

# ACCESS

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

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### ***Firstbusiness.ca***

### **A Unique Website for Aboriginal Entrepreneurs in B.C.**

by Michelle Glen

Both on and off-reserve, Aboriginal entrepreneurs face a unique set of challenges in starting up and running a successful business. Policies and laws governing on-reserve Aboriginals and poor-to-mediocre access to business resources, capital and networks can thwart well-reasoned and dedicated efforts.

Len Hartley and a team of writers and web designers at **Hartley Media Ltd.** recognized the challenges faced by Aboriginal entrepreneurs and decided to create a website to address these precise issues. "We wanted to build a whole set of tools for Aboriginal entrepreneurs in British Columbia that were relevant to them," indicated Hartley.

Funding for this web project was provided through a contribution from the **Canada/B.C. Business Services Society**, which is supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada.

The site — **www.firstbusiness.ca** — was launched in November 2003 at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Aboriginal Economic Development Networking Conference in Vancouver. Early feedback from site users has been very positive.

Recognizing the diverse circumstances and needs of Aboriginals in the province, the designers ensured that information on the website is relevant for adults and youth in both rural and urban areas.

In addition to these resources and tools, the website features profiles of entrepreneurs and their success stories. Hartley explains that they included this because "the Aboriginal business community is relatively small in B.C. and these stories help create a sense of community and belonging among them."

Another unique feature of the website is a map that contains all traditional territory delineations and traditional names. By clicking on each territory, the user is linked to a list of Aboriginal business contacts in that area.

Hartley hopes that with input from users, the site can be continually improved to make it more relevant and therefore more useful, saying, "I see it as a work in progress, a living thing."

For more information about the programs and services offered by the Canada/B.C. Business Services Society, call 1-800-667-2272 or visit [www.smallbusinessbc.ca](http://www.smallbusinessbc.ca). ♣



**firstbusiness.ca**

**A meeting place for BC's Aboriginal entrepreneurs  
1-800-551-2276**

## Prince George Exporters

by Cassandra Chowdhury

Charles Scott, director of **Export Prince George**, describes the partnership between his organization and the **Gateway to Asia** program as “a marriage of strengths.” Export Prince George offers expansion-ready production and technology firms to Gateway to Asia, which provides a strong network of business connections in the Asian marketplace.

Scott was first introduced to Gateway to Asia at the November 2002 Export Expo in Burnaby. Shortly after, Export Prince George was invited to participate in a trade mission to Shanghai, China. While they did not join in this first mission, the positive results of the Shanghai mission encouraged a rapid increase in the ambassadorial use of Gateway to Asia and S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a business development and training center in Vancouver.

When a second trade mission went to Ningbo, China, Export Prince George joined the team. Six weeks before the end of the mission, more than half a million dollars in new business had been conducted, and some companies returned immediately to secure further deals.

“Gateway to Asia provided a timely opportunity for northern B.C. to explore the Asian market. And these are the early days,” says Scott. “The benefit to us is that we have a core of firms who have technology to sell, but may



## Enter New Asian Markets

not understand the process. Gateway to Asia is helpful in providing one path – not the only path – but one good path. Firms are beginning to perceive themselves as being able to change their path of production to include other destinations. There is a good harmony between Gateway to Asia and the productive capacities of the firms here.”

The partnership, now considered a strategic priority for Export Prince George, offers both direct benefits and the prospect of future prosperity and long-term economic diversification in the region.

Scott says Export Prince George has a strong interest in bringing benefits to the rest of northern and central B.C. through the partnership. “We don’t perceive ourselves to be in competition with other northern cities. The more we can convey the message that there is a lot of business in central and northern B.C., the more we all benefit. We perceive this as a regional need, and to the extent that we can assist the Gateway to Asia project to cooperate with other cities in the region, we will do so.”

He added that Gateway to Asia is an important tool to help northern B.C. companies break into strategic Chinese markets. He is very pleased with the current partnership.

Export Prince George is a joint venture of Initiatives Prince George and the Community Futures Development Corporation of Fraser Fort George. For more information, contact Charles Scott at (250) 564-0282 or visit [www.initiativespg.com/ipg/business](http://www.initiativespg.com/ipg/business).♣

Many Canadian businesses, manufacturers and suppliers are keen to expand into the Asian markets for new export opportunities, but often find the first step to be the most difficult. Meanwhile, many Asian immigrants want to source Canadian products and services for export to Asia — China in particular.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Western Economic Diversification Canada have partnered to develop Gateway to Asia. Through the partnership, suppliers and member exporters can access information, activities and services to build up an export network in China. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. brings together Chinese Canadian exporters and Canadian manufacturers and suppliers who are interested in developing export markets in China. These Chinese Canadians have many business contacts in China, and know the market well. As a result, both parties benefit from the partnership.

For more information about this initiative, contact S.U.C.C.E.S.S. at (604) 732-3278 or visit [www.gatewaytoasia.ca](http://www.gatewaytoasia.ca).

# Columbia



## Reaping What He Sows, with S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

by Cassandra Chowdhury

When Sylvester Leung arrived in B.C., he was already aware of China's need for B.C. lumber. Having worked in the Chinese lumber industry, he knew firsthand the difficulty in maintaining a consistent supply, and the growing demand for high-grade lumber in China. What he needed was knowledge of the Canadian market, and how to connect with business networks in the province.

Leung and his wife were introduced to **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**, an organization that maintains strong business and social links within the Chinese community in Canada.

"Everyone knows S.U.C.C.E.S.S.," Leung says. "Their service is very good and they have so many programs. You can find them at trade shows, exhibitions and Chinatown events."

Through S.U.C.C.E.S.S., Leung learned about the **Gateway to Asia** initiative. "Gateway to Asia opened the door for lumber export," Leung says. "It introduced me to some good contacts through their networking events and their exhibitions and trade shows. I learned about the B.C. marketplace and the lumber industry."

That introduction proved to be the key to turning Leung's knowledge base into a workable business opportunity in his new home. Now operating as **Golden Field Investments**,



the company is exporting lumber to Leung's former employer in Beijing, directly from B.C. mills and forestry companies.

"It's sometimes hard for Canadians to understand the business culture of China. People who can understand

China and the Chinese business place can have a great advantage," says Leung. "I know what is available here, and what is needed in China, and so I can look around and find the right wood products to export."

Golden Field, now in its second year of business, maintains a broad network of connections with mills and forestry companies, allowing them to provide a steady supply of lumber to Chinese buyers.

Business is steady, says Leung, with an eye to building upon that stability. He hopes to begin exporting a wider variety of products that appeal to the popular "do-it-yourself" market in China.

Leung believes that Chinese Canadians can help facilitate Canadian exports to China, and that Gateway to Asia provides a strong link between the two groups.

For more information about Golden Field Investments, contact (604) 839-1688. 🍁