

## **FNSDS 2009 “BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES” CONFERENCE**

### **February 2-3, 2009**

The First Nations Social Development Society conference for 2009 was held at the Pan Pacific Hotel in downtown Vancouver, BC. The conference theme was Building Sustainable First Nations Communities with discussion, workshops and plenary presentations focusing on innovative and effective options in the areas of governance, economic development, social enterprise, employment creation and active measures to support BC First Nations in enhancing independence from Income Assistance.

### **The content**

The conference was attended by over 225 delegates comprised of Band Social Development Workers, band administrators, First Nations organizations, provincial and federal government representatives. It included workshops from the following presenters and topics focused around this years' theme.

- Comprehensive Community Planning
- Workplace Wellness
- Leadership for Healing Communities
- Aboriginal HIPPY
- Aboriginal Mother Centre
- Social Enterprise Development Innovation
- Nuu-chah-Nulth Community Development Project
- Effective Social Development Program Management Practices
- Learning Circles for Community Development
- Active Measures Toolkit Workshop
- Creating BioMass Energy Projects in First Nations Communities
- Input on Social Development Funding Formula Research Project
- Effective use of ITC for the Development of Sustainable Communities
- Innovative Employment & Training Practices (TOWES)
- Building Sustainability in Remote & Isolated First Nations Communities

### **Some Highlights**

Keynote speaker Bill King from the NOVA Organizational Development Group started the event with a talk on ethical leadership and on it being imperative to building sustainable communities. Nadia Ferrara, PhD followed with a presentation on Building Sustainable Communities with an emphasis on the need for partnerships between government and BC First Nations, initiatives that are community driven from the bottom grass roots level and the creation of community visions that are long term, action driven and practical. Alberta has been very much ahead of the game during its economic boom, less so since the economic downturn, nonetheless the

Hobbema presentation emphasized many socioeconomic challenges that must be assessed, addressed should a measure of sustainability be achieved. Many inspiring success stories and successful employment programs were describe and shared.

## **The Workshops**

Workshop presentations were just as successful in generating a sense of hope for many of the participants who spend their days dealing the challenging issues and the many needs of their communities. Melissa Myer in her workshop on the Psychology of Vision – Leadership for Healing Communities puts its succinctly, for communities to succeed in developing sustainability, in moving from dependence, independence to interdependence there will be a need for a holistic approach that includes the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of individuals and their communities and the requirement for courageously acknowledging and healing the past, focusing and committing to transforming the present, to create opportunities for future generations. Many practical options and solutions to creating sustainability were also part of other presentations that included one on alternative energy, the effective use of technology and the basic of personal financial literacy.



## **Networking**

One of the greatest benefits of attending conferences like the FNSDS conference is the opportunity it creates for likeminded individuals to come together to share ideas, best practices, successes and challenges. This conference was no exception. FNSDS staff were informed by many participants that numerous opportunities had revealed themselves by simply discussing issues with other participants and workshop presenters.

## **Acknowledgements**

The FNSDS staff would like to thank all participants and presenters for making this year's conference one of the most successful ones to date. We would also like to acknowledge our funders for their commitment to promoting innovation and capacity building in BC First Nations communities by their continued financial support in making these events possible.

A formal thank you to INAC BC Region, Service Canada, the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relationships and Reconciliation.