

# *Fitting Partners Together for Skills Development*

## **FITTING PARTNERS TOGETHER FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

When Don Austin began working for United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters (UA) in 2001, the organization was hoping to develop courses to train Yukon First Nations in skills required to support from the growing trades industry in the Territory.

Now the business manager for UA in the Yukon, Austin explains he was looking for a way to streamline the process of developing partnerships and reach all interested organizations at once with information about training programs. “We felt it was important to reach all fourteen Yukon First Nations with a skills development program but needed a way of coordinating such an agreement.”

Enter the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI), a National program developed by the Government of Canada in 1991 to increase the representation of Aboriginal people in the country’s workforce and economy. Armed with educational toolkits and a renewed mandate in 1997, AWPI officers look for creative and innovative ways to involve Aboriginal peoples in the growing economy.



Austin was told to contact AWPI about a possible partnership agreement in the Yukon. It proved to be the perfect vehicle for UA’s goals. The rest is literally history.

On May 14, 2005, Austin, on behalf of UA signed a formal partnership agreement with representatives of Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) and Kaska Tribal Council (KTC). The agreement was the first of its kind in North America. The initiative is a

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model to further partnerships and agreements between First Nations and trade sectors. It also kick-started a process of developing training courses in the Yukon.

The partners committed to developing action plans and programs that identify workplace barriers, including collective agreement language that may discourage Aboriginal workers from entering and remaining in occupations. In addition, the partners promote employment opportunities, facilitate Aboriginal awareness training and support Aboriginal career development. With a long history of providing specialized training across North America, the UA holds workshops and courses for apprentices and journeymen, sharpening their skills and preparing them for jobs across the country.

For many First Nations members, it is a chance to gain skills that will allow them to remain in their communities and still being employed in their trade.

According to Andy Carvill, Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, “The strategy of working with union training programs potentially helps solve both problems, offsetting the shortages in skilled labour for Canada, and providing our people with well paying jobs in industries that will be around for several generations.” Employers, in turn, can tap into a highly-trained, local workforce that is personally invested in their community.

The collaborative partnership between First Nations and UA truly provides a solid foundation to build upon for future economic success.

For more information about UA's involvement, please contact:

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of Canada and the United States  
(867) 667-2708 or (867) 334-3841 – [www.ualocal310.ca](http://www.ualocal310.ca)

For more information about the Council of Yukon First Nations' involvement, please contact:

Executive Office, Council of Yukon First Nations – (867) 393-9224

For more information about the Aboriginal Workforce Partnership Initiative contact:

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Yukon Region  
(867) 667-3888 – 1-800-661-0451



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## *Education Enhances a Community: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Banff Conference a Success*

### **EDUCATION ENHANCES A COMMUNITY: TR'ONDĚK HWĚCH'IN BANFF CONFERENCE A SUCCESS**

As anyone who has ever managed a business or directed economic development knows, formal instruction in a professional environment helps sharpen one's skills. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) recognized this reality and, in March 2007, they brought the "Banff Centre -- Best Practices in Aboriginal Business and Economic Development" course to Dawson City, Yukon.

For Gary Wilson, Director of Business Development and Strategic Initiatives for the TH, the Conference's goal was to provide First Nation leadership and individuals who are currently working in economic development with a better grasp of what it takes to move forward.

"These kinds of workshops allow us to see possibilities and to develop specific skills and knowledge in order to achieve those possibilities," says Wilson. "This inevitably leads to more jobs and opportunities in the Yukon." Economic success depends a lot on capacity—having the right people with the right skills on the right project at the right time. Training and economic development are inextricably linked as the First Nations work toward targeted economic growth.

The three-day conference with professors from the prestigious Banff School of Management brought delegates from across the Yukon to Dawson City. The focus was on developing business skills and best practices for economic



# *Education Enhances a Community: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Banff Conference a Success*

development in the areas of “Leadership and Governance” and “Economic and Business Development”.

The delegates were not the only people to benefit from the conference. Dawson City welcomed guests from across the Yukon. TH leaders refined their organizational and event-planning skills during the planning process and established partnerships with the Regional Economic Development Department of the Government of Yukon (YG) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to produce this event.

The conference focused not only on immediate skills training but also helped TH identify and target specific needs within the community. Recommendations from a survey of delegates also set the stage for another conference in the future.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in leaders applied to the Community Support Services Program (CSSP) for funding to bring the well-known School to the Yukon. CSSP was established to support the implementation of national and regional plans in support of economic development organizations.

