



Working with communities, First Nations, local government and businesses to build a stronger North by investing in economic development in central and northern British Columbia, Canada

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People power: Building capacity in Northern B.C.



Northern Development Initiative Trust was built on a foundation of people coming together to make the region stronger. By pooling resources and managing them collectively to build capacity, the region has been supported in its efforts to grow a resilient and diverse economy. As said by the Premier during the creation of the Trust, “the

best economic development decisions for the North should be made in the North.”

Leaders from across the region empower the Trust to develop programs that build a stronger north. When communities come together to make decisions and respond to the needs and goals of the region, incredible things happen.

This region is known for the strength, resiliency and vision of its residents, but sometimes resources are needed to see that vision implemented. Trust programs such as the Economic Development and Local Government Internships, Grant Writing Support, Economic Development Capacity Building and Community Foundation Matching Grants are designed to give the extra boost needed to empower the region to fulfil its vision for a strong and diverse economy.

Empowering community foundations through matching grants



Pat Short, Fort St. James Community Foundation chair, presenting Certificate of Donation for the 777 Challenge to Karen Andros of Conifex.

While still in its infancy, the Fort St. James Community Foundation now has a balance of more than \$200,000 and is already disbursing grants.

The Fort St. James Community Foundation was established with the help of the Trust's Community Foundation Matching Grant program.

The Community Foundation Matching Grants program provides all interested municipalities or regional district electoral areas with up to \$50,000 from a regional development account in matched funding to assist with establishment of a dedicated endowment within a registered community foundation. Every dollar raised by the community is matched by Northern Development up to \$50,000, yielding a potential endowment account value of \$100,000. Since 2007, Northern Development has matched more than \$1,680,000 in funds. Matched, these funds have a value of more than \$3 million.

The original \$25,000 needed for the Trust's matching grant was raised by community members through events, bake sales and other fundraisers. The community foundation now has a goal of reaching \$1 million by 2020.

Joyce Helweg, past president of the Fort St. James Community Foundation, remembers the warm reception from community members and industry partners alike from the first fundraising efforts. Their support, coupled with the matching grant from Northern Development, ensured the community foundation's success.

"Since the idea first arose, a group of volunteers diligently worked at forming a registered society and educating our community that their gift was a gift that never quit giving. Innovative thinkers keep coming up with different programs that contribute to our endowment fund.

The Community Foundation began awarding its first grants totaling \$1,000 in 2014. The following year, the foundation issued \$10,000 and has awarded \$5,000 so far this year.

"When a donor asks, 'who will benefit in Fort St. James?' We can list

seniors, students, support groups, soup kitchens, the hospital, arts council and anyone else that applies within our qualifications. Everyone agrees. A community foundation is a worthwhile effort of creating a vessel to hold funds that benefit your community forever. How can you go wrong with donating to a cause like that? We are grateful to Northern Development for helping us set the wheels in motion!”

Building economic development capacity in the Cariboo

Many local governments throughout the region operate with a small dedicated staff. These workers wear many hats, taking on a wide range of municipal responsibilities. As a result, the task of economic development, one so important to the region, can sometimes fall to the backburner as other more pressing issues are attended to.

Northern Development’s Economic Development Capacity Building Program was developed as a response to this issue. The program provides participating communities with an annual rebate of up to \$50,000 to help support their economic development initiatives. To date, Northern Development has committed more than \$15,512,485 to empower local governments and their economic development officers since the program’s inception in 2008.

Frequently, these funds are used to offset the costs of hiring an additional staff person who can truly champion the community’s economic development plans and the region. Here are a few examples:

Quesnel



“The Economic Development Capacity Building grant provides us with the people power to complete projects and continue programs that support economic development in Quesnel, including our award-winning Healthcare Professional Recruitment Program, business retention and expansion activities, exploration of investment opportunities, and marketing initiatives that promote Quesnel as great place to live and do business,” said Amy Reid, economic development officer, City of Quesnel.

100 Mile House



“The District of 100 Mile House has accessed the Economic Development Capacity Building funding every year since 2008. Being able to do so has enabled the District to employ myself as director of economic development and planning, which expands our capacity as a local government to identify and pursue opportunities that we simply could not do without the support of Northern Development. It also allows us to create and deliver programs and other supports to the local

economy such as our updated visitor guide, trade shows and hosting the economic development building blocks workshop,” said Joanne Doddridge, director of economic development and planning, District of 100 Mile House.

Cariboo Regional District



“We work closely with our network of community groups to advance projects and initiatives that strengthen our communities. We are pleased

to help community groups identify funding streams for projects and complete successful grant applications. Our capacity to do this is made possible through annual funding the CRD receives from Northern Development through the Economic Development Capacity Building Program as well as the Grant Writing Support Program,” said Jordan Hammond, economic development officer, Cariboo Regional District.

The role of the grant writer: Empowering non-profits in the Peace

Non-profits, local governments and First Nations constantly face the challenge of limitations on their sources of revenue. This challenge has the potential to limit their ability to deliver programming to their communities and move projects forward. While grant funding is available, these groups often have limited staff and volunteers without the experience or time to put together applications so that they successfully receive funding. In these cases, the support of a grant writer can make all the difference. Recognising these challenges, Northern Development created the Grant Writing Support Program.

