

VOICES



Capacity Critical to Nation Building

When the Nisga'a Liisms Government implemented their historic treaty agreement in May of 2000, an important milestone was reached for all First Nations in BC. For the Nisga'a, the move to self-governance marked the beginning of an important new journey toward independence and autonomy. It was an auspicious time – but also a challenging one.

Kevin McKay, Chairperson for the Nisga'a, recalls some of those challenges. “An enormous amount of dialogue and effort was put into developing strategies and to using them to advance our goals and milestones at the negotiations table, but that time came at a price,” says Mr. McKay. “We weren’t paying equal attention to capacity building. The challenges we faced were more difficult because we had not focused on capacity.”

Mr. McKay advises other Nations to develop the in-house expertise they need to make a seamless transition to self-governance. “On May 11, 2000 we hit the ground running. On that day – the first day of implementing our treaty – we enacted 18 pieces of legislation at our Nisga'a Parliament. We needed legal and technical expertise we just did not have. Right there is a huge capacity issue we should have foreseen.”

Capacity is one of NRT’s five priority areas, and in 2008 we have worked hard to develop new initiatives to help First Nations and communities to build the kinds of capacity Mr. McKay is talking about. To this end, two new NRT initiatives were launched in October.

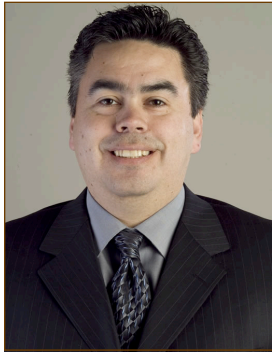
The first provides direct support to partnerships of three or more First Nations for their unique capacity requirements. Types of projects include land use plans, impact benefit agreements, and governance initiatives. Up to \$50,000 per project is available, for a total of \$750,000 in funding for this initiative.

The second initiative is aimed at policy development related to capacity. Available to First Nation organizations operating at a provincial level, this initiative supports projects that address common policy needs, leverage existing initiatives, and support capacity building for First Nations province-wide. A total of \$500,000 in support is available, with up to \$50,000 per project.

Applications for both capacity initiatives will be accepted until available funds are distributed. For details, visit the Programs section of the NRT web site.

Inside

Message from the CEO	page 2
Youth and Elders Grants	page 3
Trade Bursaries	page 3
Protecting Languages	page 4



Message from the CEO

When this newsletter reaches you, the NRT Board and Executive will be working on its 2008/09 Strategic Plan. As part of our legislated requirements, NRT updates the Strategic Plan each year, based on stakeholder feedback.

That means that as NRT evolves and refines our strategic priorities, we are continually looking to you – as First Nation leaders, employees, and community members – to inform our program development and strategic direction with your input and opinions.

As you are likely aware, we currently have five strategic priorities: education, capacity, language & culture, economic development, and youth & elders. These are based on the feedback we received in 2006 at the NRT's first regional engagement sessions. In early 2008, we undertook a second round of stakeholder feedback gathering, this time via a web-based survey in which almost 300 people participated. Results of the 2008 stakeholder survey are being integrated into our strategic decision-making.

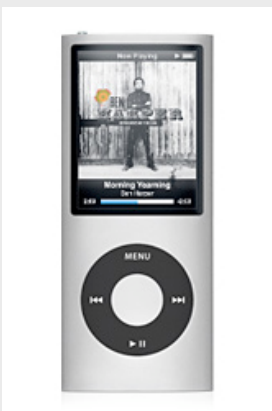
Some of the feedback we received at the start of this year was very clear. For example, the vast majority of survey respondents confirmed that the five strategic priorities listed above continue to be the top priorities for their communities and members.

In addition to general support for our overall direction, we asked for feedback on how NRT can improve. Based on responses, we are doing our best to make changes that support stakeholder needs. For example, when asked if we should include certificate programs and trades in our scholarship funding, 88 percent of people said yes; as a direct response to this feedback, NRT added a bursaries category to the scholarship program this year. Throughout this newsletter, you'll see how other responses to the 2008 survey have impacted NRT strategies.

As we move forward, NRT will continue to ask for and consider the feedback we receive from our stakeholders. We need this feedback to ensure that our strategic approach is in keeping with our mandate of Nation Building, as well as First Nation community's needs and priorities. I encourage you to take the time to share your opinion with us, whether by completing the questionnaire included with this newsletter or simply by sending us a note to let us know how we are doing.

Respectfully,

Cliff Fregin, CEO



Have Your Voice Heard

Complete the questionnaire on Capacity to help NRT shape our support and programs and have a chance to win one of three ipods!

You can fax or mail the completed questionnaire to us, or complete it on line by visiting the NRT web site at www.newrelationshiptrust.ca.

