

M9 57284 -697

**Creating a Climate of Support for
Fort Nelson First Nation Entrepreneurs**

January 3rd, 2002

*“When we follow our way-of-life
it is a benefit not a hindrance.”*

Vera Nicholson

compiled and edited by John McBride
Community Economic Development Centre
Simon Fraser University
with Ray Gerow
Aboriginal Business Development Centre

MINISTRY OF FORESTS LIBRARY
PO BOX 9523 STN PROV GOVT
VICTORIA BC V8W 9C2

Contents

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 Climate study summary of Fort Nelson First Nation**
 - Obstacles to business development reported by entrepreneurs**
 - Perspectives on community support**
 - Perspectives on culture**
 - Importance of entrepreneurs to the local economy**
 - Perspectives on community responsibility**
- 3 Apparent FNFN strengths**
 - Community Opinion**
 - Infrastructure and programs**
 - Social organizations**
- 4 Themes that could be pursued in the action planning**
- 5 Options other First Nations have tried for creating a supportive climate for entrepreneurs**

Appendices

- A. SFU/WED Gap Study**
 - history of barriers to Aboriginal entrepreneurs**
 - recommendations of the SFU/Western Diversification study**
- B. FNFN policies, priorities, and guidelines that support a better environment for local entrepreneurs**

1. Introduction

Three First Nations communities formed a partnership with SFU to investigate ways to create a supportive environment for Aboriginal entrepreneurs. This project followed the Western Diversification/Simon Fraser University study (2001) on the information and service needs of Aboriginal entrepreneurs. That study indicated there were many obstacles put in the way of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, and many of those obstacles to business start-up and success were found in their own communities.

The partnership between the Fort Nelson First Nation, The Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council, the Tahltan Joint Council, and the SFU Community Economic Development Centre was created to:

- look at how other First Nations have attempted to overcome those obstacles
- work to create an action plan that each of the communities could use to overcome their community obstacles, and
- provide a tested questionnaire/tool that other First Nations could use to assess the support in their communities for their own entrepreneurs

Following is a summary of the data that was collected in the Fort Nelson First Nation. Also included is: the many strengths that were found in the community's ability to create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, areas that could be strengthened, the themes that might be the basis of an action plan, and many ideas that other First Nations have tried to support their own entrepreneurs.

2. Climate Study Summary of Data from Fort Nelson First Nation

Introduction to the study process

The study approach favoured by the FNFN administration, was to sample through interview, the opinions of different groups. The FNFN is currently involved in an extensive community planning process that has enlisted the participation of two-thirds of the members, including 29 off-reserve members. The Nation's administration reports that members feel they have been "surveyed to death" and a full scale survey would not be in the best interests of the Nation at this time. Secondly, there was current data already available through the on-going community planning process. Third, the outcomes of the Western Diversification/SFU Gap Study (2001) reinforced previous studies and there was no reason to expect the FNFN situation was different.

In the Fall of 2001, three community members undertook key informant interviews with elders, administrators and leaders, entrepreneurs, and ordinary community members. Different questions were asked of the different groups. The FNFN project workers selected a total of 29 members who were interviewed. The intent of this sampling of FNFN members was to verify the issues and obstacles reported by other communities (see excerpts of the SFU/WED Gap Study in Appendix A), to raise the awareness of the issues among key members of the community, and to sample their opinions and priorities. The FNFN survey data has been collated and summarized by John McBride of the Community Economic Development Centre at Simon Fraser University. Following are the findings that come from the data collected.

FNFN entrepreneurs and community members report obstacles to business development.

- both groups felt a lack of encouragement from the community at large to start up businesses
- Entrepreneurs were not aware of a FNFN economic vision or plan for the future, and also uncertain of how their business ideas might "fit in" with the future economic direction of the Band
- Most entrepreneurs were unaware of links FNFN may have to organizations that could assist with mentoring, training or business start-up.
- Entrepreneurs indicated an obstacle to business start up was the lack of confidence in themselves, and the motivation to get started.
- Many identified as obstacles the lack of: financial resources, business information, assistance with business planning and the start-up process, training, and support at the Band office.
- Many did not know how to proceed with a business idea, or what approvals might be necessary from the Band office.

