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N.W.T.
LEGISLATIVE
FEB 21 2008
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Mr. Kevin Menicoche
MLA Nahendeh
Fort Simpson, NT
X0E 0N0

Re: Open Doors Society Re-Location

December 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Menicoche,

Please find attached a copy of a letter and information package sent to the following:

- NWT Premier Floyd Roland
- Minister for Health and Social Services Sandy Lee
- Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs and
- Minister for Youth, Michael McLeod
- Minister for Education, Culture and Employment Jackson Lafferty
- Health Canada Minister Tony Clement
- Member of Parliament Dennis Bevington
- Senator Nick Sibbeston

We thank you for your support in this matter and greatly appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

Anyes Fabre-Dimsdale
Open Doors Society

The Honorable
Minister of ...
Government of the Northwest Territories
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2L9

Re: Re-location of the Open Doors Society Family Resource Centre

November 10, 2007

Dear Minister,

The Open Doors Society Family Resource Centre is a non-profit community-based organization that provides early childhood programming (ages 0-5) and activities for children aged 12 and under in Fort Simpson . Currently Open Doors is operating out of the GNWT-owned Dehcho Hall. Dehcho Hall is slated for closure by fall 2008, therefore non-profit societies such as Open Doors and the John Tsetso Memorial Library will have to re-locate to new facilities.

Open Doors has been running programs for the children of Fort Simpson for the past 13 years with great success. The need for our society to find suitable space from which to operate is critical to our being able to continue to offer these programs in our community. The Open Doors Society is the sole community organization providing early childhood activities of this kind; in the event of our being unable to adequately re-locate, the society would be forced to close and terminate its programming, thereby depriving the children of Fort Simpson access to important educational and developmental opportunities.

After having explored all matter of re-location possibilities we have come to the conclusion that there are no adequate facilities readily available to us in the community; we are writing to you in the hopes that you can assist us in some manner in finding a new home for our Family Resource Centre.

Our community library, currently housed in Dehcho Hall like Open Doors, is also in a tenuous position, as it must also re-locate and no adequate facilities are currently open to it.

are no such properties available to us in Fort Simpson at the present time, or any other suitable properties available for rent, and our funds do not provide us with sufficient resources to acquire a property of our own. As we are a government-funded non-profit society, we are unable to receive bank financing to purchase a facility.

We have identified a couple of possible options for re-location, however we are not able to access these based solely on our own resources. These are detailed in an attachment to this letter.

The NWT Training Forum held in May of 2007 identified Early Childhood Development as key in fostering literacy and developing interest in learning and education in children. It is now clearly understood that the first years in a child's life are very influential in its future development; this is when the first stones can be laid in the path towards a healthy and successful life. The closure of the Open Doors Society due to lack of facilities would be a step backwards for the community of Fort Simpson, and a loss to its children.

Attached is a brief description of our Society's history and programming. Should you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Anyes Fabre-Dimsdale at 867-695-3345 or by email at peregrine@northwestel.com.

We thank you for taking the time to look into this matter and look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Rosario Lloret
Chairperson
Open Doors Society

**Open Doors Society
Potential Re-location Options**

- *Former building used for Stanley Isaih Supported Living Program*
 - owned by Housing Corporation, currently vacant

Favorable points:

- Large space with kitchen facilities,
- would need minimal alterations and upgrades if any
- Next to elder's clusters, which would facilitate elder inclusive programming
- Large enough to include joint programming with other organizations such as the Prenatal Program

Drawbacks:

- High in maintenance and utility costs
- No playground area

Requirements for use of building:

- Authorization from Housing Corporation
- Assistance with monthly utility fees

- *Former Natseneltu building*

- Privately owned, available for sale, or lease to purchase

Favorable points:

- Located on large lot, sufficient space for large playground and construction of addition to building or storage space if desired
- Large open space, sufficient to accommodate programming
- Some minor renovations and upgrading needed, but funding is available to Open Doors specifically for Fire Health and Safety upgrades & renovations, probably sufficient to cover costs.

