
**NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**



**April 5, 6 & 7, 2006
High Level, Alberta**

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July 2006

Message from the Chair

I am pleased to present you with a copy of the Conference Proceedings for **Challenge North 2006: Today's Promise - Tomorrow's Reality**.

The north is a land of action. We saw that at this conference. The vibrancy and excitement displayed by the conference delegates was contagious. That sense of excitement can be felt as you read through the proceedings.

I commend the Town of High Level, the Chamber of Commerce and the hotels for their contribution to a very successful conference. This was the first time the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) held a conference of this size in a northern town. The Town of High Level and the surrounding communities helped prove that a first class provincial conference can be held in a smaller and more remote community. I also thank our sponsors. Their generous contributions helped ensure the success of the conference, and we very much appreciate it.

Thank you as well, to all those who participated in developing strategies that address northern priorities. I want to emphasize that this conference is a very important component in developing our three year business and annual operation plans. All suggested strategies will be reviewed. Your recommendations will assist the Northern Alberta Development Council to establish its priorities. As well, you provided ideas to other delegates on how to develop partnerships to build their communities.

The theme of the conference was "Building vibrant communities and effective partnerships for Northern Alberta. The message of Dr. Mark Partridge, the keynote speaker, was a very clear challenge "northern communities must collaborate to remain viable." We need to show that Northern Alberta is one community. I am looking forward in working with you to advance northern development.



Ray Danyluk
Chair
NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
MLA Lac La Biche - St. Paul

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) is a council of and for northerners. The NADC works in partnership with northern communities, industry, other jurisdictions and ministries to develop and implement strategies and initiatives to advance the development of Northern Alberta. The Council reports to cabinet through Honourable Pearl Calahasen, Minister of Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural and vocational diversity of northern communities. The Chair is Ray Danyluk, MLA for Lac La Biche - St. Paul. The public members are:

Kim Courtoreille, Wabasca
Carmen Ewing, Girouxville
Helen Henderson, High Prairie
Wendell MacEachern, Fort McMurray
Mike Mihaly, High Level
Michael Ouellette, Grande Prairie
Maurice Rivard, Bonnyville
Williard Strebchuk, Whitecourt
Harvey Yoder, Lac La Biche

Mission

The mission of the NADC is to advance northern development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector, community-based organizations and other government agencies.

Mandate

The mandate of the NADC, as set out in the Northern Alberta Development Council Act, is to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in Northern Alberta, and to advise the Government thereon, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the council may investigate the requirements of the people resident in Northern Alberta and make recommendations thereon in respect of

- (a) social and economic development,
- (b) development of communities and service delivery, and
- (c) development of government services and programs."

The NADC Region

The Northern Alberta Development Council region represents 60% of Alberta's landmass and only 9% of the Province's total population. The region is responsible for 100% of the province's oil sands development, 21% of provincial crop production, 10% of provincial livestock production and 75% of the forestry portion of Alberta's Gross Domestic Product. This diverse resource base is a key contributor to the provincial economy and provides limitless development opportunities in Northern Alberta.

Challenge North 2006

The NADC hosts a major conference every three years to get input from northern stakeholders on strategic directions to advance development in the North. The theme for this Conference was Building Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships for Northern Alberta. The Conference provided business and community leaders from across the region with a forum to discuss challenges and opportunities they believe are critical to the future growth of Northern Alberta. The NADC is reviewing the strategies identified by delegates and assessing its next steps.



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA



Wednesday, April 5 2006

CONFERENCE OPENING

[Dan Dibbelt](#), Executive Director, Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC)
[Ray Danyluk](#), Chair, NADC and MLA for Lac la Biche – St. Paul
[Jane Chalifoux](#), Elder, Opening Prayer
[Mike Mihaly](#), Mayor, Town of High Level
[Bill Neufeld](#), Reeve, Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Community Cooperation or Community Collapse: The Reality of 21st Century Canada
[Mark Partridge](#), Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy, University of Saskatchewan

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS A
Vibrant Communities**

From Opportunity to Vibrancy
[Monica Coneys](#), Shosholoza! Productions

Diversification through Rural Tourism Development
[Nicole Vaugeois](#), Department of Recreation and Tourism Management, Malaspina University-College, British Columbia

Innovation – A Pathway to Rural Vitality –
[Mary Robertson Lacroix](#), Manager, Innovative Rural Communities Project, Ontario

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS B
Effective Partnerships**

Meeting our Employment Needs
[David Berger](#), Aboriginal Relations Committee, Alberta Chamber of Resources
[Brad Trefan](#), Alberta Economic Development

Working Together to Achieve Common Goals
[Dan Vandermeulen](#), Woodland Operations Learning Foundation
[Ian Urquhart](#), Alberta Wilderness Association

Getting the Word Out Together
[Tam Andersen](#), Country Soul Stroll
[Estelle Carson](#), Alberta Natural Health Agricultural Network

RECEPTION

Thursday, April 6 2006

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS C
A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships**

Aboriginal Partnerships
[Bill Walker](#), City of Grande Prairie
[Bernice Shadow](#), Grande Prairie Regional College

Partnership Toolbox
[Alla Honcharuk](#), Alberta Community Development

Engaging People
[Kelley Moore](#), Saskatchewan Learning

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS D
A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships**

Preparing your Community for Foreign Workers
[Brad Trefan](#), Alberta Economic Development

Innovation Toolbox
[Mary Robertson Lacroix](#) and [Ray Lacroix](#), Innovative Rural Communities Project, Ontario

ACHIEVING VIBRANCY
[Monica Coneys](#), Shosholoza! Productions

LUNCHEON SPEAKER
[Rick Boychuk](#), *Editor, Canadian Geographic*,

WORKING GROUP SESSIONS and REPORT BACK
Delegates identified northern development strategies

BANQUET

Agenda

Friday, April 7 2006

PANEL DISCUSSION

What is Today's Promise and Tomorrow's Reality - Reflections on the Conference

[Rick Boychuk](#), Editor, Canadian Geographic
[Sylvia Kennedy](#), President of the High Level and District Chamber of Commerce
[Michael Ouellette](#), NADC member
[Bernice Shadow](#), Grande Prairie Regional College
[Ian Urquhart](#), Associate Professor and Graduate Chair - Political Science, University of Alberta

CABINET MINISTERS AND NORTHERN MLA'S Q&A

Cabinet Ministers and Northern MLAs were scheduled to speak about northern priorities and strategies, and respond to participant questions. Due to weather conditions they could not land in High Level. NADC Chair Ray Danyluk, MLA Lac La Biche-St. Paul and Frank Oberle, MLA Peace River, responded to delegate questions.

CLOSING REMARKS

[Ray Danyluk](#), Chair, Northern Alberta Development Council

Dan Dibbelt
**Executive Director, Northern Alberta
Development Council**

Mr. Dibbelt welcomed delegates to Challenge North 2006, and thanked them for coming to participate in discussions building vibrant communities and effective partnerships. Special recognition was given to Tom Baldwin, former Executive Director of the NADC, and great supporter of the north. The efforts of the NADC team were recognized and it was noted that Mr. Baldwin would have been very proud of the conference program. Grateful thanks were given to the conference's gold sponsors, the Town of High Level, the Municipal District of Mackenzie, and Northern Sunrise County for their contribution to Challenge North 2006.

Ray Danyluk
**Chair, Northern Alberta Development Council
MLA for Lac La Biche- St. Paul**

The Chair welcomed delegates to Challenge North 2006 and encouraged them to "share and talk about the challenges and attributes of Northern Alberta." He recognized the expertise present including students, youth advocates, post-secondary personnel and significant representation from northern municipalities, including the members of the NADC.

Delegates were encouraged to let their imaginations go. "The conference gives you the ideas, but it's after, in the hallways that you make successes. Look beyond the conference to problem solve and to express to each other some of the attributes of your northern communities."