FNFN entrepreneurs and community member's perspectives on community support.

- Band members indicated there were many ways the community could support business including encouragement, role models, buying member products or services, and assisting with business connections.
- Many FNFN members said they would be willing to support new businesses by: offering expertise to the business where able, buy the business product or service, or introduce the business person to a friend who could help them.
- The community also thought there were many ways the FNFN administration could support entrepreneurs including: helping with business plans, providing some facility, land or raw materials, and facilitating a clear community economic vision or plan.
- Members stated that community and FNFN administration's support for business was very important for business success.

*“Band members are taught to respect and give back to the land when something is taken.”
Gladys Capot Blanc*

Elders, Community Members, and Leaders/Administrators perspectives on culture

- There was wide spread agreement that traditional ways and teachings influence the way economic activities are viewed.
- The tradition of “giving back to the land”, “respecting the land”, was a common comment.
- Most felt it was important for people who want to start businesses (depending on the business) to work within these traditions.
- There was enthusiasm for and wide agreement on business support for the culture. People felt business could help fund cultural teachings, and help restore the land. Business could also support Elders, hire people who know the culture, and incorporate the traditional values, including caring for everyone: the land, animals, plants, and the people.

Elders, Community Members, and Leaders/Administrators on the importance of entrepreneurs to the local economy

- It was widely recognized that starting up business was important to the community's economy.
- There was wide agreement on the need to support individual businesses to build a better economy, and the importance of reducing the amount of money that is spent outside the FNFN community.
- It was thought that education of the community was needed on the role of business in building a better economy.

Elders, Community Members, Leaders/Administrators and Entrepreneurs on business support of the community, and the community's responsibility to support their entrepreneurs

- There was wide agreement on the community being more important than the individual
- Entrepreneurs identified many ways that their businesses could benefit the community. Among those, most cited providing jobs and lending expertise to other businesses and to community projects.
- Community members felt it was important for community businesses to: hire community members, support cultural events, pay some sort of business tax to the Band office, and buy their supplies and services from other businesses in the community.

3. Apparent FNFN strengths

The following sections summarize the existing strengths of the FNFN in supporting the entrepreneurs in the community, as identified to date by the consulting team.

supportive community opinion

- There appears to be agreement from all groups interviewed on the importance of looking after the land, finding alternative methods of forestry and resource exploration to accommodate trapping and hunting. There also appears to be agreement on using business development to support and enhance the culture.
- Members, Elders, Leaders/Administrators and Entrepreneurs share the view that businesses have responsibilities to support the community's economy and culture where able, and members are prepared to assist entrepreneurs in business start up.
- Members recognize the importance to entrepreneurs of: a) the provision of business support services and b) the support of the Band office to encourage and enable business.
- There is a history of business sustainability and an apparent readiness to start-up new ventures.

Infrastructure and programs/governance

- The community has undertaken an economic development planning process that is inclusive and extensive, which can serve to establish an economic development vision and strategy.
- The Nation's administration is a well-functioning unit, committed to quality communication with membership, efficient governance, and with strong financial systems.
- The long-term survival and success of the Eh Cho Dene Development Corporation represents considerable experience and expertise in an industry important to the region.

Social organization

- The strength of the community - the families, community gatherings, the Native traditions, the Elders and the Chalo School - are a solid foundation upon which to build a healthy economy and healthy community.

- The social indicators of rate of social assistance and the crime rates among FNFN members are dropping.
- The Nation's commitment to the values of generosity, trustworthiness, and honesty allow people in business and people in governance to work well together.
- The Nation's population profile indicates a large number of members are found in the 25 to 44 age group. This age distribution favours community productivity.

4. Themes that could be pursued in the action planning

The following section includes 4 major themes that are potential areas for action planning. Each theme follows up from the data collected and the strengths identified. Each theme has examples of the kind of actions that other First Nations have taken and actions the FNFN could choose to take.

