



SHESHATSHIU INNU FIRST NATION
REVIEW
2023-2025



Your Leadership

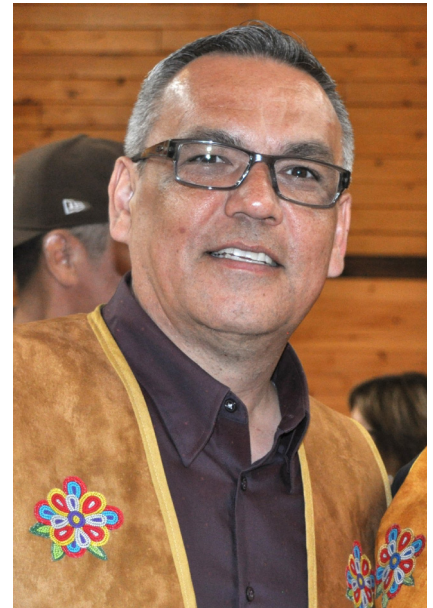
Message From the Chief

Dear Members of the Community,

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you who supported me during the election. My commitment has always been — and will continue to be — to serve and protect the best interests of our community. It has been an honour to serve as your Chief for the past nine years, and I remain fully dedicated to fulfilling the responsibilities you've entrusted to me over the next three years of this term. I'm pleased to present this newsletter, which offers an update on the important work being done by the SIFN Chief and Council, our Directors, and dedicated Staff. Issues like Mental Health & Addictions and Housing continue to be top priorities for us, and we remain focused on making progress in those areas. There's a lot of great work happening in Sheshatshiu, and it's thanks to the passion and commitment of the people working in each and every one of our organizations. Let's continue to build on that momentum, focus on the positive, and move forward — together.

Mamu uauitshitutau mak mamu iteshkatetau tshutenamenan.

Chief Eugene Hart



Chief Eugene Hart



Left to Right: Daniel Pinette, Darren McKay, Michel Nuna, Chief Eugene Hart, Lauren Ashini, Karen Penunsi, Felicia Nuna.
Absent: Elders, Mary Rose Selma and Etienne Pone

Meet Your New Chief and Council

By now, you know your Chief and Council, many of them familiar names and a few of them, new to their roles. For the first time we have two Elder Councillors in addition to the regular Council. They are Mary Rose Selma and Etienne Pone. We welcome their wisdom and experience and wish them a great term!

Chief: Eugene Hart

Female Councillors: Karen Penunsi (also Deputy Chief), Lauren Ashini, Felicia Nuna

Male Councillors: Danielle Pinette, Michel Nuna, Darren McKay



Elder Counsellors:
Etienne Pone and Mary Rose Selma



Swearing in Ceremony

For the first time, SIFN had an Oath of Office and Swearing in Ceremony on August 28, 2024. Father Joe and Elder, Etienne Pone presented Oath of Office certificates signed by all members of the new Council as the community cheered them on. The ceremony officially marked the start of their term.

CONGRATULATIONS ON A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION!

On August 18, 2024, SIFN held their first election under the new Custom Election Code. We are proud to report that candidates were true to the Code and SIFN had the first election free of drugs and alcohol and undue influence from illegal coercion. We have established a new normal for all future elections!

The SIFN Custom Election Code can be found on our website sheshatshiuinnufirstnation.com

THE SIFN CUSTOM ELECTION CODE COMMUNITY REFERENDUM

The community was heard! On February 7, 2024, SIFN members voted almost unanimously to pass the Custom Election Code. This came after two days of Power Point presentations which allowed for extensive discussions leading to motions and amendments from the community. We celebrated with a community feast.





The Elections Oversight Committee

The EOC was made up of five volunteers from the community who dedicated their time to monitoring the election to make sure rules were followed and there were no drugs or alcohol, parties or bribes. We thank them for their time and commitment to this process.



SIFN Governance Policy For Chief and Council

Every government entity benefits from a clear and well-defined Governance Policy that lays out roles and responsibilities for your community leadership, as well as Conflict of Interest guidelines and a Code of Leadership. In June of 2024, the SIFN Council passed, by resolution, this important policy. It was a timely event because this policy complements the Custom Election Code.