Questionnaire on Open Doors Society – November 2007

- Results -

Please note: This survey was passed around Fort Simpson in the fall of 2007 to find out how satisfied the community was with the Open Doors Society and its programming. Although the Open Doors Society and the John Tsetso Memorial Library are completely separate organizations, Open Doors incorporated a question regarding the Library in its survey as we feel that it is a valuable community resource, especially to the children of Fort Simpson, and are concerned about its future after the closure of Deh Cho Hall. We therefore felt it was important to also get some community feedback on this issue.

Total households surveyed: 58

Gender of respondents: 24.5% male

Age Group:

0% - 0-6 14% - 7-12 0% - 13-18 7% - 19-30 50% - 31-64 7% - 65 and up
22% unknown

75.4% Female

Age Group:

2.3% - 0-6 4.6% - 7-12 4.6% - 13-18 32.6% - 19-30 39.5% - 31-64
2.3% - 65 and up 24.1% - unknown

1) Do you agree or disagree that Open Doors provides important programs to the children of Fort Simpson?

89% Strongly Agree 11% Agree
0% Disagree 0% Strongly disagree 0% Don't know

2) Do you have a child/children who has/have participated in Open Doors programs?

54% Yes 46% No

3) Which Programs?

Out of 58 households:

Playgroup	15	Busy Bees	18
Pre-school	21	Toy Lending-Library	24
Special Events	17	Super Saturdays	13

4) (Of those who answered yes to the above question) Do you agree or disagree that your child has benefited from this/these programs?

90.4% Strongly Agree 9.5% Agree

0% Disagree 0% Strongly disagree 0% Don't know

- 5) Do you agree or disagree that it is important that Open Doors continue to provide this programming to the children of Fort Simpson?

89.5% Strongly Agree 10.5% Agree
0% Disagree 0% Strongly disagree 0% Don't know

- 6) Do you agree or disagree that it is important for Fort Simpson to have a village library?

94.7% Strongly Agree 5.3% Agree
0% Disagree 0% Strongly disagree 0% Don't know

Comments:

- Many of my friends who have children actively participate in all of the [Open Doors] programs and benefit greatly from the social activities of Open Doors.
- I believe all children strongly benefit from all of these programs.
- The village absolutely needs a library
- Developmental programs for children are paramount, especially in the North
- I have friends that use these programs
- Kids need a place to learn before they go to Bompas {Elementary School}
- Kids need books to learn
- The government should be working with the Village/Metis/Band Council to find space within their inventory to provide these two programs a facility (appropriate) to continue with this service.
- I don't want the library and Open Doors to be shut down because they might not have it again.
- Open Doors is a very valuable & beneficial program that could continue at another location
- What will our grandchildren say about this decision in 30 yrs?
- In another location (respondent not favorable to Dehcho Hall)
- Reading is cool

**Open Doors Society
Family Resource Centre
Fort Simpson, NT**

Mission statement:

The Open Doors Society exists to assist parents and their families in the growth and development of their young children's spiritual, social, cognitive and physical abilities.

Society founded:

1994 - The creation of the Open Doors Society was launched on the initiative of professionals from the Delta Divisional Board of Education, Social Services, and the Public Health Department. Their concerns for children and their recognition of kids at risk needing more support led to their collaborative efforts in forming the Open Doors Society.

Society development and growth:

The society is run by a volunteer board, with currently 2 full-time staff and 7 part-time staff. We are in the process of hiring 2 more part-time staff. Initially the board was composed of members from the GNWT Departments of Education, Social Services, and Health. Over the years the board grew to encompass community members, gradually leading to increased community involvement and less Department involvement. Currently there are 8 board members. The Society has now evolved to offer early childhood programming to all the children of Fort Simpson. Its programming has expanded to better target specific age groups and continues to grow as new programs are developed as needs are identified in the community.