Theme 1. Supporting Business Start-up and Success

business development and counseling:

- develop a one-on-one business counseling support for entrepreneurs that identifies important business information, skills, and sources of financing, provides business planning support, and stays in support of the entrepreneur as needed.
- develop a cohort business counseling support group for entrepreneurs, that builds awareness of business realities, provides some business skill development and identifies training programs available.

entrepreneurial training and job experience

- negotiate access to training in business administration skills and in important industry sectors.
- encourage community members to take courses and develop more competencies in related local industries such as resource extraction, tourism and administration.
- negotiate apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for FNFN members

mentors and role models

- create and orient a network of experienced business people to encourage and counsel business-minded individuals

incubator models

- establish “anchor businesses” around which smaller enterprises can flourish
- starting up and establishing a business, then selling it off to members

Theme 2. Building the Nation's capacity to support entrepreneurs.

band infrastructure

- clarify to the membership within the comprehensive community plan, a role for local entrepreneurs and the infrastructure that will support that role.
- complete a FNFN development policy that would include standard guidelines to member entrepreneurs and their partners, on development approvals, licensees, taxes, land use, leases, environmental impact requirements, cultural supports and preferential hiring policies.
- train and develop band level employees to enthusiastically assist and support local entrepreneurs
- establish "anchor businesses" around which smaller enterprises can flourish

Theme 3. Financing.

Developing Nation-based financing for business start-up

- create a Tribal Council or Band equity fund
- start-up a peer lending or lending circle among FNFN members
- explore ways to develop member equity

Developing formal and informal partnerships

- seek long-term partnerships with funding bodies
- develop partnerships in strategic industries that will assist in securing business financing

Theme 4. Community endorsement and support.

"People can support the culture by long term planning and incorporating traditional values and caring for everyone; the land, plants, animals then people being last." Vera Nicholson

community education

- through workshops, information meetings and other educational means, raise the awareness in the whole community of the community economic development vision, and the self-reliance that comes from building a strong local economy
- through workshops, raise the awareness of the vital importance of the community's support for member business
- start a "Buy Native" program when the time is appropriate
- investigate a local currency to promote loyalty to local business

community networking

- broaden and strengthen the business and organizational networks with the Town of Fort Nelson and the region's significant employers, to create new job and business opportunities.
- broaden and strengthen the relationships with other governments

celebrate entrepreneurs

- find ways to award people for business ideas, plans and business start up

5. Climate for entrepreneurs

Following are brief descriptions of actions other First Nations have taken to create a supportive environment for their own entrepreneurs. Some have been successful, others are still in the proving stage. They are presented here as a banquet of ideas that may be appropriate for the Fort Nelson First Nation, or may not. They may need to be altered to suit the circumstances, or the idea radically changed in order to work. The experiences are listed under the same themes as the previous section.

Theme 1. Supporting Business Start-up and Success

business development and counseling:

- develop a one-on-one business counseling support for entrepreneurs that identifies important business information, skills, and sources of financing, provides business planning support, and stays in support of the entrepreneur as needed.

The Aboriginal Business Development Centre in Prince George has been successful in its focus on providing service to Aboriginal entrepreneurs. The measure of success used at the Centre is “the complete satisfaction of the client.” The core of their operation is the one-on-one relationship the Small Business Advisors have with their clients. The service they provide is business counseling and connecting the client with the key resource people and agencies they will need, from financing to licensing. Well-qualified and highly motivated staff put the emphasis on empowering their clients and celebrating their successes.

- develop a cohort business counseling support group for entrepreneurs, that builds awareness of business realities, provides some business skill development and identifies training programs available.

Community Futures Development Corporation of the Central Interior First Nations has published a pre-entrepreneurial training curriculum, entitled The Basics: Business Planning Handbook, which covers introduction to business, personal development skills, developing entrepreneur skills, starting a business, structuring your business and doing business in the Native community. This publication is used as the content guide for groups of prospective entrepreneurs working together.

Bishop Reservation Indian Entrepreneurship Program, Bishop California, provides an extensive background in the business and managerial skills which give the prospective entrepreneur the ability to run a successful business. After repeated enthusiastic starts and high dropout rates, more emphasis is currently placed on employee management and the use of active, cooperative learning in the classroom.