Our Youth - Our Future



Sheshatshiu Innu School (SIS)

Built in 2009, the provincial curriculum is enhanced by Innu teachings including language classes and other cultural and land-based learning activities such as traditional crafts, fishing and hunting. The SIS is run by an independent school board known as The Mamu Tshishkutamashutau Innu Education (MTIE)

The population of SIFN has been growing steadily and today, the SIS has over 605 students engaged in the Pre-K to 12 programs. They were outgrowing their school space and in 2021 construction began on two large new wings on either side of the school. Completed in December of 2024, the school has much improved facilities such as a sensory room and quiet classroom spaces for special needs students led by three pervasive needs instructional resource teachers. High school classrooms now occupy the other wing, opening up space for an improved computer lab, a land-based learning classroom where students learn traditional crafts and life skills and a trades workshop that will soon be filled with equipment for woodworking, mechanical and welding.

Students are experiencing outings on the land for one-week periods. They leave their smart phones behind and live in tents and fish and hunt as their ancestors did. Students apply to go and about 12 – 14 students are chosen for each expedition. Students experience positive outcomes and demonstrate improved attendance when they return. Experiencing learning on the land in this way has been described as life changing for many of the participants.



Ussiniun Youth Centre Community Youth Network (CYN)

Situated in a spacious and well-designed log structure, the CYN offers a place for SIFN youth to gather and learn. The building has become the heart of the community offering space for other events, ceremonies, weddings and funerals. We thank our youth for sharing the space. But when it's theirs, which is most of the time it's known as the Ussiniun Youth Centre and is headed up by Gavin Sellon. It's open seven days a week and community youth can attend recreational programs, movie nights, girls retreats, bonfires, barbecues and a variety of youth programming designed and offered by a young, smart and energetic staff led by Bailey Evans- Programs Manager, Anastaisa Andrew-Youth Outreach Worker and Meech Milley-Coordinator of Youth Worker (CYN). Often, they team up with the Recreation Department to offer outdoor programs and activities as well. In the evenings they play table tennis, basketball, video games and dodge ball. They even offer ballet classes on weekends.

Social activities take place regularly: dances once a month, Halloween, Valentines and St. Patrick's Day parties, Christmas party and dance and even a visit from Santa who brings plenty of gifts for the children.

Age related programs are offered for 5 – 8 years, 8 – 12 years and 12 to up to 30 years of age. In craft workshops kids learn to make mitts and ribbon dresses – and cooking classes teach healthy eating, breadmaking and other cooking skills. Prizes are awarded to all participants.

Manishan Nui Gathering

The annual gathering at Gull island celebrates and preserves Innu culture and tradition.



Recreation at SIFN

No one would argue that hockey is a big deal at SIFN, and we have a major arena to prove it. Ice is not just indoors; there's a large outdoor skating rink that was recently rebuilt with new cement, more boards and fencing. SIFN players play in hockey tournaments all over Labrador and even Quebec and in 2024, Sheshatshiu hosted their first minor hockey tournament. Kids under 11 and ages 13 to 18 divisions play in tournaments supported by IRT in partnership with SIFN.

The Recreation department headed up by Gervais Penashue and the talented Uneiam Rich, is also supported by ASETS who help in the training of coaches and other young staff about 20 – 28 years of age. The arena supplies hockey equipment, skates, helmets and uniforms for all the players.

For those who just want to skate, public skating is offered every day, Monday to Friday after school hours. Forty to fifty school kids come out for these daily skates many of them straight from school. We encourage parents to join their kids for family skates and to support them in these activities.

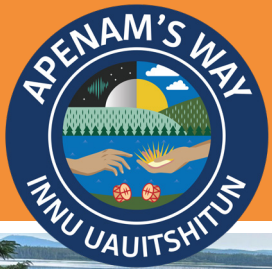
Hockey skills stay active in the summer months with ball hockey played by all age groups from kids under 9 to adults. The ice is off the arena, and it's divided in half to allow more floor time to players.

Over 80 kids are enrolled in the summer recreation programs, and 20 workers are on site to make it all happen. They have daily activities that encompass arts and crafts, beach sports, soccer and basketball. Outside programming takes groups of kids ages 13 – 17 to Kenimish to experience living on the land where they take part in fishing, cultural learning, hunting and the ways of the land. Sports and recreation is a major part of life for the youth of SIFN!



Gervais Penashue and Uneiam Rich





Caring for Our Members

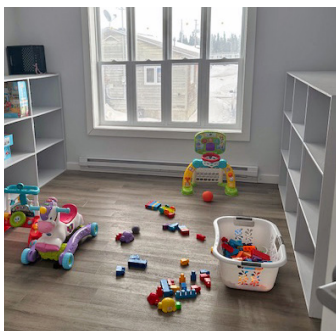


Apenam's Way

Following the closure of Apenam's House in 2023, due to mould and contamination in the structure, the community was left without a residential addiction treatment facility. Day programs were offered at the Mary May as a temporary service until SIFN purchased the Christian Youth Camp in Upper Lake Melville in 2024. A creaky summer camp, it was built in the 1960's on a breathtaking lakeside setting with a parallel running creek and an Artesian well. With some early improvements, it has become a healing lodge and a men's and women's residential treatment program.

