

**'Namgis First Nations
Sunday April 3, 2011**

**Band Business Meeting
Victoria**

Ambrosia Conference and Event Centre, 638 Fisgard Victoria.

Treaty Meeting: Band Business

Facilitator and chair: Sue Staniforth

Minutes of Meeting

Minutes taken by: Sue Staniforth

9:30 AM Arrivals, Sign in

10:00 AM Welcome / Greetings / Opening Prayer

Introductions All

10:15 AM Agenda Review

Sue reviewed the agenda, summarized all the questions from the sheets handed out the previous day on a flip chart, and encouraged participants to submit more questions as the day went on.

10:30 AM Powerpoint Slideshows

Verna Ambers, the Assistant Band Administrator, presented a brief introduction to her job. George Speck is the Senior Band Administrator.

I. Band Administration

Showed us the Administration Map - This showed the Departments and Dept. Heads.

****Action Item: put this on the web site**

The Department of Indian Affairs provides annual operating budget of \$3.92 million for administration. This is to cover such things as roads, sewers, infrastructure, income assistance, guardian financial assistance program, National Child Benefits program, training and support, post secondary initiative, community assets inventory.

There are about ten members on the accounting team and Band Support Team: E.g. secretary, membership clerk, IT Director, Computer techs, training instructor, Public Works, Capital Projects and Housing.

The Band employs 164 people, 90% of these are aboriginal. 145 are full time with 19 casual: we are one of the biggest employers on the north island. The turnover for committee members is not high, except for the Housing Committee. Every two years the Education Board is elected. Right now there are two job postings: two committee members are needed for the Finance Committee.

The staff are not voting members – they provide support and advice only. This year we prepared Portfolio meetings and have been holding them once a month in Alert Bay to inform members of what we do: The Committees have

prepared the slideshows and present them: Topics include Justice, Forestry, Fisheries, Culture and Language, Education.

****Action Item: all the Powerpoint slides were provided to TJ, who will post them on the 'Namgis website.**

The Band's total annual budget is \$16 million.

Esther: Some people have been paid to attend meetings but do not show up: - upsetting for those who attend and are not paid. Verna will look in to this.

11:00 AM II. Health Presentation

Verna: Slide show

First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) provides the band with 5 year budgets of \$1.16 million per year: \$6.6 million over five years, to deliver targeted programs and services on the reserve.

'Namgis Health Centre Goals were reviewed as well as the programs they cover.

Dental Care:

To see a dentist, 'Namgis gets 30% less from the government, so dentists do not want to work with First Nations as they lose money and the paperwork is excessive. Bills are submitted to First Canadian Health Insurance. The dental coverage is the same for on-reserve dental work, but the paperwork is taken care of – off-reserve members encouraged to make appointments on reserve when they go home.

Dental Clinic travels to other sites e.g. Quatsino. The clinic operates at a deficit.

Physicians:

Two doctors in Alert Bay; clinic open Monday to Friday on Cormorant Island and 24 hr. emergency services.

The clinic is a teaching centre for residents and medical students from UVic and UBC. Visiting specialists also come to the reserve: ophthalmologists, pediatrics, psychiatrists, and rheumatologists.

Mental Health Program and Community Health Program

Freida: asked about them doing home visits on reserve – problems stem from residential school survivors. There is still a lot of anger, important to get children to understand the results of the residential school experience on their parents. There have been multi-generational effects from it.

George: There is a Truth and Reconciliation Committee: Bands can apply for funding to bring people together for sessions.

Esther: When band members come down to Victoria to go to hospital, there are no provisions made for family members who want to visit them: they have no place to stay and there is no coverage for travel or food. Also, some band members come down in an ambulance and then get discharged with no clothes, no money and no way to get home: Off-reserve families take many people in – is there compensation for this?

Some travel and accommodation money is provided but it is only \$30. The Native Friendship Centre also helps out a lot. FNIHB policy driven.

Christina: works for VIHA – she has seen examples of this often. There are liaison people at Vic General Hospital and Royal Jubilee Hospital but there needs to be better communications between the Alert Bay hospital and off-reserve hospitals. However, they are not informed when First Nations people are admitted to hospital, as there is a liability and breach of privacy issue here as well which makes it tricky. She recommends that family members call Aboriginal Health and then the news of a patient will get to her and other liaison nurses.

