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## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to describe how the NWT Youth Business Conference was carried out and account for the sponsorship that was graciously donated to make it a success. It will also provide some recommendations for future coordinating of its kind.

## Brief History

- The Deh Cho Business Development Centre is a non-profit Corporation governed by a board of directors from the communities it serves and funded by the Territorial Government through the Department of Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development, using funds from the Community Futures Program. The Centre's mandate is to enhance the economy and stimulate employment through business Development in the Deh Cho Region.
- The idea for the Conference came about when Todd Noseworthy, the General Manager for the Deh Cho Business Development Centre was planning for the creation of the Youth Development Officer Position. With the help from the Board of Directors, they developed the proposal to hire the YDO and out of this process sprung the inspiration for the Youth Business Conference. The Youth Development Officer position was filled in September 2001 and the employee began the planning for the conference.
- A Steering Committee was created in November for the Conference made up of various advocates for youth in the community. There were 15 members at the beginning and it ended up being a core group of 10, with 3 of that number being youth.
- It was decided to expand on the idea and open the conference up to the whole NWT.

## Conference Vision

The conference was anticipated to introduce the Youth of the Deh Cho, later expanded to include youth of the NWT, to business basics and provide an opportunity for the new YDO to meet many of the potential clients from the Deh Cho.

Through the conference, NWT youth would be introduced to young and more seasoned entrepreneurs who have been successful to hear what they have to say about what it takes to get there. Facilitators and Speakers would inspire, share ideas and instruct the participants on how to start a business. Financial Institutions, including Banks, Government Agencies and Departments, would inform the youth on how and where to obtain financing. Finally a Resource Panel would provide insight into some of the opportunities in the NWT

Another expected outcome of the conference was the establishment of a working partnership with other agencies to set up a program called "Second Chance", an innovative entrepreneurship program for youth who have been in conflict with the law. The program attempts to not only develop positive attitudes but also to provide the skills to become productive citizens and entrepreneurs.

We wanted to be able to assist young adults to find meaningful work without having to leave their home community by introducing the alternative of self-employment and then motivating them to pursue business ownership. At the very least we aimed to challenge the dependence on government and encourage youth to take ownership and re-create a culture of self-reliance.

### **Mission Statement**

*We are dedicated to guiding youth to achieve economic self-sufficiency through the successful creation of their business.*

**"!Ideas Support Success!"**

## Conference Outcome

### Goal One

Increase economic activity and assist in lowering unemployment rates for youth in the NWT. We aim to foster an interest in a self-reliant thriving economy.

### Objectives:

1. *Encourage interest in Entrepreneurship among youth as a viable career option in the NWT by introducing them to its benefits and identifying entrepreneurial traits*

YES

- This was done through the facilitators Chris Curtis, Peter Van Stolk and Carolla Cunningham. Chris held two sessions, one on idea generation and the characteristics of an entrepreneur. Peter provided inspiration by illustrating what he had accomplished as a young person and how he had progressed from his initial idea to be the owner of a multi-million dollar company. Carolla then discussed the blending of cultural commitments / traditions with the running of a business.

2. *Provide dynamic speakers who will inspire and motivate the youth to pursue starting a business.*

YES

- This was done through the facilitators Chris Curtis, Peter Van Stolk and Carolla Cunningham, who were all dynamic and utilized interactive, and differing styles.

3. *Offer relevant workshops to increase their business skills and knowledge.*

YES

- Introductory skills and a broad knowledge base were offered, such as market analysis and planning your business, as well as the different legal structures available, and the type of skills needed to succeed. They were able to assess their own entrepreneurial characteristics and make note of those needed. The Entrepreneur panel also imparted knowledge through the telling of their own experiences.

4. *Support Youth businesses by utilizing their services for the conference*

YES

- We hired a youth advertising company, youth caterers and entrepreneurs for the panel.

5. *Offer incentives to participate in the conference like good entertainment and Door prizes.*

YES

- We ensured there was a wide variety of social events and entertainment every evening to draw more youth to the event and to help keep them networking with each other. The first night was a mock bar & Drum dance, the second night there was a banquet, fashion show, dramatic presentation, a singer and a live fiddle band with square dancers. The third night was another mock bar and a DJ Sound and Light Dance.

## **Goal Two**

To address the roadblocks to youth wanting to get into business and encourage them to pursue their ideas if they have what it takes to be an entrepreneur.

### **Objectives:**

- 1. *Have the youth involved in the planning process to ensure needs are addressed first hand and improve chances of their participation in event.***

YES

- Four youth sat on the steering committee to help with the planning of the conference. This allowed a good amount of youth input into the selection of the speakers and other activities, which are chosen to help meet the conference goals while attempting to make the conference attractive to the target audience.