Now called Apenam's Way, it's run by Kristen Sellon, a mental health coordinator and daughter of the namesake, Apenam Pone. He was the first Innu man to attend the treatment program at Brentwood in Windsor and returned with a commitment to help his people at SIFN recover from their addictions. "If I can do it, you can do it" was his motto.

Many more improvements are needed for water and sanitation and expanded living space and upgrades. They will be added, as funding allows. A dock, a sweat lodge and cultural teaching programs are also planned. Nevertheless, the facility is running now and with a dedicated staff, Apenam's Way provides a safe place for residents to deal with their issues and to practice Innu traditions of the land including fishing, hunting and cooking traditional foods. The objective is to instill pride and confidence while helping our people overcome their addictions.



The Womens Shelter and Safe House

The Women's Shelter on SIFN lands has been operating since 1997 and offers a refuge for women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence. In recent years many improvements have taken place with expanded facilities like a dedicated playroom, multi-purpose room, storage shed for resident belongings, laundry facilities and improved kitchen space and appliances plus new furniture and larger living room space. Four bedrooms are equipped with bunk beds and cribs are available for babies.

Overall, the capacity has been enlarged to accommodate up to 14 women and children up from 8 in previous years. Management has placed an increased emphasis on staff training in first aid and how to cope with issues such as mental health emergencies.

Recently the Women's Shelter has expanded their services by linking up with the Safe House and the two buildings are now connected. The Safe House has undergone a major renovation with a new kitchen and a generator. It has recently been renovated and now has three rooms with bunk beds and can take up to 8 clients, up from 2 previously. Managed by Esmerelda Pillay and Director Mary Jane Rich, they share staff and general facilities making both operations stronger and more efficient.

Community and Social Health

In an effort to improve services and reach, the Social Health Department was recently restructured into six divisions with team leads in each one.

They are:

1. Jordan's Principle
2. The Mental Health Team
3. Apenam's Way Treatment Centre
4. The Community Youth Network (CYN)
5. Family Resource and Parent Support
6. The After Care Team

The Social Health Department, in its entirety, remains open during holidays providing services to SIFN members at all times. Management has placed a priority on staff to meet their job requirements through extensive training in areas such as computer technology, mental health, security and general social work and capacity building.

The department organizes important healing events in the community such as the Truth and Reconciliation Inquiry, and the Suicide Prevention Conference that was held at SIFN for the first time.

With their dedicated staff, led by Helen Aster, the Social Health Department is working tirelessly to make their community a better place to live.



Building a Safer Community in Sheshatshiu

The Community Safety Officer Program

Sparked by a State of Emergency declared in October 2019 after a tragic wave of suicides, a proactive initiative to improve community well-being was launched. The Community Safety Officer (CSO) Program was introduced to support the health and safety of citizens, as a complement to existing services in the community.

Chief Eugene Hart and his Council initiated a temporary CSO team in November 2019, with the help of security consultant Victor Park.

Today, CSOs are handling hundreds of calls and have formed strong relationships with health services and law enforcement in Sheshatshiu.

An Enduring Solution

Recognizing the program's success, SIFN invested in formal training. In 2022-2023, the Atlantic Police Academy delivered a five-week customized training program in the community. Numerous CSOs have been trained, many of whom are currently employed, and are supported by casual staff. The program is now managed by CSO Director, Clarence Snow and is fully endorsed by Chief Hart and the Council.

The Program Mandate

CSOs patrol by vehicle, ATV, snowmobile, and on foot, responding to non-criminal incidents, building community relationships, offering interpretation and collaborating closely with the RCMP. Their main areas of focus include community engagement, youth involvement, cultural events, safety education, proactive patrols, incident response and referrals for support services. With continued support and funding, SIFN aims to make the CSO program part of a lasting solution for a safer, healthier community for all.