Action Item: Patient Travel Guidelines and reimbursements should be put up on the web site.

Question: Drugs on Reserve: is there any action taken by the Band?

Barb: Three people on council meet regularly with the RCMP. There have been endorsements to remove people from the community. Information surveys are also done to ask about drug problems. There are programs in the schools but it is a big problem.

Preventative programs around drug and alcohol addiction are so important: the issue seems to be growing.

Crystal: All the health budgets are being cut, so prevention programs are even more important.

Robert: They are looking into acquiring a house on the reserve that provides after care after a patient is discharged from rehabilitation. This is a big challenge that has been identified – people going back to their routines and friends and falling back into addiction with no support.

Jennifer: Need more professionalism at the Band office – sometimes when you call there you get mis-directed, or there is not response to emails or phone calls for days. There should be some standards put in place around time frame for responding to requests and emails.

Question: Residential School: St. Mike's

Is the residential school an important reminder for what went on, or is it a crutch for people? Should it be torn down?

Barb: At one point it was going to turn it into a language centre, but the cost to restore it is huge. It will even cost several million dollars to tear it down.

Community Health program

School-based health Education programs are delivered.

They also do environmental health liaison work and water testing, put on safety courses and diabetes initiatives.

Harold: Members of a Band on the Saanich peninsula – (Tsartlip?) receives a fresh fruit and veggie box as part of their health program. This would be something to look into for the Alert bay reserve – maybe the produce could come from the Comox Valley.

Freida: asked about Children having children and programs that address this.
Verna: Yes – through the education programs this is talked about.

Question - Medical Coverage: Does the Band have any extra, such as Blue Cross?

Verna: Your Care Card covers you for all the Health Canada services. However what is covered for us, in terms of medication, changes often.

12:15 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM III. Education Presentation

Verna did Powerpoint:

Barb Cranmer and Robert Mountain are council members on the committee. The 'Namgis Board of Education gets \$35,000 for their cultural program annually. This includes singing, dancing, language classes, traditional food, science projects, cultural events in the Big House.

Chris Cook III asked about smoking fish – the Band should have a smoke house at the school so students can do this. What about language immersion program? Has this been discussed?

Verna: An immersion program has been considered but the cost is huge. There is a deficit in the language program now of about \$382,000 – we now provide a one hour a week class for community members.

Also some signs are being put up in the village.

Chris Cook III – is starting up a language program in Victoria and Vancouver to encourage more classes and speaking . He is gathering materials and resources and will start by getting people to meet in each others' homes - and will keep the Band informed of his programs.

Christina mentioned the "First Voices" website that has the 'Namgis language recorded on it – there are also linguistic programs at universities:

Lori – who runs the Ambrosia Catering company, is studying the Kwak'wala language - Freida works with the UVic students!

Schools:

In 1976 the band opened their own school, in 1996 it moved to the new facility. There are 87 students, 21 staff that are 99% 'Namgis.

The high school – North Island Secondary School, is in Port McNeill. Many students don't continue through high school – the transportation is a challenge. They tried to have a secondary school program in Alert Bay but it was not successfully attended. There are two support workers based at NISS for our students funded through the school district.

Education Budgets:

The total budget is \$964,000, of which \$600,000 goes to salaries. These funds go to pay the teachers and the principal and costs to operate T'lisalagilakw School.

They rely a lot on extra grants for programs.

The student based funding is based on the number of students enrolled by Sept. 30 of each year.

Freida: Is there any support for off-reserve students for bus passes, and transportation? Schools are closing down and students have to travel further to get to school. What is offered to off-reserve students and how can we find out?

Post Secondary Funding

Budget is \$674,000

Last year we funded 54 students to take courses. There are two deadlines for application a year: November and May. The funding goes fast so apply early! Verna had application forms available at the meeting and will post the information on line.

Occupation and Skills Training is available for short courses, available to on and off-reserve members.

****Action Item: TJ to put application forms, post-secondary information, and course information on the web site. This is important information.**

Post Secondary students get \$839 a month for accommodation, tuition, etc. Books etc. are paid for by post-secondary education funds.

Harold: Why doesn't the band look into buying a house in Victoria for 'Namgis students to live in? We could hire a house parent to take care of the place – it would make it easier for the students to focus on their schoolwork instead of trying to survive on so little money. Education is so critical to our future.