The current plan calls for students to run a real business for the duration of their program, acquiring real management experience.

entrepreneurial training and job experience

- negotiate access to training in business administration skills and in important industry sectors.
- encourage community members to take courses and develop more competencies in related local industries such as resource extraction, tourism and administration.
- negotiate apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for members

The **Warm Springs Small Business Development Center** provides an opportunity for members to work towards an apprenticeship. The Center arranges for the apprentice to complete hours required for apprenticeship, at work sites on the reservation.

mentors and role models

- create and orient a network of experienced business people to encourage and counsel business-minded individuals

The American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) have several chapters in the U.S. and are dedicated to encouraging Aboriginal students in their schooling, leadership and business developments. They serve as role models and mentors, provide internship and job placement opportunities for student members, and introducing students/members to business networks. Besides providing training and conferencing opportunities, AIBL programs consistently address the cultural issues related to academic and professional life, significantly increasing the ability of students to succeed in and essentially live within two unique worlds.

incubator models

- establish “anchor businesses”

Meadow Lake Tribal Council, composed of nine member First Nations, has established an “anchor” business strategy, around which smaller enterprises can flourish. The main “anchor” business for MLTC is forestry. The forestry operations of trucking, harvesting, loading, road building and maintenance, saw milling and reforestation, are open to private individuals who are band members. Who gets the work depends on which band’s territory they are working in. Another “anchor” business is mining, which has associated catering, cleaning and clothing businesses owned and operated by members.

- starting up and establishing a business, then selling it off to members

A current attitude at Warm Springs, Oregon, is that the tribe should privatize the janitorial work in their 150 buildings, sell their tribal garage, waste management, and print shop operations. “If we start privatizing these functions, in five, ten years from now you’ll find a lot of Indian people in business, a lot of retail outlets on the reservation, and a much healthier community. To help them do it we have to create an environment in which smaller businesses will thrive.” Ken Smith, Tribal Administrator.

Theme 2. Building the Nation’s capacity to support our entrepreneurs.

band infrastructure

- clarify to the membership within the comprehensive community plan, a role for local entrepreneurs and the infrastructure that will support that role.

The Warm Springs Economic Development Corporation’s plan is to have a business community on the reservation where a variety of tribal member businesses provide foods and services to the reservation communities and visitors. This is an attempt to stop the flow of money out of the community. A majority of the employees are required to be local tribal members. The businesses must have an appearance that reflects our peoples character. The Native owned businesses already in the Tribal-owned shopping plaza include: restaurants, automotive shop, sports clothing, fly fishing shop, businesses services, grocery market, rafting, and thrift store.

For Mingan, an Aboriginal community in Quebec, “what is essential in the creation of community enterprises is **an identification with the community and the desire to participate in its development**. The community entrepreneur makes this concern a vital element and his choice often corresponds to a desire to preserve Native character while modernizing it. The collective enterprise then becomes a vehicle for preserving its special character and fighting against assimilation into White culture. The other distinctive aspect of business in Mingan, is its family basis. Businesses are owned by extended families, and when one person succeeds another in taking over a developed family enterprise or expands an existing business to add another item for sale or offer a different service, the family acts as a motivating factor. The family environment, is the main source of inspiration. Family businesses preserve the heritage, provide solidarity when faced with adversity, assist during start-up, and include profit sharing.

- complete a development policy that would include standard guidelines to member entrepreneurs and their partners, on development approvals, licensees, taxes, land use, leases, environmental impact requirements, cultural supports and preferential hiring policies.

The **Cheyenne River Sioux** adopted in 1997, a “Uniform Commercial Code” of 64 pages that deals with contract law, repossession of goods from reserve, and the enforcement of the Code by the tribal court.

- train and develop band level employees to enthusiastically assist and support local entrepreneurs
- strengthen the supports for start up and aftercare of businesses.

Warm Springs Oregon Small Business Development Center, assists the business person with the approval process by gathering people from each Tribal department involved to consider requests, and alert the person to what will work and what will not be accepted by the committee.