- 2. *Hold workshop to increase the youth's self-confidence and potential for self-employment. The facilitator will be aware of /sensitive to the needs of aboriginal youth and good at building self-esteem.***

YES

- Carolla Cunningham used some self- esteem building exercises and utilized a technique called visioning and a holistic approach to planning. This process enables the youth to incorporate their traditional beliefs with process of business planning. It is very relevant for a lot of the youth in the North. She also had the group sitting in a circle assessing their own entrepreneurial characteristics.
- This Next Generation did a workshop on healthy choices and feeling good about oneself. This really addressed substance abuse and how important it is to stay clear headed.
- Chris Curtis did some good interactive sessions on business skills building where the group broke off into smaller groups. He gave two sessions; one on the characteristics of an entrepreneur, and one on idea generation, communication, and market research.
- Peter Van Stolk gave a lot of motivation and inspiration for the youth who questioned their abilities when they first walked in to the conference. He really got them thinking "I can Do IT!"

- 3. *Provide information about funding sources and educational opportunities that would otherwise be unknown to them.***

YES

- We had a large panel of representatives from various financing institutions and government available with some of the training institutions mentioned in the panelists presentations.
- There was a long, thorough, question and answer period following the presentation.
- Many pamphlets and brochures were passed out and were available at the booths.
- In the conference evaluation youth commented that they gained valuable insight into funding and resources available to them that was unknown to them before.

- 4. *Provide information about the changing economy and it's requirements***

YES

- Peter Van Stolk touched on this in his personal story about what is driving the markets today
- Michael Pealow (EDO - Ft. Liard) did a brief presentation on how education/training or job experience in the financial field is important for success as a businessperson.
- The Industry Panel addressed some of the up-coming opportunities and apprenticeship/training programs that will be offered. BHP used one of their Welding apprentices as part of their presentation. They showed how his day-to-day life looked in a cd-rom presentation.
- The speaker David Street who was scheduled to do his dinner speech on this topic was cancelled due to a sudden illness. However he is confirmed for next year.

**5. *Provide the youth with successful role models who can be questioned in an open forum.***

YES

- There were youth, aboriginal and seasoned entrepreneurs available to the Youth in a panel discussion. They were asked many relevant questions and were able to offer a realistic look at what it is really like to be in business.
- On the conference evaluations youth indicated that it was very encouraging to hear how the members of this panel became successful.

## **Goal Three**

To improve chances of success in entrepreneurship

### **Objectives:**

**1. *To offer a workshop on how to start a business plan and its important uses***

YES-

- We definitely achieved this at an introductory level.
- Chris Curtis and Carola Cunningham talked about the key sections of a business plan.
- The Financial Panel also outlined what they would be looking for in a request for financing.
- We are considering bringing one of the facilitators back to do an in depth workshop on the Business Plan.

**2. *To allow some representatives from different funding agencies to introduce what they will be looking for in funding applications and also what is available***

YES-

- The financial panel provided a lot of information on opportunities the youth could tap into here in the North. As indicated on the conference evaluation, a lot of the youth were pleasantly surprised to find out that there is a lot of support out there and also how to go about asking for it.

**3. *To introduce some successful (aboriginal/northern) entrepreneurs who can offer their experiences and answer questions in a panel presentation and Q&A session.***

YES-

- Darcy Moses, Dennis Nelner, and Suzan Marie were sharing a lot of their strength and wisdom with the youth who asked them some good questions.

**4. *To offer some workshops on specific business techniques and viability of business ideas***

YES-

- Barry Snell did a workshop on “Niche Marketing” where he focused in on what skills the youth have and how to target a market with them. Chris Curtis offered a session on how to assess your idea and market it.
- Laura Aubrey and Keith Douglas did a workshop on Computer Technology and how useful skills in this area will be in the future as an entrepreneur. They also did a demonstration of the interactive Cd-Rom they developed as an educational model to learn about Culture.
- Suzan Marie covered a Luncheon with the topic of how traditional fine arts and crafts are making a come back in the market place. She encouraged youth to learn and develop these skills and to become masters in one particular area. She also talked a little about how to price your work.

5. *To provide direction for the steps to be taken upon completion of the previous activities*  
YES-
  - We provided the youth with various starter exercises, such as what opportunities will be viable, how to start planning and where to go for funding.
  - We suggested they contact their regional Business Development Centers for mentoring and support.
  - We also will be following up with more workshops and contacts for them.

## **Goal Four**

Enhance the effectiveness of the “Be Your Own Boss” Program.