Robert: Other bands have bought houses for their students – we may be able to partner with other bands to make this work.

Travel Allowance: Post secondary students get two trips home a year covered: bus and ferry fare.

Esther: For health-related travel – why can't we buy a house in town for people coming down for treatment?

Jennifer: Can we have a Health Committee similar to the Constitutional Committee that can look into these issues? Verna will take this back to Council.

IV. Public Works and Housing Presentation

Verna: This area includes the school, health centre, recreation centre. We liaise with Council and do a completion report each year for projects. Most funded by INAC but there are some other sources as well.

Old St George's Hospital site: Burned down – received \$107,000 to clean up the site and restore it.

Capital Planning

There is a five year plan, we submit an annual plan to INAC as part of the Capital Assets Inventory.

Completed the Boardwalk and are constructing five Awakwes which represent the five clans or Namima of the 'Namgis.

Cormorant Island Learning Centre: we took over the old "Open Area School" and got a grant to upgrade the washrooms and electrical. Will use it for the post secondary coordinator position and course delivery site.

North Island College had a site on the island but abandoned it 8 years ago.

The Health Centre is currently renting a duplex to house visiting specialists and locums: we are now building a triplex to accommodate them.

"Mold and Your Health": Created a booklet about this problem and mitigation, will do a workshop twice a year as well.

Public Works - Maintenance of roads, water, sewers, etc.

Budget based on miles of roadway, pipes and number of buildings.

Revolving Housing Program:

In 1967 we received a loan program to build houses from the federal government. We got \$550,000 to establish the program, a lot of money when houses cost \$3 - \$5,000 to build.

The program is sustained through revenue from rentals and mortgage payments, but it is in arrears.

Now a three-bedroom home costs over \$200,000. INAC contributes \$34,231, which leaves \$165, 769 to come from the RHP.

We are now in arrears \$545,000. We do not want this program to be abandoned but if the trend continues we may have to.

It is very hard to chase down the money being owed: we now have a new housing policy to design a repayment plan to pay back the money.

This takes it out of council's hands which is important, as these are our relatives and friends that are living in these houses and not paying what is owed,

There used to be a policy that a member had to get a \$5,000 loan before they could get a housing grant – this does not exist now. The down payment is now \$500.00.

Crystal: We need to stand together as a Band and support them when they go to collect the arrears. We do not want to lose this program – and we should not be subsidizing some people who are not paying their way.

Maybe we should bring back the \$5,000 policy: if someone can't get a loan for that much, should that not be a red flag for building them a \$200,000 house?

There will always be exceptions but this is something that needs addressing.

Other programs:

RRAP grant – can get \$16,000 from CMHC for house repairs

HASI – a grant to modify a house for seniors: \$3500 from CMHC

Department of Transport: Homes on this site are under lease but the land is part of the Treaty settlement – we are trying to get it back.

V. Economic Development Presentation

Barb Cranmer made the presentation: The program works through four main activities:

1) Helping Entrepreneurs

There are presentations and workshops for setting up businesses on the reserve, and links to ranting agencies. A business license costs only \$25/year.

Chris Cook III – should businesses put some of their profits back into the community? Policy to look into.

Planning for business development for “Downtown ‘Namgis” part of town.

2) Connecting to Employers

Identify skill deficiencies and job opportunities, and provide training to band members to fill those positions. Connect with employers to assess needs and facilitate job placements.

3) Creating Partnerships

e.g. Orca Sand and Gravel: Band has 12% ownership and 5 band members employed.

Tourism: kayak operations, cruise ships: some pocket cruise ships come from Seattle in the summer – the big ships don’t even stop in Campbell River anymore though.

4) Creating ‘Namgis - Owned Businesses

E.g. Gas Station, Logging company, the Natural Resources Department
Have some funds from PICFI to create a small boat fleet for fishing
Looking into shellfish aquaculture.

Outside grant sources: secured over \$3.25 million

Long Term Economic Development Plan

This is necessary and is being done

It is needed for all the funding agencies and to help Band direct revenues

The plan should be based on ‘Namgis values and include all sectors (forestry, tourism, energy, etc.)

We need to get community input on the plan and then take it to council.

3:00 PM Closing Summary

Sue thanked everyone for attending, provided reminder that all presentations will be put on the web site and that minutes from both days will be circulated through email and web site, and mailed out to individuals who requested this.