First Citizen’s Fund: “aftercare”

In 1969 the Province of BC established a \$25 million perpetual fund with the interest earned set aside to be utilized for various purposes. The program has evolved over the years to where it is today - a loan program with a 40% grant portion, administered by Aboriginal Financial Institutions. What makes this program really unique is the built in aftercare provision. Loan clients pay a 2% fee on top of their initial loan amount, and this fee goes into a communal pot that is available to all clients for aftercare services. By making this service available for the life of the loan, at no further cost to the borrower, the program ensures that all available resources are made available to the entrepreneur to assist with the viability of the business.

Mondragon Co-ops, Spain

This town in the Basque region of Spain has been recognized by the United Nations for its success in developing co-op businesses of many kinds. Their claim to fame is that they have yet to have a business that failed. This has been achieved by their dedication to planning, their thorough training of entrepreneurs, financing through their own credit union, a dedication to research and development, and the provision of professional support services offered to the new businesses.

Their mission statement: “ it is a social-economic experiment in the business world, to produce goods and services, using democratic methods of governing and management, and the distribution of wealth for the benefit of the co-op members and the community, as a measure of solidarity.

Enterprise Creation Principles:

- There is an obligation to reinvest and expand to create jobs for those who do not have jobs.
- Mondragon believes in starting new enterprises but says the real job is to keep them operating. The question of maintenance is important. (in the U.S. half the businesses are expected to fail in the first 5 years)
- The Entrepreneurial Division has a threefold function: a) developing new co-

ops

b) providing technical consulting assistance , and c) auditing and monitoring financial operations. Two thirds of the costs of this service are born by the business.

- Research and training are a central focus.

- **create an elders' council to advise on economic development problems**

Meadow Lake Tribal Council has initiated an Elders' Council, made up of 24 elders. Each of the 9 First Nations chief and councils appoint 2 elders, one Cree and one Dene, to an advisory council that meets 4 times each year. In addition, 6 spiritual elders sit on the council. William Ratfoot, the elder liaison person, says, "the council would deal with any problems that have come up, including economic development issues. They make recommendations to the Tribal Council."

Theme 3. Financing.

- **create a Tribal Council or Band loan fund**

Gary Guernsey, EDO, **McLeod Lake Band**, says the Band has developed guidelines for granting funds to Band members. Once the member completes the required steps of developing a business plan, has looked for funds through the conventional lenders, has exhausted those opportunities, but still requires more equity, they can receive a Band grant. (more details to follow)

- **create a Tribal stock purchase plan**

Bishop Reservation Equity Injection Program assists entrepreneurs to come up with the necessary capital through the following formula: commercial bank loan, 60-80% of capital, entrepreneur contributes 5-10% as equity, tribe purchases stock for remaining equity, but is not liable for debt. The stock is bought back by the owner in 5-7 years. In the meantime, BPDC provides ongoing counseling aid. Profits are reinvested in future entrepreneurship programs.

- **establish a lending circle program**

Community Futures Development Corporation of the Central Interior First Nations, has spawned 32 lending circles. Each circle must be 5 or more people and preferably include an elder. The circle must raise \$1000 on its own, determine who they expect to loan to, for what purpose, and at what interest rate, before they can receive a \$4,000 loan from Central Interior. Each circle comes up with their own development policies and

guidelines. In the first 12 month period, there is no interest paid on the \$4,000. In the 2nd 12 month period, they pay 25% of prime, and in each of the 12 month periods following, an additional 25% of prime is added on. The character of each lending circle is different says Gerri Collins of CFDC - CIFN. Some are family-based, while others stipulate their members be fully employed, over 25 years of age, and only lend to those under 25 years. One circle which has lent over \$300,000 and has reserves of \$58,000, has become the chief lender in its small community.

- **seek long-term partnerships with funding bodies**

Nuu Chah Nulth Economic Development Corporation, on Vancouver Island, B.C., incorporates several formal funding partners within its organization. Included are the following: Community Futures Development Corporation funded through Western Diversification, Aboriginal Business Canada sponsored by Industry Canada, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Province of British Columbia - First Citizen's Fund, and they are a National Aboriginal Capital Corporation. Along with its own source of business funds, the NEDC is able to steer entrepreneurs towards the best fund or combination of funds to serve their unique business needs. By doing so, they can achieve the financial needs of the business and minimize the amount that needs to be repaid.