Main Funding source:

- Government of Canada
 - Public Health Agency of Canada:
 - CAPC program

Supplementary funding source:

- Government of the Northwest Territories:
 - Department of Education, Culture and Employment:
 - Healthy Children's Initiative
 - Program Contributions

Programming:

The Open Doors Family Resource Centre has been operating for 13 years with great success. At present time all of the children in the target age groups for the Busy Bees and Preschool programs (ages 3 and 4 respectively) attend the programs. This has been consistent for several years. For the 2007-08 school year this equals to 12 children in Busy Bees and 15 in Pre-school. The Open Doors Society is the only organization that provides early childhood programming and activities for the 0-5 yr age group in Fort Simpson.

In the evenings the Toy-lending Library Program for 0-12 year olds, has an average attendance of 18 children and 3 adults. Again, there is no other organization offering structured programming in the evenings to this age group in Fort Simpson.

If any behavioral or learning disabilities are identified in a child attending program, Open Doors assists the parent or guardian in seeking appropriate care and help address the situation in any way possible.

**Average yearly births
In Fort Simpson:**

22

- **Playgroup:** 3 mornings a week, ages 6 and under with parents
Goals: Social interaction for parents and children, provide a safe caring atmosphere with age appropriate toys, foster sharing of ideas and communication among parents to build on existing parenting skills.
- **Busy Bees:** 2 groups, 2 hours once a week without parents, age 3
Goals: Social interaction, language development, and large motor activity
- **Pre-school:** 2 groups, 2 ½ hours twice a week without parents, age 4
Goals: Build on social skills, work on school readiness skills, motor skill development

- **Toy-lending Library:** Weekday evenings from 6:30-8:30 pm, drop-in for ages 12 and under, 5 and under must be accompanied by someone 12 and over.

Goals: To provide an opportunity for kids and parents to interact with each other via games, toys, and crafts, to assist parents by demonstrating age appropriate games and toys, and making available toys and games for borrowing.

- **Super Saturdays:** Saturdays 1 - 3 pm, drop-in for ages 6-12, 5 and under with accompaniment.

Goals: To provide opportunities for kids to learn concepts and encourage development of new skills through activities with cooking, sewing, painting, and crafts.

**Open Doors Society Annual Special Events:
(For all community children and families)**

- Family Literacy Day
- Beavertail Jamboree Kids games
- Community Easter Egg Hunt
- Summer Family Swim and BBQ
- Canada Day Bike Parade
- Halloween Party
- Cake walk at Christmas Bazaar
- National Child Day
- Christmas Party, in association with the Metis Nation

The Open Doors Society is often asked to participate in community special events such as Aboriginal Day, Canada Day and the Open Sky Festival to provide activities and entertainment for the children of Fort Simpson.

Additional Educational Activities:

The Open Doors Society has promoted literacy and early childhood development with initiatives such as the distribution of literacy kits to all families of children from 0-6, bringing in speakers such as Métis author David Bouchard to promote literacy to the community families, and the creation of program literacy kits for all Kindergarten, Preschool, and Daycares in the Deh Cho. At all community events we hand out books as prizes.

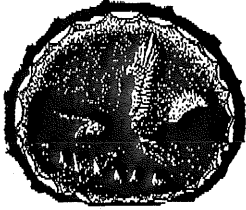
Program fees: All Open Doors programs and events are free

New Programming:

Juniors and Seniors - The Open Doors Society is currently in the planning stages of programming to increase interaction between the community's young children and elders. This would be through such activities as storytelling, reading, sewing, crafts and games, helping to promote literacy, cultural awareness, respect and sharing between the generations.

Parenting workshops - We are running monthly theme-based workshops for parents in conjunction with other community programs that target parents and children.

Books in the home - We are planning a book in the home program for children 6 and under. Via the kindergarten, preschool, busy bees, and playgroup, families will get one repetition type book per month. This book will be read at each program followed by an activity based on the book. The book will then be sent home with the child.



