



Centre Quarterly

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British Columbia First Nations show overwhelming interest in Governance Capacity Assessments

Over 30 Expressions of Interest (EOI) applications for Governance Capacity Assessments have been received by the NCFNG's BC regional office from First Nation and Tribal Nations throughout the province. The assessments will evaluate current governance capacity with the objective of identifying strategic steps that can be taken to advance the selected communities governance objectives.

BC Regional Manager Sheldon Tetreault is extremely happy with such a high level of interest. "The response from BC First Nations was incredibly exciting," he says. "It reinforces our position that First Nations are not content with the status quo. Obviously, there is a real interest in implementing a governance foundation that will support social and economic success now and in the future. The Centre is uniquely positioned to work with First Nations as they design that foundation – a foundation built on the inherent right of self-governance."

Partnership with New Relationship Trust

Capacity assessments are to be conducted as part of a recently signed protocol and contribution agreement worth \$250,000 with The New Relationship Trust in BC, an agreement Tetreault says "gives us the opportunity to work with our communities in BC at a more personal level to help ensure they achieve their goals toward self determination."

capacity of up to ten BC First Nation communities, the agreement has two other objectives: supporting the building of public service capacity within First Nations and supporting youth leadership initiatives.

For Tetreault, the only regret is that the Centre won't be able to immediately accommodate all those who applied.

"We are really glad that the New Relationship Trust saw the value in the Governance Capacity Assessment and is partnering with us to complete ten of them. Without their generous assistance we would have been much more limited. Having said that, the demand is much more than what we can currently accommodate. We will keep looking for resources and partners to provide the support to all of the First Nations that responded."

All assessments are expected to be complete by the end of March 2008, when a report of findings will be issued.

As well as assessing the governance

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inspire...

We must dare to consider our own destiny. Our language, our customs, our spirituality: these things set us apart, while at the same time tying us together as Aboriginal people across this land. It's time we move forward together.

Satsan, Herb George,
President, NCFNG

Working at a national Aboriginal organization provides a unique opportunity to see firsthand just how many of our nations and



Aboriginal communities are moving toward recognizing themselves as self-governing nations. We also experience what that means.

Recently we were greatly honoured to witness and participate in the Anishinabek gathering of the Three Fires Confederacy in Garden River First Nation, Ontario. The Three Fires people of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the United States have been gathering around the confederacy fire since the seventh century A.D.

The gathering was a powerful reminder of the influence that culture plays in ideas of governance. Community members spoke their language fluently, displaying Wampum belts to explain the meanings of treaties with Canada and their significance for today's governance.

Similar forums take place across the country on a regular basis. These provide an opportunity for our people to affirm historical connections, while at the same time giving contemporary expression to traditional governance over traditional territories.

The NCFNG supports and encourages all of our nations as they move toward self-determination. As I say in Nisga'a – *S'aam wilsim* – continue to do well.

Governance Tool Kit due in Fall

This fall the NCFNG will launch a Governance Bundle (Practitioners Tool Kit) for use by all First Nations governance practitioners.

The purpose of the tool kit is to provide in-depth exploration and understanding of community governance needs and aspirations. As First Nation communities begin to take the initial steps toward self governance, it is expected the tool kit will help in all aspects of informed decision-making.

The Bundle will include existing principles of good governance, information on lands and resources, sample constitutions and election codes and techniques for community facilitation. It will be widely distributed, available electronically on

CD, in hard-copy format or online on the Centre's resource library.

The Centre's Governance Advisory Services describes the concept of the bundle as an expression of the Aboriginal world view. Historically, a bundle may once have had a pipe, certain medicines, a small rock, a sharp tool (knife), a feather, a rattle and perhaps a necklace made from bear claws.

These symbols represented various aspects of what a practitioner may have used in guiding leadership and making important decisions. In the end, the leader having the responsibility to care for the community had the necessary tools in the bundle to assist them in moving forward.

» follow this story:

fngovernance.org/news/toolkit.htm

MOU signed with Shingwauk Kinoomage Gamik

On August 23rd 2007, the National Centre for First Nations Governance and Shingwauk Kinoomage Gamik (Garden River First Nation, Ontario) officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The MOU signifies a cooperation to pursue such activities as: academic visits, joint teaching programs, joint research initiatives and publications, participation in seminars and academic meetings, exchange of academic materials and other information, archiving and storage of academic materials and information and exchange of graduate and/or undergraduate students.

A Flame Rekindled

The signing ceremony took place in

the sacred Midewiwin Lodge of the Three Fires Confederacy 'Re-Kindling the Flame' Gathering, which was hosted in Garden River First Nation August 20th to 24th. The signing was officially witnessed by Three Fires Midewiwin Grand Council Lodge Chief, Edward Benton-Benai.

The National Centre for First Nations Governance is honoured to be part of this exciting and valuable endeavor. The Centre looks forward to building many more collaborative relationships with First Nations across Canada.