- **explore developing member equity**

Ray Gerow, while employed with the Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, developed a financing model for an Aboriginal-owned trucking company that gives company drivers an opportunity to build up personal equity so that they can ultimately buy out the truck they are driving and become an owner-operator. The company would provide business training to ensure that the individual is familiar with all aspects of managing his/her own business. This company would continue to act as an administrative overseer of the owner-operator and would use their band's political and industry connections to find on-going work for the trucks.

- **develop partnerships (larger businesses) that will provide funding**

Tsleil-Waututh Nation, within the metropolitan area of Vancouver, has partnered with developer Abbey Woods on residential housing and other building projects on their reserve. The expertise and reputation of the development firm assisted the Nation in securing the necessary financing.

Theme 4. Community endorsement and support.

- **the community economic development vision**

Michael Clements, General Manager of Business and Economic Development - **Warm Springs** says, "Our dream is to have a business community on the reservation where a variety of tribal member businesses provide goods and services to the reservation communities and visitors. The businesses will be employing a majority of the local tribal member workforce and have an appearance that reflects our peoples character.

This dream is yet to be fulfilled. Despite building a small business plaza where rents are subsidized by the Tribe, only a restaurant has been able to make a go of it. Drive by highway traffic has not stopped, nor have the reservation locals patronized the businesses. Efforts have been made with buy local campaigns but it hasn't been enough to pull locals away from the more competitive pricing and fancier outlets.

- **the vital role to be played by entrepreneurs**

The Oglala Sioux have found that the centralized tribal council business initiatives have failed at a very high rate. When they revisited their traditional political structure, unlike the tribal council structure dictated to them by the Department of Indian Affairs, they decided to go back to a family-based business strategy. This has resulted in successful run businesses.

- **the importance of building an economy to achieving self-reliance**

The Osoyoos Indian Band, is located in the Okanagan Valley in southern B.C. The Band chose the route of developing its own businesses instead of relying on non-band owned businesses to employ and develop its people. The OIB developed a comprehensive plan and implemented the specific pieces as they could. They choose to go with industries that have proven successful in their region: tourism, agriculture, retirement housing, and construction. The Band is involved in the following businesses: camp ground, golf course, convenience store, silviculture, all aspects of construction from the sand and gravel, trucking, readi-mix, sawmilling, to retirement housing construction.

Recently, they have gone from leasing land for a vineyard, to growing their own grapes. They have formed a partnership with a large wine producer and are planning a joint venture to build their own winery. There is also a plan for a \$25 million resort, complete with golf course, hotel, marina, and desert heritage and interpretive centre. These businesses, which are now amalgamated under the umbrella of the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation, have an annual budget that exceeds \$10 million. Profits from the businesses go to supporting social and educational programs.

- **the vital importance of the community's support for member businesses**

The Warm Springs Development Corporation tells their new entrepreneurs that business success in the community relies on family support, and the attitude and personality of the business person. Sometimes they go door to door to sell their business product or service. They are commonly asked to identify what they are doing for the resident and the community. Tribe encourages or requires: employees of these businesses to be tribal members or other related by marriage Indians.

- **broaden and strengthen the business and organizational networks to create new job and business opportunities.**

Inter-Community Conferences

A day and a half workshop, sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (B.C.) and hosted by The Aboriginal Business Development Centre in Prince George, was held on the theme of building relationships with non-Aboriginal neighbors. The strategy was to build understanding by showcasing the richness of Aboriginal culture and the inherent spiritual, creative and nurturing capacity of Aboriginal people. The workshops focused on the barriers to business start-ups experienced by Aboriginal entrepreneurs. Also discussed were the topics: "Dynamics of a Joint Venture", "Taxation" and "Separating Roles within Business & Politics". This workshop received much praise from the participants, and even two years later the ABDC is still realizing the benefits.

In a similar, but on-going program, the **Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs Office** is planning on holding regularly scheduled meetings in 2002 with the nearby town council of Smithers, B.C.

- **Celebrate entrepreneurs**

Student Venture Incentive Program, of the Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, provides ten awards of up to \$200 each, to five Aboriginal and 5 non-aboriginal students for the best business plans. This program which has been running for 10 years, encourages grade 7 to 12 students to implement a business idea and report back at the end of the summer. The most successful business is then awarded an additional \$100. The program has encouraged the high school students to get some real business experience.