### **Objectives:**

1. *Identify potential clients for the Deh Cho BDC “Be Your Own Boss” Program*  
YES
  - We were able to make numerous contacts with potential clients
  - The YDO made time to talk to everyone who was in attendance.
2. *Opportunity for those youth interested in starting their own business from the region to meet Youth Development Officer, other young entrepreneurs and find out about the BYOB program.*  
YES
  - The Youth now know who their Development Officer is and have all of her contact information. We provided the youth with a briefcase that included an info package with a YDO Brochure and business card.
3. *Develop “Second Chance” program for local agencies to refer clients as an alternative*  
YES
  - The Justice Specialist and the Deh Cho BDC are looking into starting up this program here in the Region.
  - Education has also been briefed on an entrepreneurial curriculum for the schools to implement from K-12.

## **Evaluation Points**

The success of the event was evaluated by obtaining feedback from the attendees, measuring the number of youth, and the amount of support provided by organizations and other government departments.

The forms were helpful in identifying where we can improve for next year:

- More time for discussion after workshops or smaller groups
- More time for networking
- People should not be talking during sessions
- More practical skill specializations
- Panelists should have signs in front of them with their names and company on it
- Set up a web site and an entrepreneur data base of resources
- Ensure we have an expert in Eco Tourism and Energy next year

- More ice breakers
- Better facilities-maybe in a larger center

The Forms also pointed out the highlights of the conference:

- Youth made many valuable contacts and gathered pertinent information
- A big motivator to start or learn more about getting into business
- A better understanding of how a business works was gained
- Excellent Presenters
- Feeling more confident about starting a business
- Especially good info about financing
- Encouraging to hear other's start up stories and how they overcame obstacles
- Inspiration!

There were 73 attendees who participated. Our estimate was 75 so we were fairly accurate.

The outpouring of support from all government levels, organizations and corporations/businesses, was astounding. We raised an amazing \$90,000.00!!

We will be sending out a short term follow-up including an informative newsletter with updates and review, as well as contacting the participants to find out how many of them actually pursued and started a business. A questionnaire with the possible choices for upcoming workshops will also be offered. Of course, to measure the long-term effect we would need to know how many stayed in business long enough to attain success.

## **Recommendations**

1. Next conference should take the process to the next level with more specific skills development workshops. For example, some of the topics we could provide include financial planning, marketing, e-commerce, more in depth market analysis, and more promotion of networking and customer service.
2. Definitely need to hire someone to record the conference sessions next year. We had some technical difficulty in the editing/recording process.
3. We need to allow for more networking and downtime for the participants to interact with each other. It was also suggested that we leave room for more questions and discussion with the speakers after they present.
4. More attention needs to be placed on the potential Deh Cho Clients, to build a good rapport.
5. We need to make sure that smaller "Break out" Sessions take place. The group was too big to really complete a whole process in the interactive sessions. The solution to that would be to offer more workshops to happen at the same time. Then the experience is more quality and less quantity.



## **Conclusion**

In Conclusion, I would like to say that I feel proud to be a part of this development process for the youth. It is fulfilling to be of assistance to those youth who just need some information and encouragement to help make their dreams a success. This conference is like the sun and water in the growing of young entrepreneurs, and is hopefully the first of many in years to come. We are definitely on target to introduce self-employment as an alternative to them and motivate them to pursue business ownership. We will continue to guide youth to achieve economic self-sufficiency through the successful creation of their business.

## **List of Speakers, Panel Members & Entertainers**

Chris Curtis  
Carolla Cunningham  
Peter Van Stolk  
Barry Snell  
Laura Aubrey  
This Next Generation  
Greg Nyuli  
Robert Beaulieu  
Paul Betsina  
Brian Dunn  
Gino Kotchea  
Shannan Roberts  
Kevin Maclellan  
D'Arcy Moses  
Brendan Bell  
Tim McClelland  
Suzan Marie  
Dennis Nelner  
Paul Davey  
Amber  
Lee Mandeville  
George Mandeville  
George Tuccaro  
Joe Tambour  
Dreamcatcher Dance Troup  
Ekuinox  
Adele Hardisty  
Jim Antoine  
John Hazenberg  
Delphone Eleeze

## List of Supporting Government Departments & Agencies and Private Corporations

Education, Culture and Employment  
Municipal and Community Affairs  
Department of Indian and Northern Affairs  
Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development  
NorthwesTel  
National Crime Prevention C ??, Federal Department of Justice  
Aboriginal Business Canada  
Metis Dene Development Fund through First Nations & Inuit Youth  
Business Program  
Enbridge  
Senator Nick Sibbeston  
National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association through their First  
Nations & Inuit Youth Business Program  
Deh Cho First Nations through the Aboriginal Human Resource  
Development Agreement  
Chevron  
Shehtah Drilling  
Paramount