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MEMORANDUM

FROM:	Bruce Russell	DATE:	March 16, 2009
TO:	Abner Thorne	LOCAL:	308
CC:	Barbara-Ann Charlie Rolf Paterson	John Keating Rob Forrest	E-MAIL: brucer@gulfpacific.ca
RE:	5663 Club Road, Duncan, B.C. ~ DP's lease renewal		

I enclose a copy of our letter to Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), dated March 16, 2009 as well as a copy of their *Request For Information As To The Availability Of Office Space For Lease In Duncan, B.C. (RFI)*.

While the RFI is not as much of a concern as an RFP (Request for Proposal) none-the-less, the fact the need to issue it is a concern. We have previously noted that PWGSC needs confirmation that the all important underlying land lease will be extended sufficiently long enough to accommodate a ten (10) year premises lease renewal. Until such time as Gulf Pacific can demonstrate, without question the land lease will be renewed, Steve has suggested it would be futile to spend time negotiating the premises sublease.

It appears Steve has had previous, less than enjoyable/acceptable experiences with First Nations and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) which necessitates we first tie-down the land lease extension. To this end, we are concerned that as between the beneficial landowner and the Band, sufficient progress has not been made. We do not have anything that we can provide to Steve to adequately demonstrate progress on this key issue has been made? Gulf Pacific has made recommendations as to the renewal but to date has not been advised the landowner and Band are in agreement on the "framework" for the land lease renewal.

Please advise if another meeting (Thorne, Charlie, Keating, Paterson and Russell) is required to move this initiative forward?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bruce'.

Bruce
RBR:ac
Encl.

Native group kept mum on alleged embezzlement

JUDITH LAVOIE
Times Colonist

A Victoria-based aboriginal organization says it has made wide-ranging changes to the way it keeps track of its finances, following the alleged embezzlement of almost \$187,000 by its former financial co-ordinator.

The B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, which is funded by the federal and provincial governments, kept quiet about the misappropriated money after Leah Bussieres agreed to pay it back in full.

Yesterday, after reports surfaced about the issue, executive director Paul Lacerte said the organization has "taken a number of steps to reinforce our accountability for public funds, including instituting a new set of financial policies and procedures."

Among the changes are outsourcing of payroll to a private company, buying a new financial software system and hiring an experienced financial controller.

Lacerte also said that all of the money has been recovered. "In 2007, the association took steps immediately to recover all funds in response to the misappropriation of funds from the organization.



FACEBOOK

Leah Bussieres, also known as Leah Norman, was financial co-ordinator of the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

These efforts were successful," he said.

The problems began in September 2007, when Bussieres, who is also known as Leah Norman, was fired from the job she had held for 11 years at the BCAAFC, an umbrella organization that represents 23 aboriginal friendship centres around B.C.

According to court records, Bussieres had taken \$186,732.26 from the organization by writing herself two cheques on paydays between June 25, 2004, and June 13, 2007.

Initially, Bussieres

HOW \$186,732 IN PUBLIC FUNDS WAS RECLAIMED

Timeline of events according to interviews, court documents and petitions filed by the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and mortgage holders.

- June 25, 2004, to June 13, 2007: Leah Bussieres is alleged to have taken \$186,732.56 from the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, while working as its financial co-ordinator, by writing two paycheques for herself at payday.
- September 2007: Bussieres is fired from her job.
- Sept. 27, 2007: Bussieres, in

agreed to pay the money back by securing a mortgage in December 2007 on the Saanichton home she shared with her then-husband Greg Neufeldt, court records show. However, when she defaulted and the BCAAFC started legal action, Neufeldt and her mother co-signed a new mortgage, and she repaid the association in April 2008.

Once the money was returned, the BCAAFC dropped the court action.

Later that year, Neufeldt and Bussieres split up.

Neufeldt says he has been ruined by the debt, which is

return for the association not taking action against her for the recovery of the money, agrees to grant the association a mortgage for her home on Mahon Place, in Saanichton, which she shared with her then-husband Greg Neufeldt.

- Dec. 7, 2007: The mortgage is granted for \$186,732.26, with five per cent annual interest.
- Dec. 21, 2007: Bussieres defaults on the mortgage.
- Dec. 31, 2007: The association demands payment.
- Jan. 4, 2008: The association starts foreclosure action in court.
- April 4, 2008: Lawyers for

now partially his responsibility.

"Even my vehicle was repossessed over this," said Neufeldt, who argues an organization that uses taxpayers' dollars shouldn't have swept the alleged theft under the carpet.

"I would just like the public to know. ... As I understand it, even the board was never fully aware of what happened," he said.

Neufeldt, who said he was surprised by his wife's high-flying lifestyle after they married in 2007, was aware Bussieres sometimes received two paycheques

Bussieres argue that no payment schedule was agreed to and the mortgage is a "security instrument" by which Bussieres acknowledges she owes the association \$186,732.26.

- April 30, 2008: The association discontinues the action against Bussieres "without costs by or to any party." Neufeldt says the reason is that he and Bussieres's mother joined with her to take out a mortgage on the property and then paid off the association.
- Aug. 21, 2009: Coast Capital Savings Credit Union moves to foreclose on the property, saying \$412,500 is owing and the mortgage is in default.

because, intermittently, he would take them to a board member to sign off on.

"I didn't ask her why she had two cheques. I thought maybe it was reimbursement for personal stuff on VISA," he said.

Yesterday, Bussieres did not return phone calls and e-mails requesting comment.

Aboriginal Relations Minister George Abbott also was reluctant to comment until he learned all the details.

"This is a very good organization that does very important work on behalf of First Nations people off reserve and I have great

respect for their leaders," Abbott said yesterday, adding that ministry staff are talking to association members about the financial problems.

"I don't want to make a statement that may be inappropriate based on a less than full understanding of what occurred there," he said.

The association has an annual operating budget of about \$7 million, much of it made up of government grants.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations gives the association about \$1 million a year. In the 2009-10 budget the group received \$935,000 Abbott said. It also receives funding from other provincial ministries.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada spokeswoman Patricia Valladao said the federal government has given the association \$150,000 over the last three years for specific projects.

"We are currently looking into the circumstances around this," she said. "We take these allegations very seriously."

Organizations that receive federal funding are required to provide activity reports and audited financial statements, Valladao said.

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