
BACKGROUND

2004FOR0006-000070
Feb. 4, 2004

Treaty Negotiations Office

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The provincial government recognizes the importance of providing economic development opportunities for First Nations. To date, a total of \$26 million has been allocated to support 124 projects that promote First Nations participation in shellfish aquaculture, tourism, forestry, and oil and gas sectors, as well as the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Funding is provided to improve access to training, expand business skills and knowledge, and stimulate economic development by encouraging First Nation entrepreneurship, enterprise and participation in the B.C. economy. The Treaty Negotiations Office administers this funding on behalf of the province.

Types of projects that have received funding include:

- Partnerships between Aboriginal communities and industry or local government;
- Projects that allow First Nations access to resource tenures;
- Initiatives that address specific land and resource issues, including First Nations involvement in strategic land-use planning; and
- Business opportunities that increase First Nations capacity to engage in the economy.

\$600,000 over three years has been secured for Cowichan Tribes to support five initiatives that will increase their participation in the forest economy. The first of three funding instalments was issued to Cowichan Tribes in 2003. Through this participation, Cowichan Tribes will develop better working relations with the Ministry of Forests and licensees which will lead to additional joint venture and contracting opportunities. The five initiatives include:

- Forest Sector Training: classroom and on site for Cowichan members:
 - Safety training to meet forestry industry standards; engineering and road layout, map and timber cruising skills;
 - Silviculture training in the preparation of silviculture surveys and prescriptions, forest science and health, and quality assessment;
 - Harvesting;
 - Restoration training, i.e., river and stream restoration, road, hill and gully stabilization and rehabilitation;
 - Geographical Information System (GIS) training in database theory and data-capturing techniques, Internet Mapping Service (ArcIMS) map-making and analysis; and
 - Machine operators training, maintenance and welding.

- Forest Economic Development Strategic Planning:
 - Provide strategic direction for both Cowichan Tribes and Khowutzun Forest Services to develop forestry-related economic ventures and partnerships; and
 - Economic and strategic planning to develop a three-year plan for forestry activity and capacity building.
- Engineering Layout for Community Forest Pilot Agreement (CFPA):
 - The Forest Management Plan provides objectives for the licence area, preparation of a harvest plan, and continues to build capacity through hands-on training.
- Forest Stewardship Plan:
 - A forest development plan with key initiatives to provide training opportunities, employment, development of the harvest areas, and maintaining the economic benefits associated with the CFPA.
- Marketing Strategy:
 - The development of a marketing strategy that identifies both short and long term business opportunities and the expansion of services and client base.

Economic development projects announced to date include:

- \$300,000 to Yale First Nation to support a mining partnership between Yale First Nation and Qualark Resources Inc.
- \$586,000 to the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council for two projects: a forestry and land-use planning accord and coalbed methane development.
- \$600,000 for the Shuswap First Nation to support a water reservoir and infrastructure project.
- \$3 million for the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations Cultural Centre in Whistler.
- \$303,000 for the Upper Similkameen Indian Band to support development of a major tourist attraction at the historic Mascot Mine site at Hedley, construct an industrial park and determine the viability of establishing an electrical cogeneration facility near Princeton.
- \$900,000 for the Aboriginal Employment Partnership Initiative, to develop partnerships with the private sector to enhance aboriginal employment opportunities.
- \$1.9 million to support Treaty 8 First Nations' participation in B.C.'s northeastern oil-and-gas sector.
- \$539,000 for the Skeetchestn Indian Band to conduct forestry research to determine the social and economic viability of alternative timber harvesting.

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