All Nations Trust, of Kamloops B.C., have initiated a series of awards to recognize outstanding achievement in business and in the community. Awards are given to Aboriginal Youth, Aboriginal Leadership, an Elders award, and an award given to the best community-based business, and to the most successful entrepreneur. Along with the award a press release is issued. The award of a plaque or a picture serves as recognition of that individual's or business's contribution to the community. The awards also serve to identify role models for Aboriginal young people.

Aboriginal Business Development Centre located in Prince George B.C., and the Prince George - Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association, offers a 3 step award for the best business plans for Aboriginal youth (aged 15 to 29). Keith Henry, who coordinates the program, says when the market research on their business idea is complete, they receive \$150. When the business plan is finished \$250 is awarded, and when and if the business opens, an additional \$1500 is given to the student, for a total of \$1900. The program was a pilot last year and is expected to be repeated this coming year. Some thought will be given to providing an option for the students. If they don't chose to utilize the money in the start-up of their business, they are able to use the last \$1500 for tuition in a post-secondary program. Despite a late start last year, 8 students participated and one started up a business.

Appendix A

WD/SFU Gap Study

history of barriers to Aboriginal entrepreneurs

The difficulties encountered by Aboriginal entrepreneurs in B.C. were documented in the WED/SFU Gap Study (Jan. 2001). Those obstacles were:

- 1 difficulty finding business support information on specific topics
- 2 once businesses started, funding agencies and service providers ignored their continuing needs.
- 3 Aboriginal entrepreneurs are “not-in-the-loop” - not connected to business circles - and therefore miss out on important information.
- 4 There is a need to build capacity among service provider workers
- 5 web-based service delivery has many obstacles and few shortcuts to improved information services for many Aboriginal entrepreneurs.
- 6 There needs to be increased sensitivity to and support of under-served areas, the North East being one such region.
- 7 There is a need for more sensitivity towards Aboriginal culture and the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal entrepreneurs needs to be recognized and strengthened.
- 8 Co-operation and co-ordination between service providers, between government agencies, and between providers and government agencies is fragmented and inadequate.

recommendations of the SFU/Western Diversification study:

The corresponding recommendations that came out of that study were:

1. Improve awareness and distribution of existing business information tools, and develop and modify additional tools.
2. Improve services for businesses after they have been established (“after care”), preferably on a continuing basis throughout the life of the business.
3. Develop vehicles and processes that will facilitate formal and informal business networks at local and regional levels.
4. Invest in building capacity of service provider personnel to ensure quality service.
5. Enhance web-based services to Aboriginal entrepreneurs and their capacity to access such services

6. extend business information services to those in more remote and under-served areas ...through consultation, networking, funding and information products and services tailored to their unique needs. (the North East was identified as one such area)
7. Promote greater understanding of and more cultural sensitivity towards Aboriginal entrepreneurs....through workshops for service providers, and promoting networking between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal entrepreneurs and organizations.
8. Foster co-ordination and co-operation among government and service agencies through a BC Economic Development Working Group to oversee the development of an Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy for B.C. and facilitate regular, regional consultation on priorities, programs and funding.

Appendix B

FNFN stated Priorities, Policies and Guidelines that support a better environment for local entrepreneurs

The 2001 planning document, “**Reaching For Our Vision**”, outlines a number of priorities, policies and guidelines that are particularly relevant to creating a supportive climate for Aboriginal entrepreneurs. In the document, there is a commitment that FNFN initiatives will be built upon community strengths, cultural revival, renewed communications strategies, capacity-building, and self-governance.

According to credible sources, building the solid foundation for business development requires a strong desire for and pursuit of self-government, an efficiently run First Nations government, and a consensus around cultural issues. These are reflected in the above commitment. Similarly, the community’s top twelve priorities for action further reflect the desire and intention to create a supportive environment. The relevant priorities are:

- to revitalize the Nation’s traditional languages and cultures,
- to promote meaningful employment opportunities,
- to support community support networks and volunteerism, and
- to improve the community’s physical infrastructure.

