

## NAN Grand Chief Urges Toronto Business Community to Participate in First Nation Mentoring Program

THUNDER BAY, ON Tuesday July 21, 2009: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy is appealing to businesses leaders to participate in a unique mentoring program that pairs NAN First Nation entrepreneurs with mentors from the Toronto business community as he officially launched Project Beyshick 2009 today.

“Thanks to the support of the Toronto business community Project Beyshick provides First Nation entrepreneurs first-hand experience to help them launch small business ventures that will increase capacity-building and stimulate local economies of NAN First Nations,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. “Working one-on-one allows our young entrepreneurs to develop the business skills they need to succeed while increasing cultural awareness and understanding.”

Project Beyshick was developed by POA Educational Foundation and NAN in 2005. It is a one-week career mentoring/job-shadowing program focused on entrepreneurship among First Nation youth (ages 21-35) within Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) territory – an area covering two-thirds of the province of Ontario. Successful program candidates participate in workshops at some of Canada’s leading business schools, while gaining hands on job-shadowing experience with Toronto-based senior level business executives and successful entrepreneurs. Previous participants have gained valuable work and life experiences assisting in the development of long-term educational and career goals.

It is highlighted by an annual juried Business/Career Plan Competition with a \$15,000 award for the participant who prepares the most feasible business or career plan.

Darcy Kejick, a Project Beyshick Alumni from North Spirit Lake First Nation, received an award in 2006 for his business plan to open North Spirit Food, a much-needed grocery store that services the fly-in First Nation community.

“The most informative part of the program is the actual job shadowing portion because you get to see the executives as they manage their company and how the organization operates,” said Kejick, who participated in Project Beyshick in 2006 and 2008. “You learn quite a bit about the big picture. There were things that I learned from those experiences that I thought would help my business today. Since we started the store, everything I visualized – it’s happening.”

Project Beyshick 2009 will run Aug. 15-20. Participants will be announced next month.

Business leaders interested in mentoring Project Beyshick participants are asked to contact Shirley Salt, Project Beyshick Coordinator, at (807) 623-8228 or [ssalt@nan.on.ca](mailto:ssalt@nan.on.ca).

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

POA Educational Foundation is a Canadian private charitable foundation aiming to provide support for educational and entrepreneurial initiatives that target regions with specific challenges and pressing needs. The foundation &ndash; founded and funded by Canadian entrepreneur and philanthropist Aditya Jha &ndash; takes special interest in nurturing prosperity and financial independence amongst Canadian First Nation communities and individuals.

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