Liidlii Kue First Nation

P.O. Box 469 Fort Simpson NT X0E 0N0
Phone: (867) 695-3131 Fax: (867) 695-2665
E-mail: info@liidliikue.com

December 12, 2007

Anyes Fabre-Dimsdale
Open Doors Society
Fort Simpson, NT
X0E 0N0

Dear Anyes;

Re: LKFN Support for Open Doors Society

Liidlii Kue First Nation supports the Society's efforts to maintain preschool services in our community. The importance of this organization is vital to our young children and we all stress how important it is to take care of our young.

This service has been and still is a venue for young children along with parents to access in developing a child to be ready for school. Children need to be taught at a young age to socialize with other children an important component to their development.

LKFN wishes the Open Doors Society luck in accomplishing their goal of saving this important program and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Mahsi,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Keyna Norwegian', written over a horizontal line.

Chief Keyna Norwegian
Liidlii Kue First Nation



FORT SIMPSON MÉTIS NATION

Box 408

Fort Simpson, NT

X0E 0N0

Tel: (867) 695-2431 Fax: (867) 695-2040

E-mail: fsimpson_mctis@allwale.ca

November 20, 2007

Open Doors Society
PO Box 125
Fort Simpson, NT
X0E 0N0
(867) 695-3962

To Whom It May Concern:

The Open Doors Society has been in operation for a number of years in Fort Simpson, however due to the Dehcho Hall being torn down the society will be without a place to run their programs by the summer of 2008. The community cannot afford to lose this program.

The GNWT should be willing to help the Open Doors Society with relocation and funds to buy a building in order to continue the operation of the program.

The Metis Nation of Fort Simpson fully supports the Open Doors Society in the quest for a new location and continuation of the program.

Mashi Cho,

Marie Lafferty
President



Rompas Elementary School

1000 FORT SIMPSON, N.B. A0E 0N0

Phone: 867-895-7326

Fax: 867-895-7950

November 26, 2007

To whom it may concern:

I was asked to write a letter of support for the "Open Door Society" in Fort Simpson. I do so gladly and without hesitation.

I am a new Principal at Bompas, and was very impressed with the community's support of it's children. In fact one the reasons I came to Fort Simpson was the Busy Bee and pre-school programs offered by the "Open Door Society".

From a social and academic sense, these programs greatly aid the children in their development and also in their successful transition into the school system. I also like the involvement of the parents in their children's programming along with the parent workshops that are offered.

In my 20 some years in the North, these types of programs are sadly missing and only a dream in most communities!

Lets keep these great programs at the "Open Door Society" a reality!

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Kingsbury".

Chris Kingsbury, Principal



DEHCHO DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

Box 376, Fort Simpson, N.W.T. X0E 0N0

712 5 9

November 22, 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Open Doors Society

Over the past decade the Open Doors Society has provided a much needed service in the community of Fort Simpson. Families have received support from various programs available through Open Doors. As a result of their consistent program delivery over the years children are well prepared to enter their formal education at the age of five. Staff at the elementary school in the community notice the readiness of children who have engaged in Open Door programs.

Like many pre-school programs, funding is limited. Through support from the community the program is able to continue. Since its inception service has been offered out of Dehcho Hall, the building that houses Aurora College, Education Culture and Employment and the Dehcho Divisional Education Council. A decision by the Government of the NWT to close Dehcho Hall and move occupants to a new facility did not include a space allocation for Open Doors who now face the challenge of finding available space in town and space that is affordable.

Open Doors faces a difficult situation. In the next few months they must secure affordable space or shut the door. If the program were to end it would be a great loss to the pre-school children and their families. The support for Open Doors by the Dehcho Divisional Education Council is demonstrated through the offering of the charity lease since the program began. The Council continues to see value in the program and offers support for it to continue.

The Open Doors program should be considered an essential service to the families in our community and for that reason we offer our continuing support.

Mahsi Cho

Martina Norwegian
Chairperson

Fighting to find a home

Open Doors Society turns to territorial government for help with relocation

by Roxanna Thompson
Northern News Services
Lillian Kue/Fort Simpson

The Open Doors Society is turning to the territorial government for help.