Jane Chalifoux
Elder, Meander River First Nation

Elder Chalifoux opened the conference with a traditional Dene prayer in her mother tongue, asking the creator to guide delegates through the daily challenges they face.

Mike Mihaly
NADC Member, Mayor, Town of High Level

Mayor Mihaly brought greetings from High Level, the "next city in the northwest and the gateway to the south."

Bill Neufeld
**Reeve, Municipal District (MD) of Mackenzie
No. 23**

Reeve Neufeld conveyed greetings from the MD of Mackenzie, the largest municipality in Alberta and the most northern agricultural area in North America. He expressed his hope for fruitful dialogue and negotiation at the conference. He noted the appropriateness of the title Challenge North, indicating that there are indeed many challenges faced by northern communities that still need to be addressed.

Dr. Mark Partridge Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy,-University of Saskatchewan

Mark Partridge is the Canada Research Chair in the New Rural Economy and a Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Saskatchewan. He is currently investigating the underlying causes of different community growth rates across Canada by assessing the alternative roles of economic opportunities, quality of life, and government policies with the aim of improving local governance arrangements. Dr. Partridge has authored more than 60 academic and scholarly papers and has sat on the faculties of three different universities in the United States.

Dr. Partridge described Alberta as a resource rich province that “must be doing something right,” because not all resource rich regions have done as well. Even when energy prices were lower, Alberta kept growing. Alberta’s advantage is not just luck. However, in 10 years things might be different as natural resource booms end. He stated that Alberta needs to start planning for that time.

Alberta’s success factors:

- Western lifestyle and amenities including the Rocky Mountains;
- Two strong and dynamic cities (Calgary and Edmonton);
- A pro-business environment and entrepreneurial spirit;
- Strong population growth statistics;
- Strong human capital/ education base; and
- Abundance of natural resources.

“Good times blur long-term challenges.”

Dr. Partridge cautioned that Alberta’s booming economy lends itself to the ‘Natural Resources Curse’ where corruption, bad institutions, bad planning, and the increased wages associated with high growth of a single sector make it difficult for manufacturers to compete on international markets. This can create the potential for natural resource economies to fare poorly in the long term.

Dr. Partridge advised that in the next decade Alberta’s economy needs to diversify. Rural

communities must band together and secondly, increase cooperation between themselves and the larger urban centers. This is necessary to achieve the critical mass necessary for sustainable growth as most population growth traditionally occurs in 100 km circles around urban centers.

Meeting the Needs of Northern Alberta:

To meet the needs of Northern Alberta, Dr. Partridge suggested the following strategies:

- Enhance the quality of life through diversification to retain the current population after the boom.
- Shift front office work from urban centers to northern regions where the resources are located.
- Expand transportation linkages for access to services and markets.
- Integrate and partner with First Nations and Métis in rural development initiatives.
- Use the unique knowledge and experience and become management consultants.
- Promote tourism opportunities of Northern Alberta nationally and internationally.
- Work with urban centers to create critical mass. “Cities are Canada’s engines of growth. They help keep the wealth in the province.”
- Change the northern perception and reform the “just here for a time” attitude.

Northern Alberta is more than just latitude, its attitude. It has wide open spaces, and large First Nations and Aboriginal populations, and assets that contribute to the province’s growth potential. Regions must find consensus in order to increase their rural “growth poles.” This includes formal intergovernmental cooperation and more importantly, regional collaboration.

“Either communities collaborate or else the next bust will be very difficult.”

Dr. Partridge noted that strategic opportunities for change and cooperation require consensus and made the following suggestions:

- Use volunteer and non-governmental organizations to promote partnerships;
- Build regional identity, not just ‘island’ community identity;

- Address regional needs including infrastructure, transportation, economic development, education, health, environment, land use and access to urban services by increasing political clout for common interests; and
- Build community clusters through support for the energy economy and increase assistance to municipalities, for example, allocate the fuel tax to them.

prosper. Alberta currently has an abundance of surplus wealth which should be used to develop rural communities creating a better more diversified quality of life now, while the resources are available and the demand is high.

Dr. Partridge laid the challenge for regional cooperation, which was echoed in Ray Danyluk's comment, "We need to show that Northern Alberta is one community."

"People vote with their feet"

When measuring success, greater focus should be placed on population growth and not surplus wealth. Wealth becomes meaningless unless it is used to help communities develop and

Vibrant Communities From Opportunity to Vibrancy

Monica Coneys

Shosholoza! Productions

Monica Coneys uses her experiences as a former teacher in India, human resources manager in South Africa and economic development officer in Saskatchewan, to share with delegates some valuable philosophies regarding community cooperation and interdependence and vibrancy.

Monica Coneys inspired delegates with her unconventional and upbeat presentation, encouraging revitalization in small communities. Her message, built on the premise that people have “diamonds on the soles of their shoes,” encouraged participants to use these diamonds that exist within their communities to create vibrancy.

Communities often do too much too soon instead of moving things forward at a pace that is enjoyed and accepted by the general

population, according to Ms. Coneys. She discussed transformational leadership and the role it plays in the development of community vibrancy. A swinging trapeze analogy was used to illustrate transformation and the need to leap, allowing the community to become the dream its residents once had.

“There will be time for developmental leadership now is the time for transformational leadership.”

Ms Coneys urged each community member to realize their potential to positively impact the community. She encouraged individuals to combat negative attitudes regarding change and visionary planning, and instead “Shosholoza,” or move on as a train moves. Use that energy instead to manage growth and excitement.

Her message is simple, “*Don’t wait for your community to push you out there. Leap. For when we shine, we unconsciously give others the opportunity to do so as well.*”

Vibrant Communities Diversification through Rural Tourism Development

Nicole L. Vaugeois, Ph.D.
with **Dan MacDonald, faculty,** and **Jeff Vos,**
student, **Malaspina University-College**

Nicole Vaugeois is a Professor in the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management, at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Her research interests are rural tourism, community development and knowledge exchange. Nicole believes strongly in engaging students in the field and actively involves them in her research projects. She has been nominated for a BC Leading Edge Innovation Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development.

Delegates attended this session to learn about diversifying their community and economic health through rural tourism. Presenters shared insights into the realities of rural tourism within Canada, largely based on a three week study tour throughout rural British Columbia and Alberta taken in May 2005. On this tour, the

group met with numerous operators and community leaders, observed the status of rural tourism, and researched tourism development information needs.

Profile of Rural Tourists

In 2002, over 50% of all Canadian, 33% of overseas, and 30% of USA tourist visits in Canada were to predominantly rural areas. The Canadian rural tourists tended to be younger, the overseas travelers were middle aged, and the USA travelers were older. The USA tourist represents a higher share of visitors to rural northern regions and seems to prefer visiting a predominantly rural region.

Dr. Vaugeois noted that rural areas have drawing power, attracting 11 tourist visits per rural resident compared with only four tourist visits per urban resident, along with more overnight visits and visits of longer duration. While this can be attributed to the remoteness factor, it is also an indicator of attraction.

More could be known about the drawing power of predominantly rural regions and whether or not peoples' expectations are being met when they arrive. Statistics show that tourism to rural areas is happening and it is evident that many rural communities are adding tourism to their economic development priorities, but are things as good as they appear?

Factors for Successful Development of Tourism in Rural Areas

Cooperation, not competition, is key for successful rural tourism development, stressed Dr. Vaugeois. The following ten factors were identified as important for success:

1. A complete tourism package: FATE (Food, Accommodation, Transportation, Entertainment);
2. Good leadership;
3. Support and participation of local government;
4. Sufficient funds for tourism development;
5. Strategic planning;
6. Coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership;
7. Coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs;
8. Information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion;
9. Good Visitors Information Centres and Chambers of Commerce; and
10. Widespread community support for tourism.

