

## Ryerson: Benefactor empowers others through education

Contributed by Andy Lee (Public Affairs, Ryerson University)  
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Project Beyshick 2006, taking place August 12 to 18, aims to nurture prosperity and financial independence among First Nations communities.

Aditya Jha knows the power of education.

The 50-year-old self-made millionaire attributes his success to education, ambition and hard work. Born in a village in Nepal, Jha obtained his masters in mathematical statistics and pursued post-graduate studies in computer science at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. After coming to Canada in 1994, Jha and two businessmen founded a software company called ISOPIA Inc. in 1998. Three years later, it was acquired by Sun Microsystems for \$100 million US.

Today, Jha is Chief Operating Officer of Osellus Inc., a multinational software company with 74 employees, and Chairman of the POA Foundation, a charitable organization that promotes education and entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups.

### PROJECT BEYSHICK: AUGUST 12-18

One of the POA Foundation's initiatives is Project Beyshick, a week-long program for aspiring First Nations entrepreneurs. From August 12 to 18, 16 members of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN) will participate in job shadowing, workshops and seminars in Thunder Bay and Toronto.

"I couldn't understand how people could suffer in Canada," said Jha. "There is this tragic aberration: integration and success for most communities, but somehow the First Nations people have been left out and left behind. It's like the Third World living in the First World."

### THUNDER BAY: AUGUST 12-13

Project Beyshick will kick off with a two-day preparatory seminar in Thunder Bay, where Ryerson Professors Neil Wolff and David Valliere will teach participants how to identify new venture opportunities and prepare a business plan.

"Project Beyshick is an excellent example of how Ryerson is reaching out to all communities to help them to unlock their entrepreneurial potential," said Wolff, Program Director of Entrepreneurship and Strategy.

"Entrepreneurship represents the best path for community members to harness their individual talents for the economic growth of the community," said Valliere, Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy.

### TORONTO: AUGUST 15-17

Following the Thunder Bay seminar, participants will travel to Toronto for three days of job shadowing with senior business executives. While in Toronto, participants will stay on campus at one of Ryerson's residences. At the end of each day, student members of Advancing Canadian Entrepreneurship (ACE) Ryerson will conduct debriefing sessions and help participants prepare a business or career plan.

"POA and ACE have the same mission: to foster entrepreneurship," said Patrick Collin, ACE Ryerson President. "By working together, we can increase our impact."

At the conclusion of Project Beyshick, the participant with the best plan will receive a \$15,000 Entrepreneurship Award courtesy of the POA Foundation, NAN and the Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund.

Jason Paul Rasevych, a recent marketing graduate of Confederation College, is looking forward to taking part in Project Beyshick 2006. For the past three summers, Rasevych has worked in the finance and administration department of the Ginoogaming First Nation Office. He hopes to create employment in his community by launching his own entertainment company.

"There's a lot of hidden talent in the First Nations communities but they just don't have the networking opportunities to showcase it," said Rasevych.

### THE FUTURE

Next year, Jha plans to expand Project Beyshick to other countries. Ultimately, he hopes to create a Social Venture Capital Fund to provide seed money for aboriginal entrepreneurs.

Project Beyshick, however, is just one of Jha's means of promoting education. To date, he has created a \$250,000 endowment fund to support four Ryerson scholarships in Engineering and Business.

"I have a deep belief that education should be supported by the private sector," said Jha. "My experience with Ryerson has been outstanding. As a donor, I have no fear of getting lost in the shuffle."

"Ryerson is fortunate to have a friend like Aditya Jha," said Adam B. Kahan, Vice-President of University Advancement. "Project Beyshick is yet another example of Aditya's deep commitment to education."

"I have come up and Ryerson is coming up," said Jha. "If it had stock, I would buy it."

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