

# KIA still plugging for cultural centres

by Darrell Greer- November 7, 2018

The Kivalliq Inuit Association's (KIA) plans for a cultural centre in every Kivalliq community are still moving forward, but there are funding challenges to overcome.

KIA president David Ningeongan said it was in his plans – when first elected about five years ago – to get a cultural centre built in every Kivalliq community.

“We plan to construct a multipurpose facility in each Kivalliq community,” he said. “We also see these facilities being a type of healing centre when they do toolmaking and/or sewing programs, during which elders talk to the youths and deliver healing programs that way.



Kivalliq Inuit Association (KIA) president David Ningeongan displays plans for the Cultural Centre for Chesterfield Inlet at the KIA office in Rankin Inlet on Nov. 2, 2018.

Darrell Greer/NNSL photo

“Those programs will also be an opportunity for the elders to teach the youth about the culture because some communities like Arviat have several cultures – Ennadai Lake, Padlei, Mountain Hills, etc. are all very different areas of the country, so they have little differences in their culture.”

He said his vision for each centre includes a women's sewing area, a separate skin-preparation room and a small room for butchering, packaging and putting meat into a freezer. This would allow community members to have access to country food to help address food insecurity.

The centres would also have a kitchen for cooking or healthy-living programs for young families, a boardroom, a visitor's centre displaying community history and giving visitors the chance to purchase locally made garments and tools, a separate room for the harvester's support program, inventory and a small store for hunting necessities, as well as two separate offices.

The idea to construct these community centres came when Chesterfield Inlet approached the KIA about four years ago to ask for a space to clean skins and hold sewing programs, he said.

Ningeongan said the KIA would want a cultural centre in Arviat to reflect all those different cultural influences.

Inuktitut would be spoken during the tool making and sewing programs to allow the youth to engage with the elders and learn how to speak their traditional language.

The KIA has found a contractor who will start the process of ordering material in the new fiscal year and hopefully everything will be on the first ship to Chesterfield Inlet this coming summer, said Ningeongan.

Construction is expected to be completed by March 2020.

“Where we proceed from there basically depends on what the federal government allocates for funding,” said Ningeongan. “Originally, they said they typically do 75/25 on infrastructure but we quickly learned once you start doing the paperwork, it’s not as simple as they make it out to be.

“KIA has put \$2 million of Inuit money into this program from a surplus we had over the years and, in the year previous to its AGM this year, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. committed matching funds of \$2 million, so we do have enough money right now to bring one building up.”

Ningeongan said the KIA anticipates about \$50,000 operation and maintenance for the building and has reached out to the Government of Nunavut (GN) to see if it could look after those costs.

He said the KIA is still waiting for the GN’s reply.

“We anticipate we (KIA) would run the day-to-day operational requirements, although we would need the GN’s expertise to help support the visitor’s centre aspect of the building.

“Other than that, everything would fall under the KIA to run programs.”

Ningeongan said every Kivalliq community is looking forward to having a cultural centre, but funding has become a challenge.

“Basically, it’s \$28 million for the seven communities and we would have had to come up with \$7 million based on our first conversation with the federal government.

“We could have achieved that but, with the feds not being able to commit to the 75 per cent, we’re starting with Chester for now and the next communities would have been Naujaat, Coral Harbour and Arviat, with really no time-frame set for Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove or Baker Lake.

“We have a consultant out of Yellowknife helping to bridge the funding gap and working very hard to try and get as much money for the project from Heritage Canada as we can.

“The 75/25 funding changed because this is a multipurpose facility and not everything in the building envelope is heritage-related.”