Examples from Alberta and British Columbia

During the 2005 study tour, the group found that they became conduits of information as each community was interested in learning what other communities were doing. Mr. Vos illustrated different "paths to vibrancy" taken by rural communities visited by the research team.

Sayward, BC: To draw tourists to the area, a strong core of volunteers developed unique tourism products based on a logging theme and a gruelling hike, the Kusam Klimb.

Osoyoos, BC: The Nk'Mip resort accessed project funding and developed interrelated products for visitors including a winery, golf course, desert museum and real estate.

Kimberley, BC: The community adopted a Bavarian theme for downtown beautification, supported local operators, and developed

multipurpose facilities for residents and tourists to enhance the quality of life.

Alder Flats, AB: The community is thinking about value-added products and developing local collaborative partnerships to promote each other's businesses such as the Western themed Em Te Town and bison educational tours.

Torrington, AB: A strong volunteer core and tremendous community spirit resulted in the creative use of an abundant resource – gophers - to create an extremely unique product.

Rosebud, AB: The small town incorporated the arts and culture sector to develop the Rosebud Theatre and a theatre school.

Pincher Creek, AB: The town is involved in the Cowboy Trail, a regional approach. In the area is the Great Canadian Barn Dance, a family owned and operated venture that started small but built on successes by using creative marketing techniques and by remaining family and community-oriented.

Sylvan Lake, AB: The community links sport, recreation and tourism by hosting major special events such as skating, beach volleyball, and an international long distance swimming event.

Information Needs for Rural Tourism Development

Mr. McDonald talked about information needs for rural tourism development. He noted that businesses expressed a great deal of frustration as they felt they were all learning from trial and error.

Community leaders and entrepreneurs expressed a need for the following information and resources:

- Basic visitor data: who is coming, who could be coming, and what do they want?
- Partners and products: who is working towards rural tourism development, what are our potential tourism assets, how do we develop products, and how do we get them to market?
- Organization: how should we approach tourism development, what comes first, are there successful models for rural tourism development and is there support?

Vibrant Communities

Diversification through Rural Tourism Development

- Planning and policy: How can tourism as an industry get support and what adaptations to community planning need to be made to accommodate tourism?

Concluding Remarks

The potential of tourism in rural regions was evident. Collectively, most rural areas were in pursuit of tourism and use a variety of approaches to rural tourism development. However, they face common problems such as the lack of support, funding, infrastructure, and awareness of unique product potential, as well as a limited use of packaging to make rural products visible and accessible.

Mr. McDonald commented that because core tourism attractions are mostly public and

not-for-profit, they face challenges to become market ready and remain viable. Mr. McDonald advised that maps, routes, signage and transportation networks need to emerge in order to get people to unique rural tourism products. A regional approach to tourism development that supports cooperation can facilitate access.

Mr. McDonald concluded that there is a general lack of understanding and/or support of tourism development in many rural areas. Silos have emerged in tourism marketing and economic development; instead of using existing frameworks, different ones have been developed. He acknowledged that although there is little shared knowledge about how to proceed; there is great interest by communities to hear each other's stories.

Vibrant Communities

A Pathway to Rural Vitality

Mary Roberson Lacroix

Manager Innovative Rural Communities Project, Ontario

Dr. Mary Robertson Lacroix specializes in project design, management, and strategic coordination of provincial rural-based projects. She is currently managing Ontario's Innovative Rural Communities Project. Mary has designed and delivered courses in rural studies at both the University of Western Ontario and the University of Guelph.

Dr. Robertson Lacroix reviewed Ontario's Innovative Rural Communities Project. The initiative is a University of Guelph administered collaborative project that explores the nature of the scope of rural innovation, addresses rural vitality, and promotes rural needs to the provincial government.

Rural Innovation

The project examined the implications of innovation as a driver of competitiveness and prosperity in the global economy. It addresses the following questions:

- What is the nature & scope of rural innovation?

- How do communities benefit from innovation?
- What characterizes innovative rural communities?
- What are the conditions that foster an innovation culture?

The project defines innovation broadly to include: commercialization, community development, environmental and natural resource management, and policy development. It can be an incremental improvement or a major breakthrough.

The project's researchers found that being rural was a motivator for innovation rather than a barrier. Innovation requires innovators, champions and social and knowledge networks. A community may be perceived as being an "overnight success" as an innovative community but in reality often success is based on 20 years of ground work; but once innovation occurs, the networks are strengthened and this leads to more innovation. Rural innovation tends to have community development goals and supports a holistic view of the community.

Revitalization

Innovation revitalizes rural communities by developing new jobs and business, improving human and community services; and developing culture and arts, which enhances the quality of life. The improved quality of life in turn produces additional economic benefits.

Innovation May Lead to Tension

Innovation is about change and must be an ongoing process to maintain a vibrant community. People within the community or region, however, may resist change. Establishing local networks are necessary as they provide “safe” venues for community members to discuss contentious issues.

Tensions may occur because:

- Members of a community or communities may experience different levels of benefits and costs. For example, economic development may lead to higher housing prices and subsequently higher property taxes, making it difficult for those on fixed incomes.
- Innovators are not necessarily skilled at establishing good interpersonal skills. They also might not be willing to let go of their idea and allow other people to take over the management and implementation of the innovation.
- Unlikely partners who have different objectives will lead to tension.

- Laws and regulations do not always align themselves or support innovative approaches.
- Intercommunity cooperation may be required to achieve critical mass.

Fostering Innovation

Dr. Robertson Lacroix reviewed a package designed to assist communities to support innovation. This package and additional information on fostering community innovation, tools and resources is found at www.innovativecommunities.ca.

Suggested ways communities can support innovation include:

- Value and celebrate innovators and innovation champions as assets;
- Recognize volunteer investment and involvement of youth;
- Create innovation hubs;
- Aggregate needs and pool resources;
- Engage educational institutions in innovative initiatives;
- Network across sectors;
- Look outside the community for mentors;
- Use information technology effectively as tools (the challenge for Alberta is how to use it, other communities are still trying to get it);
- Change attitude from competitive to cooperative; and
- Recognize and build on community assets.

Effective Partnerships Meeting our Employment Needs

David Berger

**Co-Chair, Aboriginal Affairs Committee,
Alberta Chamber of Resources**

David Berger is Manager, Aboriginal Strategy for ATCO Electric. In this role, David is responsible for helping the company build its capacity to maintain positive relationships with the 27 First Nations and 6 Métis Settlements in ATCO Electric's service area in northern and eastern Alberta. David has worked on company policy, is involved in developing strong links with educational institutions, and has assisted in the negotiation of good neighbour agreements with a number of Aboriginal communities.

David is also co-chair of the Aboriginal Affairs Committee of the Alberta Chamber of Resources, which undertook the Aboriginal Programs Project, a major research initiative sponsored by the Alberta Chamber of Resources (ACR), Western Economic Diversification Canada and Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The Aboriginal Programs Project was initiated as a way for ACR members to share the benefits of their experiences in working with Aboriginal communities.

Effective Partnerships

Meeting our Employment Needs

Brad Trefan

Senior Director, Alberta Provincial Nominee Program, Industry and Regional Development Division, Alberta Economic Development

Mr. Trefan started his career with a manufacturer of oil and gas production tools, Brad has been with the Alberta Government for the past 20 years. During his tenure with government, Brad has held a number of positions, encouraging value-added manufacturing in the province, reducing barriers to trade and maximizing Alberta industrial benefits in both the public and private sectors. In September 2005, Brad accepted the lead of the Alberta Provincial Nominee Program. His mandate is to oversee the expansion of the program, and increase program productivity, and improve processing times.