Darren Taylor, a member of the TH and one of the organizers says well trained people support the economy of the entire Yukon, not just of the community. “It is important to recognize that with greater First Nation participation and commitment to the local and regional economy we strengthen the economic future of communities in the Yukon.”

For more information about the TH's role in the conference, please contact:  
Gary Wilson, Director, Business Development and Strategic Initiatives  
(867) 993-7120

For more information on the Community Support Services Program in the Yukon, please contact:  
Indian and Northern Affairs – Yukon Region  
(867) 667-3888 – 1-800-661-0451



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*Walking Forward, Building Up:  
Ross River's economic  
development success*

## **WALKING FORWARD, BUILDING UP: ROSS RIVER'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS**

Several years ago, as the Ross River Dena Council (RRDC) began to develop the small community of Ross River, there was little more than an aged and struggling store in the town. Today, a step-by-step process of developing both people and companies has transformed the community.

One resource Ross River did have were people to provide both workers and leaders in economic development. John Etzel was one of those people hired by the Chief and Council of RRDC. The financial foundation for his position was received through the Community Economic Development Program (CEDP). Etzel is now the manager of Dena Nezziddi Development Corp. the economic development corporation for the First Nation.

John Etzel sees economic development as more than just establishing a business. He and the Chief and Council envision a sustainable development program in Ross River that raises employment levels in the community and directs social benefits through the prosperity of business.



# *Walking Forward, Building Up: Ross River's economic development success*

The actual development happens “brick by brick”. The vision includes long-living businesses that are neither too large nor too small for the community. “Scalability” and “sustainability” are the guidelines as they work toward jobs and development for all members. In the past five years, RRDC has established three joint ventures and signed Socio and Economic Participation Agreements (SEPA) with large companies including Yukon Zinc. The store now supplies both the community and nearby mining and exploration companies with goods necessary to maintain a camp. Nearby, the Tu Lidlini Petroleum station is a hub for fuel delivery across the region. RRDC is also actively involved in developing transportation and providing security for various companies.

A key to Ross River's success is in part the ability to find the right people at the right time. A First Nations leader who grew up in the community, Etzel reflects and implements

the vision of the entire community. Economic success may be measured primarily through dollars, but the impact of the work is also felt in areas of social development.

As the community looks to the future, Etzel envisions scholarship funds and educational programs that will bring up the next generation into the jobs created through the current economic development. Ross River still faces many social challenges but each new agreement brings jobs and opportunities to members of the community.

The next big step is “to walk into the future” and, in Etzel's words, to see the next generation have “something to sustain them for life”. He hopes they will bring their own vision to the community as it evolves. Meanwhile, the foundation is being carefully laid.

For more information about the Ross River Dena Council's economic development strategy and programs,  
please call (867) 969-2832

For more information about Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Community Economic Development Program, please contact:  
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Yukon Region  
(867) 667-3888 – 1-800-661-0451



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## *Planning an Economic Future, Tlingit Style*



### **PLANNING AN ECONOMIC FUTURE, TLINGIT STYLE**



The past, present and future all mingle in the Taku River First Nation's (TRTFN) economic development process. Based in Northern British Columbia, in the community of Atlin, a process of economic development and capacity building has begun. Their plans are guided by traditional values and have unfolded over the course of twenty years. Louise Gordon, TRTFN's economic and fisheries director, expresses TRTFN's fundamental belief that "the biggest investment in economic development right now is in people."

The First Nation community ratified the *TRTFN Vision and Management Direction Document for Land and Resources* in 2003 in order to help their vision become reality. The document describes how citizens want to see their land and natural resources used, managed, and

protected for the benefit of present and future generations. It provides a foundation for sustainable economic development and capacity building in line with the economic goals of the Nation.

A few years later, TRTFN leadership acquired funding from the Community and Economic Opportunities Program (CEOP) to support two new stages of their economic development strategy. The first stage, a corporate assessment process, is based on the results gathered through the community members and professional legal opinion. The results will allow leadership to focus on governance, with specific business decisions being made according to a sound corporate structure. A Social Economic Employment and Training Officer also focuses directly on the people and works to ensure economic development policies meet their needs.

