



About the Communities:

Innu Takuaikan
Uashat mak
Mani-Utenam First
Nation and the
City of Sept-Îles,

QUEBEC



First Nations-Municipal Community Infrastructure Partnership Program

The City of Sept-Îles and the Uashat mak Mani-Utenam First Nation are located on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in traditional Innu territory. The two communities have shared services for more than 15 years, but would describe their relationship as one based on obligation. "We would connect when an issue arose and we were compelled to work together. But it has been a confrontational relationship with regard to the administrative aspect of agreements." They wanted to participate in the CIPP process to strengthen their relationship and develop a more positive working environment for preparing collaborative agreements between the two communities. Both the mayor and the chief were open-minded about building a solid relationship, and the administrative directors were keen to improve the dynamics between the communities.

Background

Sept-Îles consists of the former municipalities of Gallix, Moisie and Sept-Îles. According to the 2011 census, Sept-Îles has a population of 28,487.

The Innu community in the region has 3,728 members who live in two communities, Uashat and Mani-Utenam, which are 16 km apart. These two communities are governed by the same band council and hence form a single band. Uashat is located on the extreme western end of downtown Sept-Îles and Mani-Utenam is 16 km east of Sept-Îles.

The communities have signed a number of service agreements including water and wastewater management agreements. These agreements eventually expired and they have been automatically renewed on an annual basis. Owing to new circumstances within the communities, they needed to be revised. The population, particularly the Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam Innu population, has grown, and the communities need to build new infrastructure. A joint sewage treatment infrastructure project was initiated to meet the demand.

FCM would like to thank the following community champions for their leadership in this work:

Mike McKenzie
Chief, Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam;

Ricky Fontaine
CEO, Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam;

Réjean Porlier
Mayor, City of Sept-Îles and;

Denis Clements
Assistant Deputy CEO,
City of Sept-Îles



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Highlights of the Process

The communities held their first joint workshop with the CIPP team in February 2015. A number of members from the two councils gathered the evening before the workshop at city hall for a social event. They were interested in working together and building a rapport. During the opening remarks of the workshop the next day, both the mayor and the chief spoke about the benefits of working together and a willingness to identify projects that would help them get acquainted. Participants identified a common desire to move from a reactive way of working together to a proactive way of working together – which would become a theme in their meetings going forward.

At the beginning of the process, the communities were in the early stages of developing new sewage treatment infrastructure to meet both of their needs. They wanted to do this work in a collaborative way, and use this opportunity to build positive working relationships between the communities. They knew that this would be a long term project requiring the involvement of both the federal and provincial governments for both funding and approvals. The Chief and the Mayor, as well as the Band Manager and the Assistant Deputy CEO committed to work as community champions for the process, to meet regularly, and to engage their respective councils and communities throughout the process.

Between CIPP workshops, in June of 2015, the two councils held their first formal joint meeting. The community champions described this as a way of “broadening the number of people interested in forging ties between the “two worlds” and fostering greater buy-in for the vision... a great beginning.” The two councils shared information,

as well as a meal together, and expressed a desire to meet more regularly. “Mutual understanding is essential to moving forward together,” and this joint council meeting was an important step in developing this mutual understanding. During the same time period, the communities developed a renewed solid waste agreement, giving them a practical focus for their joint work in the short term.

At the second facilitated workshop, in December 2016, the communities further articulated principles that they want to integrate into their agreements moving forward. These include: transparency, equity, clear and fair decision making processes, and predictable financing. In order to implement these ideas, they created a new body called the ‘comité intermunicipal’ - a joint implementation committee with a mandate to take a proactive approach in finding solutions to issues that relate to the implementation of service agreements. This committee was formalized in the solid waste agreement.



Mayor Réjean Porlier (left) and Chief Mike McKenzie (right) at a joint council meeting in June 2015



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At the final CIPP workshop, in March 2016, representatives from each community reviewed both their draft communications protocol, and their draft 'entente de services partagés visant un étang d'épuration des eaux usées'. For the sewage agreement, a series of questions were identified for further discussion once the plans for project financing and the site of the treatment plant are decided – the details of the agreement will depend upon whether the plant is situated on reserve land or within the City limits. The Innu community is moving into an election in April 2016, and plans were made for a joint council meeting in the spring once the new council is in place. The communications protocol is ready for review and ratification by both councils. The strength of the relationships between the community champions is clear, and they are well poised to engage with the new council and widen the circle of collaboration.

Results

Before the CIPP process, the communities met primarily when there was an issue to be resolved between them, leading to a reactive approach to their relationship. Through their discussions, they have made the commitment to pursue joint council meetings each spring, immediately following the budgeting process for both communities so that they can share plans and goals for the coming year. By meeting and sharing on a regular basis they are opening the doors for a more collaborative way of working together over the long term.

Closing Thoughts

"It's essential to build positive momentum on both sides when it comes to political will, leadership, and keeping an open mind to learning about, understanding and especially accepting other people's realities."

- Ricky Fontaine, CEO, Innu Takuakan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam

"We also want to show current and future generations that despite our differences, we all benefit from working together on building our region and enabling our residents to flourish in a great place to live."

- Réjean Porlier, Mayor, and Denis Clements, Assistant Deputy CEO, City of Sept-Îles.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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