David Berger talked about how employers could meet their staffing needs by engaging and supporting the Aboriginal workforce and Brad Trefan reviewed the option of hiring foreign labour. Mr. Trefan gave an overview of his presentation "Preparing your Community for Foreign Workers" which appears later in this document on page 22-23.

What is the Alberta Chamber of Resources?

The Alberta Chamber of Resources (ACR) was established in 1935. The one hundred seventy members are companies in the oil sands, forestry, mining, minerals, coal, power generation and transmission, oil and gas, pipeline, and service industries. The Chamber pursues innovation in: land use management, resource management, and policy development.

The ACR is involved in the "Learning from Experience" project documenting best practices in Aboriginal relationships. It began in 2003, under Doug Golosky who employs 500 people in Northeastern Alberta, and has resulted in 106 programs described on the ACR webpage and a summary report. More than 90 companies contributed to the summary report which can be found at: <http://www.acr-aboriginalproject.org/>.

The Changing Landscape

The business community needs skilled workers. First Nation and Métis peoples are interested in participating in the economy and are a

significant potential source of labour. There is a growing awareness that business must address the gaps between employment opportunities and unemployed or underemployed Aboriginals. These employment opportunities must be managed properly so that they are not lost.

Industry's Role in Building Vibrant Aboriginal Communities

What makes a vibrant community? Mr. Berger's answer is governance. The best communities have good governance, not resources or proximity to larger communities. Industry has a supporting role in developing good governance, by supporting culture and helping to build capacity. Good governance leads to pride; is supportive; has a vision of an economic and social future that is obtainable and sees the need for infrastructure.

Success Factors

Mr. Berger stated success factors for Aboriginal workforce development include:

- Broadening the recruiting pool,
- Linking training to jobs,
- Creating a welcoming environment,
- Establishing mentoring programs,
- Encouraging networks among employees,
- Engaging the community, and
- Reaching out to students.

Mr. Berger then focused his presentation on broadening the recruitment pools and linking training to jobs providing examples of related initiatives.

Factor 1: Broaden the Recruitment Pool

Sunchild E-learning Initiative

- Piloted a job training initiative in 2000 at Sunchild for Grades 9-12.
- Courses approved by Alberta Learning.
- Different from conventional distance learning:
 - Over the Internet in real time
 - In-class teacher support.
- 2005: 10 communities with more than 300 students.
- 80% graduation rate.
- Support from Nexen, Burlington Resources, ConocoPhillips, TransCanada Pipelines, Suncor, Syncrude, Shell/Albian Sands.

Factor 2: Link Training to Jobs

Petroleum Employment Training Program

- Started in Wabasca (2000).
- Target: increased employment in resource sector
 - Production operator trainees;
 - Vehicle & equipment operators
 - Oilfield rig/maintenance.
- Safety, employment skills, industry skills, academic upgrade, self-enhancement.
- Direct industry involvement in the form of practicum's from Husky, CNRL, Encana, JACOS, Conoco Phillips, Shell, PetroCanada, Nexen, and Imperial Oil.

Mr Berger then addressed business development; communications and mentoring. Early engagement is critical. Aboriginal communities should be approached while a project is in the initial planning stage, not once it has been planned. Remember that there is no one right way to do this. What works in one community, may not work in another. He provided examples of what can be achieved by effective communications and mentoring.

Factor 1: Communications

Dover-Whitefish Transmission

- Successful start and completion of a 350 km pipeline in one winter.
- \$10 million in brushing & clearing contracts.
- 80% to aboriginal communities.
- Tight timelines:
 - Sept. 03 Request For Proposal (RFP)
 - Face-to-face meetings
 - 8 contracts in Dec '03.
- The project received ATCO Electric and Edison Electric Institute awards.

Factor 2: Mentoring

Pimee (owned by six Treaty 6 First Nations)

- Imperial Oil seconded a manager to assist this company.

Western Lakota (Aboriginal Partnership)

- Encana provided a limited-time contract guarantee to assist this company.

He concluded that, what makes a successful program is the importance of relationships, the level of corporate commitment to aboriginal relations, how commitment is communicated, early engagement and consultation, the capacity & willingness of aboriginal community, and sufficient time and flexibility.

Effective Partnerships Working Together to Achieve Common Goals

Dan Vandermeulen

Founding member, WOLF and President Emeritus, Northern Lakes College

Dan is a founding member of Woodland Operations Learning Foundation (WOLF) and has a strong interest in industry-directed vocational training. Dan had an extensive career in secondary and post-secondary education, working as a public school and college teacher and administrator since 1968. He joined Northern Lakes College in 1981 as Director of Instruction, became Vice-President in 1984, and was President from 1987-2005. A strong proponent of community-based learning, Dan helped establish the Alberta-North Post-Secondary Institutions Society, which he continues to chair.

The presenters discussed how partnerships helped the forest industry meet its training needs along with an environmental perspective on working with industry and government.

The Woodlands Operations Learning Foundation (WOLF) is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to developing and providing quality training for harvest equipment operators and woodland workers in western Canada. It is an excellent example of an industry-led partnership, which consists of harvesting contractors, forestry manufacturers, equipment suppliers, government representatives, forestry consultants, research agencies and educational institutions.

Effective Partnerships

Working Together to Achieve Common Goals

There is a need for workforce development in the increasingly complex forestry industry to provide work specific skills and knowledge. WOLF has listed and prioritized competencies. It develops in-service training, and partners with colleges and others to deliver certificate and demand training. WOLF has worked with the petroleum industry training organization Enform, to reduce duplication of courses and bring together training certificates for different industries. Other services provided by WOLF include custom training, analysis of physical demands for operators, and lobbying.

WOLF recognizes the need to create career ladders to make forestry careers more attractive to young people and to keep them in the industry and the communities. To this end, WOLF offers a range of modules on topics such as watercourse crossing, water quality, log quality, spill response, maintenance and service; and professional driver improvement.

In a work environment with increasing complexity and liability issues, training has shifted from being equipment-based to being simulator-based, which is safer, more convenient, effective and affordable. Training on different harvest equipment simulators allows for pre-employment evaluation, pre-employment skill enhancement, and post-employment diagnostics.

Mr. Vandermeulen identified effective partnerships with community and industry as the reason WOLF is able to be successful, stating that vocational training is very much in the hands of community, industry and government. He concluded that while training is expensive, no training is even more expensive.

Ian Urquhart **Alberta Wilderness Association**

Since 2004, Dr. Ian Urquhart has been coordinating an Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) protected areas initiative in the Primrose-Lakeland area of eastern Alberta. As an Associate Professor in the Department of the Political Science at the University of Alberta, he examines resource development and environmental policy questions.

Environmental groups, corporations and governments do all they can to provide and enjoy healthy and prosperous livelihoods. However, according to Dr. Urquhart they must reconsider their traditional positions for a healthy and sustainable future. Furthermore, he submitted that it is imperative that northern communities receive adequate resources to do what they find is in their best interests, and emphasized the importance of creativity, compromise, consultation and collaboration.

Creativity

All parties, including the AWA and corporations, need to think creatively “outside the box” and recognize the shortcomings of stereotyping players based on old positions. Dr. Urquhart referred to a past submission for the Cheviot Mine made by the AWA. He said that the AWA expressed a narrow view of economic livelihood, viewing nature only as a place to play and without any discussion of alternatives or other livelihoods. Dr. Urquhart argued that the AWA needed to be more creative in considering how work and nature can be part of the environmentalist position.

Compromise

Compromise is the ability to give and take, and according to Dr. Urquhart, it is a blind spot in the environmentalist perspective. It is important to think about how the environment can promote economic growth and incorporate economic dimensions into environment. It is also necessary to see the legitimacy of other actors and players.