Northern Development’s Grant Writing Support Program is designed to assist municipalities, regional districts and First Nations to build grant-writing capacity and expertise. The program covers up to 76% of wages as \$8,000 in rebate funding each year to support the employment of a locally based grant writer. The funding is available to local governments and First Nations bands in the Trust’s service region.

Since its inception, interest in the Grant Writing Support Program has grown considerably. In 2007, 17 communities received funding through the program, representing an investment of \$120,000. This year, 52 communities received \$423,498 in funding.



Andy Ackerman has been an incredibly active participant in this program. In 2015, Ackerman applied for \$4,363,917 in grant funding and the projects he worked on were awarded \$689,971. Experienced grant writers like Andy provide non-profits with exceptional value in several ways:

- They know the appropriate funders to approach for specific types of projects
- The kinds of projects they are looking to support at a given time; and

- The format applications should be submitted.

The key to success for these grant writers is understanding the importance of building relationships. Ackerman works closely with the North Peace Economic Development Commission (NPEDC) to make connections with local governments and societies. By working closely with organizations he is writing the grants for as well as the funding institutions themselves, Ackerman is better equipped to write successful proposals.

“Success in grant writing comes from a great partnership between the grant writer, applicant, and many times, the funder,” said Ackerman. “I often tell people that I cannot do this alone because I need to get a lot of details from the organization, and many times, meet the people involved. Dealing directly with the applicant is a great experience, and although I know a lot of people in the area, I often get to meet new individuals who are very passionate about their organization and want to see a successful outcome. And of course, there are the funders like Northern Development, who have great staff who want to see the organization get to ‘yes’.”

Northern Development has invested more than \$3 million supporting grant writers in the region. Since 2007, this investment has since been leveraged close to \$379 million in grant funding applications, with \$108 million in new funding successfully approved for the region.

The role of the grant writer: Empowering First Nations in the Northwest



Marianne Weston is an experienced grant writer for aboriginal and non-profit organizations. Weston has worked on a wide variety of projects with First Nations throughout the Northwest including the Nuxalk Nation, Gitwinksihlkw Village Government and the Ksan House Society. She has benefitted from the Grant Writing Support program since 2012.

“I started out grant writing in the early 1980s,” said Weston. “I was hired by the Kermodé Friendship Centre in Terrace as program director and was acting executive director for more than a year, where I learned a lot

about First Nations, social services and the tips and tricks of writing bigger grants.

“What excited me about working on economic development and cultural tourism is how it builds capacity, self-esteem and skills.”

One such project that Weston is passionate about is the Nuxalk Pathway to Cultural Tourism, which has been in development for three years, beginning with the Nuxalk Council intention to build an aboriginal tourism strategy for the First Nation. In 2014, the Nuxalk Nation purchased the Bella Coola Motel lands. Under Nuxalk ownership and with First Nations management and staff, this motel has completed several upgrades, setting the stage for development of a larger vision.

Weston’s recent grant application was for the construction of the second phase (of five), which is the restaurant and gift house. Aside from an indigenous-inspired menu, the facility plans to include an adjoining multi-purpose space to be used for smaller community events, coffee houses, music and storytelling nights, family birthdays and dinners. This venture will provide employment and skills training to Nuxalk members, both in construction and operations phases.

Aboriginal tourism is growing in B.C. According to Aboriginal Tourism BC, the industry is expected to contribute an anticipated \$68 million to BC’s economy.

The shared vision of an indigenous-inspired restaurant, gift house, big house and cultural path showcases the Nation and the valley, fostering collaboration, economic growth and community pride. It could provide infrastructure and attractions, drawing visitors to the region.

Northern Development has provided funding for similar First Nations tourism infrastructure projects such as the Gingolx Longhouse project, the Lheidli T'enneh Aboriginal Pavilion project in Prince George, Xenii

Gwet'in Traditional Village project in the Nemaiah Valley, Xat'sull Heritage Village Enhancements project at Soda Creek, Qay'Inagaay Heritage Centre, Williams Lake Pow Wow Arbour Revitalization project and the Interior Allied Tribes Memorial Project in Spences Bridge.

Grant writing support specifically for First Nations from the Trust has reached more than \$1.3 million.

Interns an asset to Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine



There is a need for passionate, educated, hard-working youth in Northern B.C.'s local government and economic development sectors. Communities around northern B.C. all face a similar challenge: there is a lot to do and not enough people do it all. Northern Development's internship program helps develop the leadership and management skills of new graduates through hands-on work experience. But, most importantly, the program results in a lasting legacy of capacity to help build a stronger north.

For the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, Northern Development's internship program not only works as succession planning, but also as a valuable tool for finding employees who are committed to the region.

“Attracting skilled workers into our northern local government offices has always been a challenge. Northern Development Internship Programs are an excellent path for developing skills and identifying people committed to the success of the region,” said Bob Marcellin, the Chief Administrative Officer with the Regional District of Kitimt-Stikine.

Since 2009, 93% of Northern Development interns found jobs in the region either during or immediately following their internship. This success rate shows that there is a need for talented young minds, and a willingness among the region’s university graduates to stay and work in the region.

Said Marcellin: “For the Regional District, the program enabled us to manage the workload and provided more options when considering employee succession. We are extremely pleased to report four former interns of Northern Development have become full-time employees of this Regional District.”

Explore hundred of projects...

and connect with the people who are building their communities and a stronger regional economy in central and northern BC.

Share Your Story...

Do you have an update or personal story about a project undertaken in central and northern BC that has made a positive difference for you, your family, or organization?