



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

Spring 2025 Newsletter

This Newsletter is being written a few days before the actual start of Spring but will reach you with every hope that the coming Spring and the rest of this year will bring all of you health, happiness and prosperity. We are continuing to make preparations for the coming year and will share our plans and hopes with you in the sections that follow.

1. Our 2024 Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held in Williams Lake on December 6, 2024, and resulted in the re-election of Irene Gilbert of the Tsq'escen First Nation (Canim Lake) as President, Kerry Chelsea of Esk'etemc as Vice President, and Graham Leslie of the 100 Mile House & District Historical Society as Secretary. Dora Demers of the Stswecem'c Xet'tem First Nation was elected as Treasurer and elected as Directors at Large were Alana Dixon of the Tsq'esecen First Nation, Irvine Johnson of Esk'etemc and Harold Duncan of the Stswecem'c Xet'tem First Nation.

2. Our New Building

Shortly before Christmas, work was completed on the restoration of our cement floor. We had been dissatisfied with the state of the floor at the completion of the main project in early September 2024, and so we commissioned a local contractor to grind down the original finish and re-seal it more appropriately. At the same time, we commissioned the painting of the cement walls in the storage areas to avoid any possibility of our artifacts being subject to dust. This task was also completed shortly before Christmas. The 16 banners that had been erected in time for the September 6th ceremony, were taken down while the floor restoration took place, but will have been re-hung by the time this Newsletter reaches you.

3. When Will We Open the Building to the Public?

That question has been asked by numerous folks who have been attracted to the new building but have been unable to enter it. We naturally enough would like that opening to occur as soon as possible, but there are still a few glitches to sort out before we open. Amongst those things are the following.

4. Outdoor Signage

We retained an amount from our construction budget that is sufficient to commission our exhibit design consultants, D. Jensen & Associates, to work with our President Irene Gilbert in order to produce the 8 signs that will greet visitors who enter our site from the BC Government Rest Area along the winding path we have created. The metal stands for the



signs were constructed and installed during the 2024 construction phase, and David and his team are currently working to produce the narratives that will be affixed to the signs. They will tell the stories of life before contact with Europeans on the first four signs, and the impact of colonization on that culture and way of life on the last four signs. David's team is working on that project at this time, and we are hoping for its completion by the time we open to the public.

5. Rental of the Building

From the time of our original Business Plan in 2014, we have always recognized that we would only be able to be open to the public on a continuous basis during the six months from mid-April to mid-October, keeping in step with our neighbours and friends at the 108 Heritage Site. In order to contribute to our income during the Fall and Winter off-season, we are hoping to attract a variety of groups to the facility for meetings.

To attract those meetings, it was necessary to provide reliable high-speed internet to support the ability to communicate by Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other means. We spent a frustrating several months in our attempts to find a provider of the service at a reasonable cost. Having started our search at Telus, which has been extraordinarily supportive of our project from its outset but having been deterred by the high monthly cost of its service, we explored every alternative without satisfaction and have now entered into a contract with Telus that will allow us to offer the level of service that will be expected.

We have already been forced to decline requests to rent the building because of the absence of reliable high-speed internet but are delighted to announce that we have accepted a request from the Cariboo Regional District to host their two days of meetings in mid-June of this year.

In the very near future, we will resume contact with the several organizations that had expressed interest in renting our building and will be able to inform them of the range of facilities we have to offer them.

6. The Road Ahead

Much of what we hope to produce during the balance of this year depends on the success we have with our several outstanding funding applications.

First and foremost is an application to the BC Government's Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program that, if successful, would provide us with \$500,000 and enable David Jensen's exhibit design team, working with our member communities, to portray many more banners that would tell the many stories that community members have already shared with his team. The plan is to create many more banners than can be displayed at any one time, but that would meet one of David's original proposals, namely that we will need to be able to refresh our exhibits and change our display from time to time in order to maintain interest on the part of visitors who might be inclined to return for subsequent visits. We hope to learn the result of our application at some point in the Spring of this year. If



successful, David Jensen and his team will devote the balance of the year to completing the project.

Another funding application has been made to the British Columbia Arts Council for \$40,000 for the purchase of the specialized equipment that we will need for both the display and the safe storage of the many artifacts we are expecting to receive from community members and their administrations. We have not yet compiled an inventory of these items, but are anxious to be able to accept them, either on loan or as outright gifts. The outcome of this application is expected in the very near future.

A third funding application was made to the Vancouver Foundation. It is for an operating budget contribution of \$100,000 for each of three years and, if successful, would make a huge, positive difference to our Society's ability to get our cultural centre launched with the confidence that we will be financially able to take the time to grow into full operation. We don't expect to learn the outcome of this application until June of this year.

7. Hiring a Cultural Centre Manager

At about the same time as this Newsletter reaches you, we will be asking the administrations of the Tsq'escen First Nation, Esk'etemc and the Stswecem'c Xet'tem First Nation to post notices soliciting expressions of interest in the position of Cultural Centre Manager that is now open. We have always been anxious to attract a member from the Northern Secwepemc communities and are hoping to succeed in that endeavour. If we don't succeed initially, we will extend our search to members of the Williams Lake and Xat'sull First Nations.

8. Our Opening to the Public

Our current hope is to be able to open to the general public by the time of the June 20th and 21st CRD Board meetings, and very possibly with a new Cultural Centre Manager in place. We will welcome you all to visit.



Notes to the Reader

1. If you would prefer not to receive future monthly Newsletters, please notify us by email addressed to grahamleslie@shaw.ca.
2. If you are not on our direct emailing list, but would like to be added to it, please notify us by email addressed to grahamleslie@shaw.ca.