Consultation

Consultation is the inclusion of people in the process who have an interest in the issues. Dr. Urquhart stressed the importance of going into affected communities to learn from each other. He commended an oil sands company that took the initiative to approach the AWA to ask about their concerns with an oil sands development major project.

Effective Partnerships Working Together to Achieve Common Goals

Collaboration

Collaboration is where all parties play meaningful roles in the process. It can result from consultation and a predisposition to compromise and from being creative. Dr. Urquhart offered the Hay-Zama Wetlands as an example of how genuine collaboration between the different interest groups is possible. A First Nations band, oil companies and environmentalists were able to reach a consensus that all were able to live with.

Dr. Urquhart concluded by commenting on the extent that government lags rather than leads on these types of issues. He mentioned AI-Pac's successful bid for green labeling certification, noting that government was not encouraging the company to do this. While industry and environmentalists have been thinking outside the box, Dr. Urquhart thought that it was time the government, as steward of our resources, should start to do more of the same.

Effective Partnerships Getting the Word Out Together

Estelle Carson Alberta Natural Health Agricultural Network

Estelle has been the Executive Director for the Alberta Natural Health Agricultural Network for two years. More information on commercial opportunities in natural products may be obtained at www.anhan.org.

Estelle Carson reviewed the network's purpose and its developmental steps. The objective of the Alberta Natural Health and Agricultural Network (ANHAN) is to establish relationships between producers, opportunities and potential partners. The network, which consists of grassroots interests in the natural health and wellness industry in Alberta, is a nonprofit organization that has been in existence for over two years. The 200 members include: growers, processors, health practitioners, researchers and agri-entrepreneurs.

The key to success is to develop partnerships that have the right expertise to achieve the organization's goals.

The Network Provides:

- Education services - courses and workshops, an annual conference, and demonstrations;
- Information services - newsletters, website and online current news, and lending library;
- Business development - partnered projects; essential oil distillation, from field to

medicine cabinet, assistance, cosmetics, natural personal care; and

- New initiatives in non-timber forest products and the pet food industry.

Opportunities in Herbs and Botanicals

An initial report, Natural Health Products – Market Opportunity Identification for Herbs/Botanicals in Alberta, published June 2004 by Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development (AAFRD), identifies eight herb/botanicals that have the potential to contribute to the natural health products industry in Alberta:

- Roseroot (*Rhodiola rosea*)
- Echinacea (*Echinacea pallida* var *angustifolia*)
- Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
- Milk thistle (*Silybum marianus*)
- Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*)
- Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
- Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*)
- Bear root (*Hedysarum alpinum*)

Alberta's Other Oil Industry

Top 10 essential oils identified having the potential for commercialization in Alberta include:

- Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*);
- Calamus (*Acorus americanus*);
- Giant Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*);
- Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosum*);
- Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*);

Effective Partnerships

Getting the Word Out Together

- German Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*);
- Labrador Tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*);
- Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*);
- White Spruce (*Picea glauca*);
- Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*); and
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

Tam Andersen

Country Soul Stroll

Tam Andersen is the owner of Prairie Gardens & Greenhouses and Chairperson of the Country Soul Stroll in Sturgeon County. Over the past 21 years, she has built her horticultural and agri-tourism operation, at Bon Accord. Tam offers several on-farm festivals each year and is involved in several agri-tourism pilot projects – the Country Soul Stroll and Visit the Country Guide. More information can be found at www.countrysoulstroll.ca.

How Do You Develop Agri-tourism?

Tam Andersen reviewed her own business, the Country Soul Stroll and how agri-tourism can be developed. The Country Soul Stroll is a group of agri-tourism operators with different products and experiences that offer a self-guided driving tour, two cuisine events, and an educational agri-cultural experience. Supporting organizations include: Travel Alberta, Sturgeon County, City of St. Albert, Namao Ag Society, Redwater Ag Society, City Palate, and over twenty local operators of farms, orchards, ranches, u-pick gardens, artists and rural museums in the Sturgeon County region.

The mission of the Country Soul Stroll is to provide educational ag-inspired tourism opportunities for the public to experience country culture and generate economic growth opportunities for operators." The objective is to stimulate a viable rural tourism industry for farms and agri-tourism operations, targeting families, women, and seniors in Edmonton and the surrounding region.

The initiative provides a rural shopping experience and an educational opportunity to bridge the urban-rural gap with a free educational activity for visitors to participate in at each of the host locations. Activities include: visiting a working farm; going on a horse drawn wagon ride; learning how pea-butter is made; learning about miniature goats, alpacas and a

Saskatoon orchard; going on a honey bee 'safari', and visiting a grain elevator museum.

Ms. Andersen noted that in 2003, 47% of Albertans took part in an ag-tourism activity. Agri-Tourism is growing because:

- The target tourist sector is increasingly traveling by car;
- Trips are shorter with last minute planning;
- People want new "real" experiences;
- Families want to bond; and
- Parents want kids to know how food grows.

The Road to Success

"The key is to Market - Market – Market."

Team work is required and using sub committees with specific assignments is an effective way to distribute the work. She stressed the importance to recognize successes, champions and sponsors.

Keys to Success

- Clusters work.
- Combine Agriculture, Arts & Heritage.
- Must Create On-farm Revenue for partners.
- Experience is essential.
- Need critical support from Alberta Agriculture, local municipalities, and Travel Alberta.

She stated that delegates had diamonds on their soles as their back yard is a country adventure for the tourist and was unique. She asked:

- Your Place – are you ready for company?
- Your Space – are you ready to share it?
- Have you assessed your insurance and risk exposure?
- Can you create the theatre to make it fun?

Conclusion and Recommendations:

- Embrace New Ideas;
- Work together to create great opportunities;
- Build Relationships; and
- Network with like minded champions.

Bill Walker

City of Grande Prairie

Bill Walker has been with the City of Grande Prairie over 32 years. His current position is Protective Services Director. He is presently one of the senior leaders for the City of Grande Prairie and has chaired the City's succession planning process since its inception.

Tapping into the potential of the region's Aboriginal population is a key component of these succession plans.

Bernice Shadow

Project Coordinator/Researcher, Grande Prairie Regional College

Bernice Shadow is an experienced relationship builder between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. She assisted a school district in northern British Columbia build positive working relationships with the aboriginal people. As well, Bernice was instrumental in guiding the signing of two Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiatives agreements in Northern Alberta. Bernice is also a private consultant. Bernice is of Cree ancestry, was born in High Prairie, grew up in Fort St. John, and currently resides in Grande Prairie.

Bill Walker and Bernice Shadow spoke on the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI) and the experience of the City of Grande Prairie.

Labour Market Pressures

Ms Shadow noted that Canada is facing a skills shortage that will be exacerbated by a low Canadian birthrate and an aging workforce. By 2016, labour force growth in the Canadian population is expected to be zero. The demand for skilled workers is growing and as global competition for those workers increases, the labour market will only get tighter.

Why Aboriginal Employment?

Labour market pressures for the Aboriginal population are different as it is the fastest growing in Canada. It is expected there will be 1.6 million Aboriginal people by 2016. She said engaging Aboriginal people in the workforce will increase performance, productivity and creativity, meet legal requirements and show a commitment to diversity.

The Bottom Line...

- Aboriginal peoples are a growing, young, local, and accessible labour force;
- Education levels are rising – but gains are still needed;
- Aboriginal leadership want to work more closely with industry; and
- Aboriginal people are a growing economic force.

Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI)

The AWPI was created to align Canadian labour market needs with Aboriginal labour. Its goal is to educate and inform employers about the advantages of hiring Aboriginal peoples. Its mandate is: "To increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) in the Canadian labour market." Its purpose is to develop a coordinated, holistic and nation-wide approach that will:

- Relate existing training to real employment opportunities, and enhance economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in their communities;
- Meet workforce needs with skilled Aboriginal employees; and
- Assist successful workplace integration by promoting welcoming environments and community-level support.