The society is one of the non-profit organizations that are currently

housed in Deheho Hall in Fort Simpson. With the government building scheduled for closure by the end of 2008, the society is looking for assistance to find a new home.

The society needs assistance to move into a new space, said Anyes Fabre-Dimsdale, a facility consultant for the society.

The society receives funding for their programs from the federal government through the Public Health Agency of Canada and from the territorial government through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Neither funding

source supplies money for facilities. The assumption is that the society will operate in a rent-free facility, said Fabre-Dimsdale. Currently the society only pays janitorial fees at the hall.

Please see Children's, page 4

4 DEH GHO DRUM, Thursday, November 29, 2007

news

Children's programs at stake

Fighting, from page 3

Knowing that the hall would close, members of the society's board have been essentially looking for a new location for about two years and stepped up the process to an active search in September. So far the search has not been fruitful.

"There aren't a whole lot of options in Fort Simpson," said Fabre-Dimsdale.

With their current resources there is nowhere for the society to move, she said. There are no facilities for rent that match the program's requirements and because they are non-profit the society doesn't have funds to buy and renovate a facility, said Fabre-Dimsdale.

"We're trying to get the government's attention on this matter," said Fabre-Dimsdale.

Members of the Open Doors Society argue that the

territorial government has a responsibility to provide funding for the transition for a number of reasons.

The government funds the society's programs so they must think the work it does is important, said Fabre-Dimsdale. Government officials also talk about the importance of early childhood education, which is what the society provides, she said. Finally, the government is putting Open Doors Society in this position by closing the building, Fabre-Dimsdale said.

Without transitional help the program could close.

"The situation is looking pretty grim for us," she said.

Supporters of the society say that if it closes the whole community will feel the loss.

"It provides something you can't find anywhere else in the community, programs for the zero to five age group," said Fabre-Dimsdale.

The Busy Bees and Pre-school programs are the only ones of their kind in the village for three to four-year-olds, she said. Through the Toy Lending Library, the society

also offers the only structured programming available in the evenings for children up to age 12, Fabre-Dimsdale said.

Open for the past 13 years, every family in the village has used the society at some point, said Val Gordon, a member of the society.

The thought of losing the society's programs upsets many people.

"It really scares me because I have used this program," said Connie McNab, a board member.

Chance to socialize
A lot of parents, including young mothers, that otherwise wouldn't meet, come to the programs to socialize, McNab said.

"It's a big resource for the community," she said.

Rosie Browning, another board member, said she challenges the government to put their money where their mouth is in terms of early childhood education.

"There is so much to lose," said Browning.

The wider community also supports the society, said Fabre-Dimsdale. A survey distributed by the society was completed by 55 households.

One hundred per cent of the respondents agreed that Open Doors provides important



The Open Doors Society is lobbying for government help so they can stay open and continue to provide programs such as pre-school. Members of pre-school program are seen here going on a nature walk and include, from left, front row: Warren Cui, Ryan Browning and Grace Day; middle row: Stephanie Lacrosse and Mya Wrigley; back row: Abigail Pascua-Matte, coordinator Tina Verge and Julie Sabourin.

programming to the community and that it's important for services to continue, she said.

Kevin Menicoche, the MLA for the Nahendeh said he supports the society in their goal of getting transitional funding from the government.

The government is closing the hall but hasn't provided transitional planning to any of the non-government groups, he said.

"It's not really fair to leave them out in the cold," said Menicoche.

"I've always said government are the ones that let the organizations in there and they shouldn't disown them outright."

Finding another government building to move the society into or giving assistance to locate grant money are some options, said Menicoche.

"I'm not sure how far we could go," he said.

Menicoche said he sent a letter of support to Jackson Lafferty, the minister of Education, Culture and Employment, lobbying on behalf

of the society and the other non-government organizations.

The Open Doors Society is also sending letters to a number of ministers at the territorial and federal government levels.

With an eviction date in fall 2008 the society needs an answer quickly so they start to prepare their plan, Fabre-Dimsdale said.