# Planning an Economic Future, Tlingit Style

After this foundational change had begun, the consultant firm CopperMoon surveyed the citizens and identified that traditional culture and language remain important to the citizens as they envision the future. At the heart of their report is a desire to take the next steps to further build-up the people while simultaneously pursuing economic development. Trust and respect are fostered when the citizens and community members are fully informed, engaged and empowered to participate.

Entitled *Woosh Wah Du Ati* (Bringing It All Together), the report lays out a clear plan for the future with short and long-term goals that provide the steps for healing and strengthening TRTFN while raising its economic profile.

Core community values provide a framework for decision-making. These “include sustainability, family and community, support and mentoring for future generations.

One value that supersedes all others is the overarching concept of respect; respect that begins with respect for oneself, and naturally expands to include respect for family and community members, other people in general, the natural world and everything beyond.”<sup>i</sup>

Altogether, the strategy’s ultimate goal is to bring unity and healing to the Taku River Tlingit people by increasing communication between the citizens. A healed and unified community will then contribute to future development with support from many partners and will build on the social and economic foundation of the past and present.

For TRTFN, economic development is clearly more than a business plan or two.

<sup>i</sup> “Communication Plan” *Woosh Wah Du Ati*, 2008-09. CopperMoon: communications for aboriginal initiatives. Ph: 1-877 476-0763 [www.coppermoon.ca](http://www.coppermoon.ca). p. 10

For more information on the Taku River Tlingit First Nation’s strategy, please contact:

Taku River Tlingit First Nation’s Spokesperson, Sandra Jack  
Box 132, Atlin BC - V0W 1A0 or call (250) 651-7901

For more information on the Community Economic Opportunities Program (CEOP), please contact:

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Yukon Region  
(867) 667-3888 – 1-800-661-0451



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# *A Unique World: SYANA Arts Festival*

## **A UNIQUE WORLD: SYANA ARTS FESTIVAL**

First Nations' art in the Yukon is extremely diverse, ranging from the traditional beaded moccasins and carved masks to modern pieces such as jewellery and paintings. The artists are equally unique as many mix traditional and new materials and techniques. In June 2008, the Society of Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry (SYANA) set out to reflect this diversity in their first-annual Yukon First Nations Arts Festival.

The Whitehorse waterfront in the summer is the perfect time and place for an event featuring the best talent in the Yukon, according to Sonny Voyageur, Executive Director of

the Society. The festival allowed SYANA to “showcase and highlight” the visual and performing art of First Nations and other Northern artists through workshops, galleries and stage events.

SYANA was founded in 1989 with the mandate to promote First Nations art across the world, to encourage emerging artists by providing training and exposure for their work, and to enable the public to participate in the creative expression of Yukon First Nation's world. After years of hosting small workshops to network Yukon artists, SYANA decided it was time to take things to the next level.



# *A Unique World: SYANA Arts Festival*

The festival was not “just about art for art’s sake,” said Voyageur. SYANA also “sees art as a viable economic development commodity or asset in the Yukon.” The Society received some of its funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s (INAC) Targeted Investment Program through the Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development initiative. Voyageur credits this funding as allowing the Society to make its vision a reality. “The funding was a stepping stone that helped SYANA reach the next level to promote and stimulate interest in the Arts.”

In early 2008, SYANA sought out professional event organizers and contractors to create the first-ever major event to showcase Yukon First Nations artists. During the festival, visitors and artists took part in workshops, enjoyed concerts and wandered through galleries showcasing finished pieces.

The main tent was abuzz with excitement, said Harreson Tanner, an artist and gallery manager who also participated the festival. “It was a beneficial way of bringing groups of artists together and just being together. It was something new and you could see the elders beaming with pleasure. There was a sense of pride in what the community is producing.”

SYANA markets the art in Europe, showcasing many projects made with both modern and traditional methods. The economic benefits of creating saleable art are being felt in families and communities across the territory.

Tanner hopes the festival will also foster an appreciation for the arts and artists in Yukon First Nations communities for many years. “Everyone is excited about next summer’s festival.”

For more information about the SYANA Yukon First Nations Summer Arts Festival, please contact:  
The Society of Yukon Artist of Native Ancestry at (867) 668-2695 or visit the website at [www.syana.ca](http://www.syana.ca)

For more information about Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s Targeted Investment Program, please contact:  
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – Yukon Region  
(867) 667-3888 – 1-800-661-0451



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