Youth and Elders Grants Launched

In the 2008 stakeholder survey, we asked respondents how NRT should build capacity for youth and elders. The resounding response was: support programs that are community-based. As a result, this year NRT changed our overall strategic direction in this area; where previously we were aiming to support youth and elders' organizations at the provincial level, in 2008 we launched the grant programs to direct support to community-based initiatives.



Applications were received for the first year of this program in June, and NRT provided \$250,000 in support for a total of 80 projects -- 36 for youth and 44 for elders. Programs range in scope and type. Some of the youth projects are conferences, youth council development, and language and culture initiatives; some elders' initiatives are traditional knowledge transfer, culture and language initiatives, and travel so elders could attend the annual elders gathering.

In addition to the new grants programs, NRT provided \$25,000 in support for the 2008 Annual Elders Gathering. The event was hosted by Ts'msyen Nation Elders in Prince Rupert and surrounding First Nation communities.

NEW: NRT Trades Bursaries

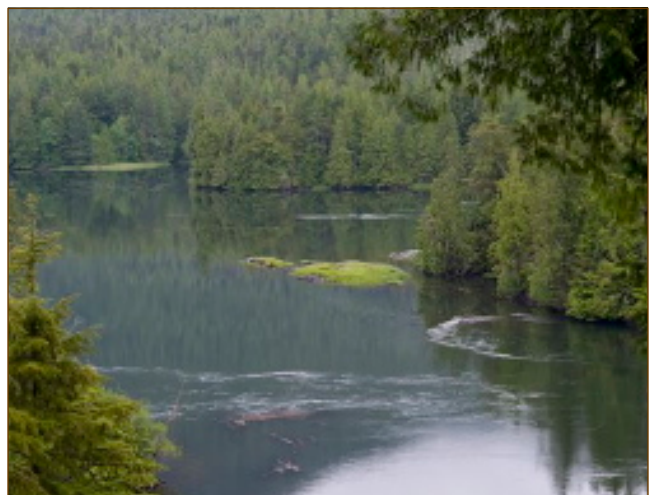
Launched in 2007/08, the NRT Education Scholarship continues to be one of our most popular and successful initiatives. In the first year, we supported a total of 97 First Nation students to further their post-secondary educational goals, providing \$725,000 in scholarship monies.

Our 2008 stakeholder survey showed that education remains a top priority. Further, when asked if trades and certificate programs should be added, 88% responded yes, so we did just that. The



2008/09 Scholarship initiative was expanded to include certificate and trades bursaries, with 60 bursaries of \$2000 being offered this year. To date in 2008/09, we have supported 106 students with the scholarship / bursary program.

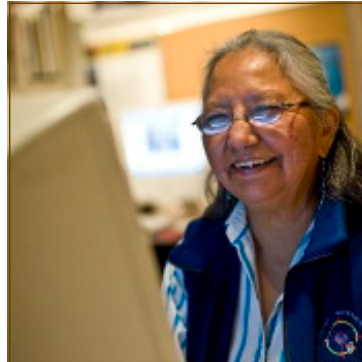
Applications are still being accepted for this program, and will be reviewed until all bursaries are awarded. Check the programs section of the NRT web site for application guidelines and information.



Protecting our Languages

With virtually all of BC's 32 First Nation languages in danger of extinction, the timing is critical to focus on language protection and revival. Partnering with the First Peoples Heritage, Language and Culture Council (FPHLCC), NRT is supporting six different initiatives designed to revive First Nation languages and cultures. 2008 support included:

- \$250,000 to First Voices, web based tools and services for language archiving
- \$250,000 to the BC Language Initiative, which supports language revitalization through documentation, classes, immersion, materials and curriculum development
- \$150,000 for language and culture immersion camps
- \$100,000 for an immersion program for pre-schoolers and their parents
- \$100,000 toward the development of language and cultural authorities
- \$150,000 to a master apprentice program that pairs learners with fluent speakers.



See the next issue of Voices for a detailed story on the language and culture programs we are supporting!

Our Partners

NRT is building strategic partnerships with organizations that share our values and can help us achieve our goals. Partners for the 2008/09 fiscal year include:

First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)

National Centre for First Nations Governance (NCFNG)

First Peoples Heritage, Language and Culture Council (FPHLCC)

Board of Directors

Nathan Matthew (Chair)

Dawn Farrell

Terry Kuzma

Kathryn Teneese

Gloria Morgan

Michael Bonshor

Yvonne Smith

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Mission

To increase authority and jurisdiction of First Nation governments through the use of the fund and thereby improve the quality of life of First Nation citizens in British Columbia.

Vision

A better British Columbia where First Nations have efficient and effective governments, vibrant culture and language, social justice, and economic prosperity.