The stated priorities, policies and guidelines of the FNFN support the development of a better environment for local entrepreneurs.

**Creating a Climate of Support
for Aboriginal Entrepreneurs
in the Fort Nelson First Nation**

Action Plan

CREATING A CLIMATE OF SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE FORT NELSON FIRST NATION

ACTION PLAN

ACTION # 1:

Establish a budget for creating and staffing a position of "Economic Development Officer", including a support staff position.

Timeline: complete by Feb. 15, 2002

Resources Required

Information to determine budget for: office space, equipment, supplies, services and staff

Responsibility

Bill Moore and Leslie Dickie

Critical Success Criteria

A complete budget that accurately outlines the total costs that will be incurred, in each expense category, for setting up and staffing the position for one year.

ACTION # 2:

Research and write a job description for the Economic Development Officer and support staff

Timeline: complete by Feb 28, 2002

Resources required: advertising budget for positions

Responsibility: Who will do it? Richard Resener and Leslie Dickie

Critical Success Criteria:

Identify the qualifications, skills, personal characteristics, and experience required for both positions, including:

- describe the duties, responsibilities, and reporting structure of the position
- identify an experienced manager, advisory board or board of directors who will guide the direction of the project
- Set up a search or hiring committee and advertise widely
- With an interviewing committee, determine the relative importance of skills, experience, qualifications and personal characteristics
- Set up interviews, and hire for positions, and negotiate start dates
- Compare the above to similar job descriptions in other organizations

ACTION # 3:

4. Find an appropriate location for an office, and equip it.

Timeline: complete by Feb. 28, 2002

Resources required: legal organization or incorporation, project bank account, project books

Responsibility: Bill Moore and Leslie Dickie

Critical Success Factors:

- determine a location that will give the project an independence that will encourage all Nation members to use it.
- Purchase the necessary office furniture and equipment
- Purchase the necessary office supplies
- Set up services or accounts for the telephone, mailbox, internet service, and suppliers
- Design a communications strategy that will present services available in a positive context
- Identify an opening date and invite people from various networks who can support the project, and others who can take advantage of the services offered.

Action # 5:

Research and develop policies, guidelines, and bylaws that will assist the Fort Nelson First Nation to make decisions about what specific economic development activities will contribute to the Nation's economic development vision and plan.

Steps:

Develop a work plan that identifies the steps required to research, consult and propose for adoption, economic development policies, guidelines, and bylaws.

Timeline: begin March, 2002

Resources Required:

Responsibility:

Critical Success Criteria:

Policies, guidelines and bylaws will include:

- List of criteria required by the FNFN community when approving business proposals, including types of businesses acceptable
- Community zoning information including where commercially zoned land will be located, and what commercial activities will be restricted to commercially zoned land
- A definition of home based businesses that are approved to operate in a residential zoned area.
- Recommendations on the need for a business license or a type of business tax, and dollar amounts.
- what will business tax revenue, if any, be used for.
- The role entrepreneurs will play in helping to realize the economic vision of the FNFN community
- An estimate of the infrastructure and land that may be required to meet the needs of entrepreneurs

ACTION # 6:

Develop a strategy to insure continuing community support in the development of the FNFN economy

Timeline: ongoing to August 2002

Resources Required:***Responsibility:***

Gladys Capot Blanc and Leslie Dickie

Critical Success Criteria:

Strategy would include:

- A consultation plan to receive information from the FNFN community on economic development preferences.
 - A communications plan to disseminate information to FNFN members about FNFN economic development plans.
 - Staff development of those in the Band office to insure they have the basic information about the economic development program, including who is responsible for economic development, where the economic development office is located, what services are available, what information pamphlets are available and where applications, pamphlets and information booklets are stored.
 - Plans for a series of workshops on building our economy, to educate the community on what is involved in achieving our economic development vision.
-
- Plan a annual or semi annual business trade fair for both on reserve and local businesses. Invite guest speakers who are experts in business and economics, ask local banks, aboriginal funding agencies and other small business support agents to attend.
 - A program to celebrate entrepreneurs with awards, certificates, or money, so we can reinforce businesses support of the community. through generating business volume, employment.