Meeting Primary and Public Health Needs



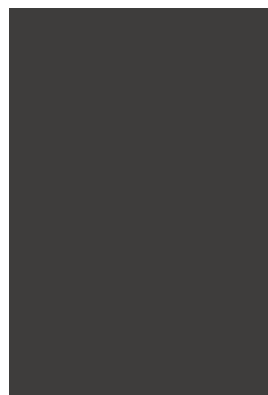
Mani Ashini Clinic

Recently the three clinic rooms were redesigned to create a better flow that encourages a better team approach through improved communications and continuity with clients. With 30 years of experience as the community public health nurse, Mary Pia Benuen has a keen interest in the health and well being of her community. She is the Director of Primary Health and runs the clinic that employs three Public Health Nurses who engage in a team nursing approach. They are all taking a 20-week course in Innu Aimun language lessons at the school. The Clinic offers an open-door policy along with several programs including:

- **The Pre-natal Program**
New mothers receive Loving Care books, a baby care kit and a pre-natal voucher program for healthy foods from the Innu Pimi Gas Station.
- **Diabetes Resource Centre**
Diabetes rates at SIFN are many times higher than the provincial average. As part of the treatment program the centre is offering community outreach in the way of cooking classes, information sessions, grocery store tours with a dietician and aquafit classes at the YMCA. They are embarking on a Peer Education Program for community members to support diabetes patients.
- **Dialysis Unit**
The Clinic now has two machines plus one back-up machine to service up to four patients. They were obtained with support from the Rotary Club and the Province. Support persons to accompany the patients are being sought.

Hart Haven Personal Care Home

This exceptional facility opened in 2024 to provide care to elders who could no longer get by in their own homes but remain close to family in their own community. Situated in SIFN, it is gradually housing elders needing care in our community and cared for in their own language. Staff include 8 permanent PCA's and another 8 casuals along with a Licensed Practical Nurse LPN but more trained Innu staff are needed. Training programs are available such as a six-week program at the College of the North Atlantic. We encourage our members to consider a career at Hart Haven.



Facilities and Housing For a Growing Community



New Housing Subdivision

Thanks to the tireless work of Housing Director Sheldon Nui and after numerous rounds of applications, funding was acquired from a variety of sources under the Rapid Housing Initiative, for 33 new housing units. The Band Council covered the cost of water and sewer.

An additional 16 units were built through proposals awarded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and 5 were insurance covered rebuilds. The three-bedroom homes are energy efficient with heat pumps that were funded through a grant from Natural Resources Canada under the Canada Greener Homes Program allowing for 115 homes per year for the next three years.



Fire Hall

The new Fire Hall was completed in 2023 and SIFN is enjoying much improved services as a result. With the careful supervision of the Fire Chief, Douglas Ashini, the building came in under budget leaving funds for additional firefighting equipment and a new fire engine. They are also adding a forest fire management system. Sixteen active firefighters are on call with a specialized pager system. Also in the works is an Emergency Evacuation Plan.



INNU PIMI Gas Station and Store

The only gas station outside of HVGB, an active and well stocked grocery store, a café – soon to have tables and chairs - and the Post Office, has made this a central feature for SIFN residents and the surrounding community. It's a major employer at SIFN with 21 employees of which 10 are Innu and it has become a training ground for local youth including Jared Nuna Pardy who got his start at the Post Office and is now employed with many benefits at the main Post Office on HVGB. The gas station has contracts with commercial entities such as the regional school buses, construction companies, the town of Northwest River and other HVGB businesses. It's operated by the Northwest Company who also provide training and systems for smooth operations.



Preserving Traditions



Outpost-Kakuspinanut Country Expeditions

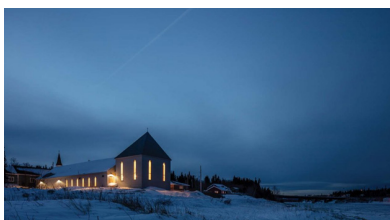
Kakuspinanut is a fundamental principle of Innu life dating back thousands of years to the arrival of our first ancestors. The land was our teacher as we adapted to the seasonal shifts of nature following the salmon rivers and inland lakes where the fish were most abundant. We were aligned with the movements of the caribou and other mammals that sustained us. These natural junctures became meeting places where the Innu shared knowledge, food and celebrations.

When the waves of colonial culture descended upon us in the last century, we began to lose our Innu traditions and our very lifeblood. Thankfully, our leadership recognized the impending crisis and reinstated the practice of nutshimit known in Sheshatshiu as Outpost. When we engage in nutshimit we restore our connection to the land by living within the rhythms of nature, respecting her as our guide and using our instincts and skills to sustain ourselves.

Jean Pierre Ashini is a cultural custodian and a man of the land who is well equipped to coordinate these ventures out to ten camps throughout Labrador. The vast land he has inhabited over the years has taught him all the sciences including archeology, geology, biology, geography, climatology and chemistry. He is eager to see his people retain the knowledge of the land and the Innu spirit of their ancestors while being reliant only on themselves when they are in Outpost.