AWPI Partnership Strategy

AWPI is a principle-based partnership initiative committing to common goals. An employer steering committee drives the process of increasing Aboriginal participation in the labour market. This consists of:

- Constructive cross-cultural relations;
- Linkages to the Aboriginal labour force;
- Promote employment and career development for Aboriginal people; and
- Promote economic development opportunities for Aboriginal people.

City of Grande Prairie Work Force Projection

As the lead for Grande Prairie's initiative, Bill shared his knowledge and experience about successfully building partnerships to engage the Aboriginal workforce. The City of Grande Prairie is the first city in Canada to sign an Aboriginal Workforce Partnership Agreement, (March 2005) demonstrating its commitment to building effective partnerships.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Aboriginal Partnerships

The City has revised its hiring processes, focused on professional development, created a performance management system, and focuses support on high performers among other initiatives.

To date the City has established subcommittees to oversee various aspects of the project; developed a website with AWPI information (<http://www.cityofgp.com/citygov/dept/hr/awpi/default.htm>) and conducted a workplace review of recruitment and selection; collective agreements; and policies and procedures.

The City of Grande Prairie has several Aboriginal related projects underway such as:

- Communication Plan;
- Misconception Training and Education;
- Developing Inventory of Positions;
- Identify High-Growth Positions and Skills Shortages;
- Review Contracting Policies and Practices;
- Build Sustainability; and
- Monitor and Evaluate Success.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Partnership Toolbox

Alla Honcharuk

Consultant, Volunteer Initiatives Unit, Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta Community Development

Alla has been with the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta Community Development for the past four years. She provides training to non-profit/voluntary sector organizations, facilitation services, as well as coordinates volunteer recognition programs.

Ms. Honcharuk reviewed the process needed to form mutually beneficial partnerships. This information is included in the Working in Partnership Kit prepared by Alberta Community Development. Additional information may be found at www.cd.gov.ab.ca/wrf.

Partnerships - What and Why?

Partnerships range from the simple sharing of resources to more sophisticated relationships where collaborations jointly develop the mission and strategies of the partnership and even influence the vision and mission of each partner. Non-profit organizations are faced with difficult financial realities, while the private sector has moved from being simply donors to wanting increased involvement with projects that they support. Pooling resources are often the only way to achieve the critical mass to move forward. Agencies increasingly need to define their mission by broadly-based objectives, rather than by activities, which means looking for others to share those same objectives.

Using the Partnership Kit

There are three broad types of partnerships:

- Partnerships with other non-profit groups
This type is usually based on an overlap of mission and strong commitment to a joint goal, and generally involves an attempt to maximize the resources of member organizations.
- Partnerships with the private sector
The exchange of a cheque and a thank you letter is not a partnership but it may be the start of it. Building equality in a partnership is important to create effectiveness. One of the goals of this kit is to help agencies identify the expertise and resources they can bring to their private sector partners.
- Partnerships with government agencies or programs
Increasingly government is considering the agencies they associate with as partners rather than clients. Accountability required of government means the agency is faced with some bureaucracy and formality. However, there are benefits: it not only maximizes the opportunity of the existing program, it often means the partners are “at the table” when future programs develop.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Partnership Toolbox

Key Steps in Forming Partnerships

She reviewed the five steps in forming a partnership which are addressed in considerable detail by the Partnership Kit

1. Know yourself
2. Know what you want in a partnership – identifying potential partners
3. Establish compatibility – setting the partnership framework

4. Getting the details right – key points for the partnership agreement
5. Making the partnership work

“The secret to making a partnership work is simple: meet commitments and communicate, communicate, communicate!”

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Engaging People

Kelley D. Moore, MCIP Regional Intersectoral Committee Coordinator, Saskatchewan Learning

Prior to assuming the role of Regional Intersectoral Committee Coordinator for the Province of Saskatchewan in January 2006, Kelley was a senior planner with the City of Saskatoon. Saskatoon was nationally recognized for leading the development and implementation of a Local Area Planning Program devoted entirely to citizen engagement and the creation and implementation of comprehensive community-based plans for its most challenged communities. Through the Canadian Institute of Planners, Kelley is involved in an ongoing international planning mission to the West Indies, where she is assisting to implement a Comprehensive Community Improvement Plan Program in Trinidad.

Why engage people? When do you engage people? What degree of participation should citizens have? These were some of the questions addressed by Ms. Moore in her presentation. People want to be engaged, noted Ms. Moore, particularly in matters in which they have large emotional stakes, or decisions that are visible or have large financial consequences. Citizens correctly assume that they know something about planning without having studied the subject.

The degree of participation and when to engage citizens in the process needs to be determined at the outset. Citizen involvement and responsibility can be viewed on a continuum from non- or contrived participation in decision-

making, such as directing citizens on an already decided upon course of action, to full citizen-control through self-determination or devolution. The level of responsibility then determines when citizens are involved in the process. Lesser participation would lead to citizen involvement at the end of the process, whereas fuller involvement would mean participation even before the plan is developed.

Citizens' attitudes about being engaged will vary, advised Ms. Moore. Some citizens rely on community decision-makers to make decisions while other citizens are encouraged by communities to take ownership. It can be difficult for citizens to reach psychological ownership but, it is important to find first points of contact or entry to integrate people into the community, particularly in communities with large transient populations. She identified various techniques to transfer responsibility to citizens including community profiling, mapping, focus groups, workshops, and community meetings.

The focus of the presentation shifted to an examination of techniques to facilitate positive and productive meetings. Participants reflected on meetings they had attended, identifying the lack of preparation, poor facilitation, lack of focus and poor follow-up as common characteristics of bad meetings. Ms. Moore emphasized the importance of preparing for meetings, emphasizing that it is critical that the meeting must have a purpose. Once the purpose is determined, then the content, participants, and logistics can be worked out.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Engaging People

Ms. Moore then talked about the art of facilitation and understanding group processes. She noted that it was important to set the stage for any meeting by outlining the purpose, expected outcomes, and clarifying the roles of participants. Another critical factor in facilitating group and participatory decision-making processes is asking the right questions. Ms. Moore used an agreement gauge to illustrate differing degrees of acceptance of decisions.

She also talked about using these skills to navigate the “groan zone” in order to uncover the source of any problems, clarify what needs to be changed, gain commitment from the group

to proceed, brainstorm solutions and explore options.

Once options have been synthesized and refined and decisions have been reached, the final step is to take action. At this stage, priorities need to be set, a timeline and budget schedule developed, resources dedicated and the initiative widely promoted.

Engaging people, or consultation, is about relationship building, concluded Ms. Moore. This requires a range of skills and techniques which can be developed.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Preparing your Community for Foreign Workers

Brad Trefan
Senior Director, Alberta Provincial Nominee Program, Industry and Regional Development Division, Alberta Economic Development

Brad started his career with a manufacturer of oil and gas production tools and equipment. Brad has been with the Alberta Government for the past 20 years. In September 2005, Brad accepted the lead of the Alberta Provincial Nominee Program. His mandate is to oversee the expansion of the program, and increase program productivity, and improve processing times.

Alberta’s labor strategy is to increase skill levels of Albertans, facilitate mobility of labour to Alberta, and increase immigration. Brad Trefan presented information regarding the hiring of foreign skilled workers under the Alberta Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) which is part of Alberta’s labour strategy.

Immigration in Alberta

To increase immigration, it is important to have a welcoming community. Alberta has a comprehensive approach with the federal and provincial governments attracting immigrants. The provincial government is working on policies in consultation with the federal government, and other stakeholders to recruit more foreign skilled

workers, increase the attractiveness of Alberta to immigrants, provide better support to immigration initiatives, and increase the collaboration and consultation across partners/stakeholder groups through the Provincial Nominee Program.