"We need to know it away," said Fabre-Dimsdale. Jackson Lafferty, the minister of Education, Culture and Employment was unavailable to comment on the issue.

"It's a big resource for the community,"



Northwest Territories – Education, Culture and Employment

May 2-3, 2007
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

NWT Training Forum 2007

Meeting facilitated by:
Tony Nash, CPF
613.592.9776

Report by:
Erinne White
613.567.6148

EXCERPTS

NWT Training Forum**Yellowknife, NWT – May 2-3, 2007**

Executive Summary

The NWT Training Forum took place in Yellowknife on May 2-3, 2007. Attendees included representatives of Aboriginal governments, industry, non-governmental organizations, educators, and federal and territorial governments.

The Forum was organized by the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment, in order to build partnerships and improve coordination and outcomes in education and training across the NWT. The expected output was a well-defined framework for joint collaboration to achieve substantial sustainable progress in adult training and education.

The group identified nine key focus areas: equity and accessibility; creating a foundation for learning; labour supply and demand; funding; standards; community needs; partnerships; culture of learning / changing mindsets; and social issues. For each key focus area, they identified a strategic vision, indicators of success and recommended actions. Finally, they chose priority actions and created a timeline for the expected substantial completion of each priority action.

The following priority actions were identified:

2007

- Create opportunities to share information among partners (i.e. networking, newsletters, regular forums and regional events).
- * • Lobby for appropriate resources and investment in early childhood education (pre-K-12) to build a foundation for success. *
- Create an inventory of organizations willing to partner (include vision, mandate, and current and future activities).
- Establish a process for identifying education and training needs in communities in consultation with the communities.
- Enhance literacy strategy to build strong partnerships with community, Aboriginal government and industry.

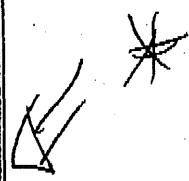
2008

- Create an inventory of available training programs and supports (such as funding and child care) and post the information in an accessible manner.
- Identify sources for community communication and information-sharing and communicate with them appropriately.
- Create an inventory of economic opportunities in the communities.
- Educate communities on the importance of career program plans.
- Ensure that there is a full-time qualified adult educator in every community.

Key Focus Area #2: Creating a Foundation for Learning

Strategic Direction
Explaining where we want to be

We as partners will contribute to our vision of a community where all residents are literate, lifelong learners supported in a culturally relevant environment to reach their learning potential and equipped with the skills to achieve their personal goals and contribute to society.



Success will have been achieved in this key focus area, when...

- ...all residents are literate.
- ...100% of students are reaching their chosen academic potential.
- ...all people have the requisites necessary to enter the workplace.
- ...there is complete job satisfaction.
- ...lifelong learning is accepted and respected.
- * ...all children are encouraged and supported by family/community to achieve their academic potential. *
- * ...children see the value and relevance of education to their future. *

We can go part way in achieving this...

- 2.2 ...by lowering pupil/teacher ratios.
 Substantial completion: December 2012
- 2.3 ...by teaching parents how to keep children in school.
 Substantial completion: December 2010

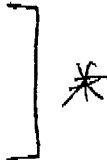
Key Focus Area #6: Community Needs

Strategic Direction
Explaining where we want to be

We as partners will focus on education and training that meets the needs of communities. That includes community-based training with the goal of retaining and attracting people to communities.

Success will have been achieved in this key focus area, when...

- ...communities have capacity.
- ...education and training are accessible in the community.
- ...we focus on small communities as a priority.
- ...there are increased economic opportunities (i.e. a mixed economy).
- ...training is based on community needs.
- ...there is an attraction/retention strategy.



We can go part way in achieving this...

6.1 ...by establishing a process for identifying education and training needs in communities in consultation with the communities.

+

1.11 ...by conducting community learning needs assessments.

Substantial completion: December 2007

6.2 ...by creating an inventory of economic opportunities in the communities.

Substantial completion: December 2008

OTHER SUGGESTED ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES:

6.3 Develop and implement a training and retention plan in each community.