Then once a year, as the summer draws to a close, Gull Island becomes the week-long home of the Manishan Nui Gathering. Nature embraces a well coordinated celebration of Innu culture on the land. Hundreds of people gather in traditional tents and engage in traditional activities surrounded by music and festivities. This is Innu life at its best!



Father Joe in front of St. Anne de Beaupre

Keeping the Catholic Faith

Our Lady of the Snows Church

While several generations have lived through residential schools and repression of traditional spirituality, the Catholic faith is still practiced in Sheshatshiu and honours traditional Innu belief systems. Originally from India, Father Joe Pillai Vellenkanni came to live in Sheshatshiu and to lead the congregation in 2017. Since that time, he has been dedicated to the people of the community, visiting the sick and the elderly and praying for them. Holy Mass is offered every day, sacraments are made available to anyone who needs them, catechism is taught for the children and other spiritual activities are regularly carried out to help and guide the people.

St. Anne's Pilgrimage

Every year on the last weekend of July, Father Joe, with around 300 people from Sheshatshiu joins worshippers from all over Canada on a pilgrimage to St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec. The leadership of SIFN supports our elders and those with health problems to participate in the anointing and healing services and to attend spiritual activities at the shrine.

MAKING THINGS

Innu traditions are kept alive by Sebastian Benuen through his workshops on making snowshoes and Innu drums. Everyone is welcome to participate.

A social health program for men, offers workshops centred around traditional practices making snowshoes, drums, tents and other Innu crafts.



Celebrations

Christmas Lights Contest

For many years now, Roxanne Rich with help from her husband and other community members, organizes the Christmas Lights Contest. The community comes alive with the Christmas spirit and prizes are awarded.

Christmas Parade

Christmas lights migrate to vehicles as cars and trucks, four wheelers and skidoos parade their decorations through the town as children and parents cheers them on.

Santa Claus Comes to the CYN

One special night during the holiday season Santa Claus parks his reindeer and comes to the CYN with gifts for all the children.

Bingo Nights

Everyone loves to play Bingo! Games take place throughout the year raising funds for various causes such as the Gathering, the hockey league and for supplies and equipment needed in the community.



Planning Ahead

Healing and Justice

The SIFN Justice Department led by Ruben Pillay, is in negotiations with the Provincial Justice System to return to the community from Happy Valley Goose Bay. It will begin as a Circuit Court in interim facilities until the new SIFN Office Complex becomes its new home. Having a Justice Centre on our lands will solve transportation problems for members and will return traditional justice methods to SIFN. Diversion Justice will be practiced as a way of holding the accused accountable through means other than a trial and may result in volunteerism or community service instead of jail. Healing circles will be facilitated as a means of restorative justice, providing an opportunity, for parties directly affected by the crime whether they are victims or offenders, to identify and address their needs respectfully and with fairness and compassion.

SIM Individual Living Arrangement Homes (ILA)

Two homes were funded through CHRT 41 and are to be completed in early June.

Band Council Building

Planning is well advanced for a beautiful new structure to replace the old building that burned to the ground in 2023. The design was approved by ISC and is ready to be tendered out.

Office Complex

A new office complex is in the works and will be built on the lot beside the Innu Pimi Gas Station. With new government funding under the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Section 41, (CHRT 41) the complex will house three agencies that are dedicated to children and families:

1. CSSD: Children, Seniors and Social Development,
2. SIM: Shusheshipian Ishepitentanum Mitshusp Inc. also known as the Emergency Placement Centre, and
3. Jordans Principle.

The Justice Centre will be the fourth tenant receiving financial support from the Provincial Department of Justice. This highly energy efficient and accessible building will enhance all services for children and families in the community.

Closing Message from the Director of Operations

All Sheshatshiu Departments report to the Director of Operations, Greg Pastitishi – also known as the Band Manager. He reports directly to the Chief and Council.

SIFN is growing. Our population today is 2,300 up almost 10% from 2019. With such rapid growth it's challenging to keep up to the demands for housing and services, but we are doing our best to address our strengths and weaknesses through departments, programs and services designed and delivered by our dedicated group of Directors and Managers and their staff. We rely on our community to keep us informed through our expanded Band Council and we meet regularly to discuss your concerns and seek solutions. Recently we launched our new website www.sheshatshiuinnufirstnation.com a communications vehicle to keep you and others apprised of developments within SIFN. I encourage you to subscribe to this site and to contribute your news and stories. We look forward to strengthening our relationships and to building a stronger and healthier community together!



Greg Pastitishi, Director of Operations