One of Alberta’s challenges with immigration is that the province needs more input and control in the process to get immigrants. Most immigrants currently go to Toronto or Vancouver. The Provincial Nominee Program helps address the issue, and encourages immigrants to move to Alberta. The PNP expedites immigration to the province. It is a partnership between the province and the federal government. The province selects the immigrants and the federal government supervises and approves those choices. It is an employer driven program where corporations identify what skills and people they need and then hire the foreign workers when they arrive in Alberta. The focus is on attraction, but it is also working on retention.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships

Preparing your Community for Foreign Workers

The PNP Program is operated by the Alberta Government in cooperation with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) which expedites the permanent resident immigration process for skilled workers such as managers, university graduates and trades people. The program includes skilled workers, their spouse/partner and dependents. Pilot projects are underway to study the feasibility of hiring unskilled foreign workers.

The Provincial Nominee Program addresses critical-skill worker shortages through: attracting and retaining skilled foreign workers and by retaining foreign students who are in post-graduation employment. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) controls the process: provincial priorities may differ from federal objectives.

Process

The Provincial Nominee Program is for permanent full-time position(s) in Alberta. It is employer driven as to meet employers needs only employers can nominate foreign workers under this program. Nomination of specific individuals is based on the requirements of employees, provincial criteria, and federal criteria.

The employer completes and submits "Occupation Business Case" (ABPNP 001) for an allocation of a nominated employee. The Provincial Nominee Program unit reviews the application and provides a decision to the employer regarding the occupation and number of provincial nominees allocated.

The Application Criteria

Hiring foreign workers is a process. Employers *must show that Albertans cannot fill the position* before foreign workers can be hired. Other criteria include:

- Must be for an individual who meets required qualifications,
- Must be for permanent, full-time employment in Alberta,
- Must meet provincial employment and wage standards, and
- Must not conflict with existing collective bargaining agreements.

The application must include:

- Information on employer's operations (includes financial statements),
- Detailed position description and rationale for need,
- Licensing/regulatory requirements and the process for credential assessment and recognition,
- Benefits accruing to Albertans and to the Alberta labour market,
- Company must outline their Alberta recruitment activities and plan including supporting documentation such as advertisements, and
- An overview of the employer's employee benefit plan.

Candidates are evaluated on: age, education/credentials and work experience, language skills, adaptability, spouse's education and language; relatives in Alberta/Canada, education and work experience and the types and numbers of visits to Alberta and Canada.

Expedited immigration processing time is approximately 6 – 18 months. The most common cause of delay is missing or incomplete information.

Community

Foreign worker retention depends on successfully integrating the person into their job and community. It is important to note that communities should prepare for foreign workers. Making them feel at home will help attract and retain them.

Assistance from employers is required regarding: temporary accommodation, health care and Social Insurance Number, banking, schooling and/or English as a Second Language education, living in Alberta, weather, shopping, leisure, Canadian social customs, care of children and who to contact in case of emergency situations. "Welcome to Alberta" - provides basic information about living in Alberta and can be accessed at www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop/.

A Toolbox for Vibrant Communities and Effective Partnerships Innovation Toolbox

Mary Robertson Lacroix Manager Innovative Rural Communities Project, Ontario

Dr. Robertson Lacroix specializes in project design, management, and strategic coordination of provincial rural-based projects. She is currently managing Ontario's Innovative Rural Communities Project. Mary has designed and delivered courses in rural studies at both the University of Western Ontario and the University of Guelph.

Ray Lacroix Senior Research Associate, Innovative Rural Communities Project

Having spent over 31 years at Bell Canada, Ray Lacroix has an extensive background in the telecommunications industry. Ray was a founding member of the Ontario Rural Council and has acted as a director of the executive.

A Toolkit for Innovation

Communities can build a critical mass for innovation and become known for their innovative thinking. They reviewed and used group exercises from a toolkit that they are developing to encourage innovation in rural communities.

They announced that the toolkit was to be launched shortly after the conference and can be found at www.innovativecommunities.ca. The material may be copied if recognition of the source is given. They asked for feedback on the application of the tool kit.

Become Known for Innovative Thinking

The toolkit includes the Innovative Rural Community Index. The index examines 40 characteristics of people, institutional networking and community factors that foster innovation in rural and northern communities. It should be noted that not every innovator or community has all of these characteristics all of the time, but innovators are usually passionate and engaged in their community.

Delegates participated in a group exercise using this index to demonstrate how to develop a profile of the readiness of a community for innovation. The main point of the exercise is to initiate discussion on a community's strengths and weaknesses. A community is complex as its members have a diversity of viewpoints. This exercise facilitates debate where contentious issues can be discussed.

Achieving Vibrancy

Monica Coneys Shosholoza! Productions

Monica Coneys is a motivational speaker that isn't afraid to do things differently. She incorporates theatrics and dance with an African flavor into her powerful message inspiring individuals to "Shosholoza" or "Dance to the beat of your own drum!" Her experiences as a teacher in India, human resources manager in South Africa and economic development officer in Saskatchewan are the foundation of her expert and imaginative presentation.

Monica Coneys shared her thoughts on bringing communities together through music, dance and experiences from her past as part of Nelson Mandela's Rainbow Nation in South Africa.

She described northern people as "innovative, creative and strong," highlighting the need to unite. Ms. Coneys gave her interpretation of Einstein's equation $E=MC$, where "MC is the stuff, and E is the energy." According to Ms. Coneys, if you don't have the stuff, then start with the energy. She encouraged delegates to use the diamonds that exist within their communities, whether that's natural resources, people or ideas and transform them into projects and initiatives to further partnerships and vibrancy.

A flower model was used to represent ways to create more prosperous communities around resources individual communities already possess. The flower's center represents the communities existing resources, while the petals represent the potential growth communities can

experience through partnerships that draw on those existing resources.

Ms. Coneys included students from High Level in her presentation showcasing them as examples of innovation in their high school.

Delegates participated in creative activities illustrating the need for individual energy and involvement in the process of community unification.

Luncheon Speaker

Rick Boychuk Editor, Canadian Geographic

Born and raised in St. Paul, Alberta, Rick Boychuk is a graduate of McGill University. He spent 10 years working in daily newspapers (the Edmonton Journal and the Montreal Gazette), has written two books and taught journalism at Carleton University. He won a gold National Magazine Award for his first feature story in Harrowsmith and, under his leadership, Canadian Geographic has been nominated for more than 50 national magazine awards, was named Magazine of the Year in 2001 by the National Magazine Awards Foundation and has been named Best Magazine of the Year three times by the Canadian Society of Magazine Editors.

Rick Boychuk discussed how to create vibrant communities and retain people in them. His strategy was to use natural beauty to create a place where people would want to live.

The Question: What do you have that no one else has?

Mr. Boychuk started his luncheon presentation with this rhetorical question then related it to the magazine he works for. To start with, Canadian Geographic is one of the top 10 magazines in Canada. Moreover, Alberta's circulation is growing the fastest of any province in Canada. This is important because the Canadian Geographic magazine's mission is to explore how Canadians inhabit Canada. Many of the issues facing how Alberta is inhabited are also reflected in the rest of Canada. He says that the magazine tells stories in the publication that people find beautiful and insightful; the magazine does not tell you how to grow roses or repair your fence. Mr. Boychuk compares it to a luxury, much like a Compact Disk or an evening

at the movies; people do not want to give luxuries up even in hard times.

Mr. Boychuk asked, how does the idea of luxury and people's reluctance to give it up relate to the conference? Where is your grace and beauty in Northern Alberta? Do you get it from urban areas or do you find it here?" What reputation is Northern Alberta building?" How do you want others to think about Northern Alberta?

