

NAN members receive awards for business plans

THUNDER BAY, ON, Jan. 22 /CNW/ - Project Beyshick partners Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, POA Educational Foundation Chairman Aditya Jha, and Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF) president Harvey Yesno, together with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Michael Bryant and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Minister Harinder Takhar honoured Project Beyshick 2007 participants Devon A. Meekis and Desta Buswa during an award presentation this afternoon at Queen's Park.

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Devon A. Meekis of Deer Lake First Nation and Desta Buswa of North Spirit Lake First Nation both received recognition and cash rewards (\$15,000 and \$5,000 respectfully) to pursue business plans submitted as part of their participation in Project Beyshick 2007 - a mentoring/job-shadowing program focused on enhancing entrepreneurship among First Nations in NAN territory between the ages of 21 and 35.

"Desta and Devon are not only success stories in their own right, but role models for other young people," said Michael Bryant, Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister. "The awarding of the Beyshick Awards to these recipients will only serve to inspire a new generation to achieve excellence for the benefit of all."

Meekis's business plan aims to extend the abilities of his web site development and computer network maintenance company to meet small and medium business needs in Northern Ontario.

"My participation in Project Beyshick was a mind-opening experience and gave me the opportunity to meet people and build networks I otherwise wouldn't have been able to," said Meekis who has owned and operated FLI Technologies since 2005.

Buswa's award is the first of its kind based on her outstanding participation in Project Beyshick 2007. The award will help to fulfill her career goal of becoming a business coach in the field of Human Resource

Management.

"My hope is the benefits of this award will be far-reaching," said Buswa who's taught secondary school at Pelican Falls First Nation High School since 1995 with an emphasis on the cooperative education program. "My desire is to see that this award will benefit other NAN members and to inspire the next generation of NAN youth to grab a hold of the value education holds."

Project Beyshick was launched in 2005 by NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy and Chairman of POA Educational Foundation and President of Osellus Inc. Aditya Jha. Today Project Beyshick is jointly offered by NAN, POA Educational Foundation, and Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF).

"Project Beyshick has been an important networking and mentoring opportunity for many NAN members by enhancing and building business skills," said NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "The success of the program shows the success of our people and how only we can break the mould in achieving our goals and dreams of success both within our communities and outside."

"The goal of Project Beyshick is to nurture First Nation entrepreneurs, linking the youth network with successful individuals from the business world," said POA Chairman Aditya Jha. "There is no doubt in my mind that our efforts are too small to address all issues facing First Nation people, however the successes of this program and what we're working toward in the future is definitely making impactful first steps."

Successful program candidates participate in workshops at some of Canada's leading business schools and training companies, including Ryerson University, Trent University, and Dale Carnegie, while gaining hands-on job-shadowing experience with Toronto-based senior level business executives. Previous participants have gained valuable work and life experiences assisting in the development of long-term educational and career goals.

The program, which will recruit for the 2008 program this March, is available to NAN entrepreneurs, students, and community leaders seeking to sharpen entrepreneurial skills and/or pursue business careers.

Some of the businesses involved in the past three years include TD Canada Trust, TV Ontario, Globe and Mail, HSBC, Trillium Hospital, ICICI Bank, Toronto Police Services, SunLife, Sick Kids, Yum! Brands, and AMJ Campbell Van Lines.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is an Aboriginal political organization representing 49 First Nation communities within James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario First Nations part of Treaty 5 - an area spanning two-thirds of Ontario with a total approximate population of 45,000 members on and off reserve.

POA Educational Foundation is a charitable foundation aiming to provide support for educational and entrepreneurial initiatives targeting regions with specific challenges and pressing needs.

Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund is an Aboriginal organization delivering business and financial services to the member First Nations of Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

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