants who are producing (1) an array of tall banners that will be erected inside the Centre, and are designed to provide an explanation to visitors of what we hope to display in the future, once additional funding has been secured, and (2) some exterior signage that will be erected along the pathway that will take visitors from the parking area at the BC Government Rest Area, and bring them to the building. Those signs will briefly describe the history of the pre-contact way of life of the Northern Secwepemc people and the impact that contact and the colonial influx had on that way of life and the centuries old culture. Visitors journeying through this landscape along this carefully designed



pathway, will be led to the building where they will be able to experience the information and images contained on the tall banners.

## 5. A Final Word

As all our readers may well imagine, all of the Society's directors are excited beyond words by our arrival at this significant point on our journey towards a Centre that will eventually house the world-class exhibits and programs that we hope to be able to present as soon as the funding for them has been obtained. In the meantime, we extend to all our readers, their friends and family members and all their acquaintances a warm welcome to come and visit this incredible new Centre – **Ckultenellcw** – and experience the start of what will eventually be the culmination of our 20 plus years dream.



### Notes to the Reader

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