» follow this story:

fngovernance.org/news/threefires.htm

communityFocus

Find out how communities across Canada are approaching and implementing their own self-governance

Alberta First Nation moving forward with inherent rights strategy

The Sucker Creek First Nation in Alberta is taking steps toward ensuring protection of community treaty rights and interests; a top priority for the Chief and Council of this Treaty 8 community.

As the community's territorial land continues to be developed there is an increased emphasis on protecting its citizen's rights and interests to hunt, fish and trap, gather medicines and berries as well protect their burial and ceremonial sites.

At the initial stages of increased development, there was no process in place that ensured protection of these rights and interests for the community. That's when the citizens collectively decided, through community consultations, that they needed to 'get things done', and create their own process for consultation. Chief and Council were then directed by the community to initiate this process.

Leadership in the community is using key information on current consultation and accommodation law, as found in the NCFNG online library and publications, to assist them in the organizing and planning of their legal, political and negotiation strategies.

This has also helped the community become aware of and take advantage of the numerous opportunities to acquire agreements from companies that are developing their lands so

they can direct these investments into their community. In

fact, the community is in the process of

finalizing thirteen agreements with

industry such as

oil, gas and forestry which

will lead to community

investments as well contributions to scholarship funds.

With these pending opportunities on the horizon, community

leadership is ensuring that the citizens are ready and eager to be a part of community's development and prosperity – due mostly in part because its based on their own collective terms. Any new developments or changes to the codes will be done through referendum thereby ensuring that community involvement will always be maintained.

Although a consultative process is well underway, there is still much work that needs to be done to ensure the process continues. The community is in the development stages of being able to respond to and deal with serious concerns or issues regarding their lands. As well, they are preparing to respond to industry's creation of its own consultative process.

Sucker Creek leadership is using key information on current consultation and accommodation law found on the NCFNG web site to help plan their legal, political and negotiating strategies.

2 ways Sucker Creek is pursuing its inherent right to self-governance

1 Organizing the Community » by consulting with the community, community and leadership work together to obtain a mandate to move forward, resulting in a clear vision, consistent goals and specific objectives: who you are, what you want to achieve long-term, how and who will get you there.

2 Signing Agreements » Courts have defined title as having an "inescapable economic component, including rights to the resources themselves." Signing deals with resource and development companies recognizes this right, and establishes the First Nation as the governing authority on the land.



Mi'gmaq seek to reassert control over traditional lands

Since 2005, the eight chiefs of the Gespe'gewa'gi District, an area that spans from east of Quebec City to New Brunswick, have been taking steps in order to reaffirm their title to their land. The NCFNG, through its Quebec and Atlantic regional offices, is working with the Chiefs and the Mi'gmawei Mawiomi Secretariat (MMS) to help them achieve this goal.

The NCFNG has been invited by the MMS to help organize and facilitate a conference on governance, which will bring together Chiefs, Elders, youth, academics as well as the community members. Tentative date for the conference is Spring, 2008.

» for more: fngovernance.org/news/migmaq.htm

Journey toward self-governance

The Beardys and Okemasis First Nation is the first community in the Prairies region to invite the NCFNG to be a part of its journey toward self-governance. It has created a *Community Governance Committee* to establish a self-governance structure.

For many committee members, this new and exciting venture provides them the opportunity to contribute their vast skills and experiences and demonstrate their available capacity to create change.

For Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation Chief Rick Gamble, it's an in-depth understanding of what is needed to implement self-governance. Prior to becoming Chief, he served at the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) as the Chief of Staff and later on as the Executive Director of the Treaty Governance Process. When he decided to commit to community politics in a leadership role, he has set a priority to achieve significant change with a lasting legacy.

» for more: fngovernance.org/news/beardy.htm

Overfishing spurs call for title rights

Overfishing in the Robinson-Huron treaty area of central Ontario has become such a concern that local First Nations have come together to organize and plan a strategy focused on gaining control of their fisheries. "The area's resources have become depleted, but the communities are not sitting around. They are taking proactive steps to end the exploitation of their lakes and rivers," says NCFNG Ontario Regional Manager Robert Houle.

Houle has been working closely with leadership to develop a negotiations strategy for discussions with the Province of Ontario.

"Development of this strategy is integral in the implementation of their inherent right", says Houle, "and the right to choose how the land and its resources are used."

» for more: fngovernance.org/news/huron.htm



webSearch

highlights from the NCFNG website www.fngovernance.org

Check out our new Interactive, the Self-Governance Timeline:

fngovernance.org/resources/timeline.htm

For thousands of years, the Aboriginal people of what is now Canada organized themselves as sovereign nations, with what was essentially governmental jurisdiction over their lands, including property rights. Those rights – of governance and property – were largely trampled in the stampede of European settlement, colonization and commercial interests. But they were never lost, never extinguished and never forgotten. Explore the history of those inherent rights, their erosion through the dark periods of colonization and marginalization, and ultimately, their recognition in Canadian law.

