

NAN, POA Educational Foundation announce Project Beyshick participants

THUNDER BAY, TORONTO, ON, Aug. 14 /CNW/ - Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, together with POA Educational Foundation Chairman Aditya Jha, is pleased to announce today the eight NAN participants and mentor organizations for Project Beyshick 2009 - a unique mentoring program that pairs NAN First Nation entrepreneurs with mentors from the Toronto business community.

"The skills these participants will develop by working one-on-one with mentors in the Toronto business community will be invaluable when they return home to set out on their own business ventures in their home First Nations," said Beardy.

Developed by POA Educational Foundation and NAN in 2005, Project Beyshick is a one-week job-shadowing program focused on entrepreneurship among First Nation youth (ages 21-35) within NAN territory. Successful program candidates participate in training programs from Dale Carnegie and Ryerson University Business School to gain valuable practical business experience. Participants gain hands on experience job-shadowing senior level business executives and successful entrepreneurs in areas of their interest. Previous participants have gained valuable work and life experiences, and made significant progress towards their entrepreneurial goals.

"Year after year we see encouraging results that Project Beyshick is helping First Nation people develop their business and leadership capacity," said Jha. "We acknowledge that this is just a small step towards our wider goal of helping First Nations become equal partners in the economic prosperity of Canada and Canadian life, but this is a good start."

Participating organizations for Project Beyshick 2009 include TVO, BMO Financial Group, Laura Secord, SkyLink Group, National Post, Penguin Canada, Poirier and Brightling (P&B) Marketing Inc., Ogilvy & Mather, CargoJet and Karma Candy Inc.

This year's participants were recruited from four categories - students, entrepreneurs, professionals and community leaders - and include:

- Archie Meekis, Deer Lake First Nation – Former Deer Lake First nations Chief and owner of Thunder bird air, he is a life long student, who wants to leverage teachings and contacts from this project to expand his business. Archie will spend his time during project Beyshick at SkyLink Group and CargoJet Inc.

- Roxann Shawaykeesic, Eabametoong First Nation – She is a leader, an athlete and an entrepreneur who wants to start a company that does online and print design work for publishing houses. She is currently manager of print services at a northern Ontario news paper called Wawatay news. Roxann will spend her time at National Post and Ogilvy & Mather.

- Damian Bouchard, Aroland First Nation – A former fire fighter, he one day decided to change his life and start focussing on his passion of film making. He has recently completed a two years program in of broadcasting and directing. He will start another one year program on film making in Vancouver after which he wants to start his own production company. Damian will spend his time at TVO.

- Keri Cheechoo, Long Lake 58 – A Project Beyshick alumna, she has enrolled herself in a bachelor of education

program and hopes to help design curriculum for students one day. Keri will spend her time at Penguin Canada.

- Linda Trudeau, Moose Cree First Nation – An entrepreneur and project manager by profession, she currently sells eco friendly products to various first nations communities. She wants to expand her business and leverage the online tools. She will spend her time with P&B marketing.

- Patrick Cheechoo, Constance Lake First Nation – A project Beyshick alunus, he wants to take his skills in finance and artwork and translate that into a business that works with retail companies. He wants to take art work of native artists (including his own) and commercialize it through clothing lines. He will be at Laura Secord.

- Kyra Kaminawaish, North Caribou Lake First Nation – Bernice wants to focus on starting a clothing retail business in northern Ontario. She will be at Laura Secord.

- Bernice Kakekagumick, North Caribou Lake First Nation – Bernice is passionate about helping at risk young first nation individuals. She has plans for a partnership to start a treatment program for youth ages 16- and older.

Note to media: Participants will be available for interviews throughout the program.

Project Beyshick ends with a competition that awards \$15,000 to the participant who prepares the most feasible business or career plan.

The project is organized with help from members of Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) Ryerson, Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University and the Dale Carnegie Business Group.

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

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.

BACKGROUND - PROJECT BEYSHICK

- A one-week career and mentoring/job-shadowing and educational program established in 2005 to promote entrepreneurship among First Nation

youth (ages 21-35) within Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) territory.

- 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.
- Developed in response to unique needs and conditions of NAN's 49 First Nation communities and nurtures prosperity and financial independence amongst First Nations communities and individuals by encouraging and mentoring entrepreneurial efforts.
- Provides an entrepreneurship award of \$15,000 to the participant who presents the best business or career plan report at the end of the program.
- Available to NAN entrepreneurs, students, and community leaders seeking to sharpen entrepreneurial skills and/or pursue business careers.
- Partners and participating mentor organizations include Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), POA Educational Foundation, Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF), Ryerson University, Trent University and the Dale Carnegie Training.
- 2008 participating organizations included HSBC Canada, Toronto Police, TV Ontario, BMO Bank of Montreal, Karma Candy Inc., Prego Della Piazza, Sears Canada, Globe & Mail, Royal Ontario Museum and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

For further information: Ashutosh Jha, Director of Project - POA Educational Foundation, (416) 834-5274 or ashutosh@poafoundation.org;

Michael Heintzman, Media Relations Officer - Nishnawbe Aski Nation, (807) 625-4906 or (807) 621-2790 mobile