Northern Alberta has one of the largest forested areas in the world. He said "take care of what you have and promote it. Images and emotional appeal should be used to promote and retain people to a region by developing a myth of an area. People commit to communities where there is a purpose and quality of life. Communities must be home, not just a place of work.

A measurable variable as to whether communities are homes is the attitude of youth: "Do they just want to leave or are they interested in staying?"

The Answer; Northern Alberta

What do you have that no one else has?" Northern Alberta. No one else has Northern Alberta. How local residents view it, will determine how others view it.

"If you consider it a gravel pit to be emptied, others will consider it the same way."

To avoid this pitfall, cultivate beauty and invest in mythmaking to attract people to the area. Make Northern Alberta more than just a place to work. When this is done, people will not want to give it up and move, they will want to come to the area and stay.

Introduction to Working Groups

The Northern Alberta Development Council conducted in May-June 2005, a survey of northern organizations of their local and regional priorities.

The NADC categorized the results into ten priority groups. Challenge North participants received a background report containing a summary of the priorities and examples of current activities addressing previously identified

priorities. Also included were questions to stimulate discussion towards identifying strategies to address the priorities.

Conference participants were able to choose two of 20 small group discussions. The groups' task was to suggest strategies to address priorities that could be applied by participants in their respective communities and organizations; the NADC or appropriate Ministries.

Working Groups Economic Development and Tourism

Highlights of Sessions

Three working groups were held on Economic Development and Tourism. Session report backs listed the following strategies:

- Change Travel Alberta's strategy to take into account rural and remote communities who need help developing their initiatives.
- Have a youth representative on the Northern Alberta Development Council.
- Establish an ongoing link to research bodies that impact Northern Alberta.
- Consider the importance of the shadow population.
- Use Aboriginal employment to address labour shortage.
- Develop a quick process for immigration.
- Make use of part-time human resources such as baby boomers and retirees.
- Develop and market Aboriginal tourism products and experiences and educate Albertans about Aboriginal tourism opportunities.
- Educate Southern Alberta about the north.
- Use Northern Alberta resource money for infrastructure funding in Northern Alberta.
- Develop better, more economical air, bus and rail transportation systems to encourage tourism and economic development.
- Use a shadow population study to justify changing funding formulas.

Collaboration

- There must be greater need for cross cultural awareness to facilitate collaboration.
- There is a need to coordinate leaders in the north to work together – reports get made but next steps are not followed up on.

Agriculture Sustainability and Youth Retention

- Sustainability of rural communities, agriculture and the family farm is a concern. Something is needed to bring people back to the family farms. Agri-tourism may be one solution.
- Youth retention and opportunities for youth must be addressed.

Inflation pressures

The pressure to rapidly develop resources and the lack of skilled/unskilled labour is pushing inflation up and soon the north may become uncompetitive. As an example, regional projects require travel but the price of gas has reduced the amount of people volunteering. Administrative grants that are available are inadequate.

Tourism

Travel Alberta is not paying attention to what is happening north of Edmonton – using the Rockies as a hook to get people to Alberta does not get them to Northern Alberta. There is a lack of funding for tourism product development and promotion. The Tourism Destination Region's (TDR) have limited capability to help with on-going initiatives.

More regional and local information about tourism development possibilities needs to be available. Tourism guidelines and a system for central bookings and promotion of tourism packages need to be developed. Opportunities are many – how do we get started?

Communities need tourism when the current development slows down. Tourism is hard to promote when resource development is booming – tourism is a major contributor to economic development and has to be promoted that way.

Increased investment in northern roads must be made to facilitate tourism and economic development as there is a lack of circuit routes (only one road in and out). Good signage and rest areas along our highways need to be developed.

Lack of Vision

Visioning from communities is missing. Communities need to take ownership of developing their own vision.

Additional suggested strategies include:

- Put money back into Northern Alberta where the resources have been extracted such as:
 - Rural initiatives – take advantage of new rural innovation funds.
 - Look at colleges/universities in Alberta – put more funding into rural learning institutions.
- Recognize tourism as a stream of economic development. It is good to make recommendations for tourism but it is important that all follow-up be done through a central point/group/ or organization.

- Develop a “Dinosaur Trail” from Drumheller to Grande Prairie.
- Develop: eco-tourism; industry tours; a tourism mentorship and entrepreneur program; partnerships, tourism packages and central booking; more presence of the north in southern festivals; and more tourism education inside aboriginal communities. Encourage tourism students to come north.
- Be more strategic and seek out experienced local representatives to partake in conferences like Challenge North – people who have been involved in building these vibrant communities.
- Inform communities about opportunities regarding potential pipelines.
- Don’t miss the part-time expertise of those who have retired.
- Encourage the seasonal or shadow population and their families who are coming through to work here to live here as well.
- How do Métis settlements compete with high growth urban centres? Opportunities exist elsewhere in dying communities – they are the ones that need help. There should be more focus on the smaller communities in the north, for example, bring economic development seminars to smaller communities and hamlets so that they become more knowledgeable on economic development opportunities.

Working Groups Education

Highlights of Session

One working group was held on Education (Kindergarten to Grade 12). The session report back presented the following strategies:

- Use schools for community activities.
- Raise awareness amongst parents, community and community leaders on education issues.
- Address funding framework for transportation for small high schools.
- Make use of video conferencing.
- “Break the mould” of how government does business with northern communities.
- Use Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools to enrich the attraction of our northern

communities by equipping schools with arts, social, health and recreation facilities.

- Fix the funding framework model.

Value of Schools

Consult with the communities - happens all the time - but government doesn’t listen. Schools are the lifeblood of the future. Participants stated that more than dollars are required for solutions. There needs to be a better definition and implementation of basic or quality education. For example, is music an extracurricular activity or basic education?

Working Groups Education

Recruitment, Community Capacity and Quality of Life

Recruitment of teachers to rural communities is an issue. Staff burnout is constant. Teachers in small schools have to teach multiple courses, some of which may be outside of their specialty. Families choose to relocate to get “basic education” as some small rural high schools don’t offer programs that are needed. Some students that graduate do not have the level of education as those from urban centres.

Governance Strategies

The current form of education administration needs revisiting. There needs to be greater cross ministry funding and collaboration. Social infrastructure planning should link health, social services, education, culture, recreation and the arts. Can we afford dual education systems (public and Catholic)? Are there missed opportunities for collaboration?

Alberta Ministries need to talk to each other and be flexible on how school facilities are used. Efforts should be made to make better use of schools in off-hours. Urban services should be decentralized. Community enrichment makes communities more attractive.

Streaming students beginning in grade 7 to pursue trades or university is forcing students who are too young to make decisions of this importance. The teaching method is different in the Youth Apprenticeship Program – “great program initiated by NADC and Alberta Apprenticeship.” There needs to be a better alignment between secondary curriculum and post-secondary requirements.

There needs to be an effort to increase the general awareness of education issues and increase parental and community involvement and support.

School Divisions and Ministries need to look outside the box. Possible approaches include: joint appointments for teachers, rotate teachers not students, personal interaction and balance needed, class scheduling month by month, not semester by semester.

Role of Telecommunication Services and Applications

The completion of the Alberta SuperNet provides Northern Alberta significant opportunities in developing education services

All school children need high speed internet – not just some. The Provincial Government needs to recognize that rural Alberta is on dial-up internet access. Internet is not always available at affordable cost in rural communities and is time sensitive.

A clearinghouse is needed to address a province-wide need to support schools in ensuring telecommunication equipment is compatible and to train facilitators to teach how to effectively use video-conference technology.

Funding Formulas

Funding Formulas need to address northern needs and conditions. The Province must recognize the difference between rural and urban education. A more efficient system is needed. Government is not aware of the importance and impact of geography, however, transportation and distance are only part of the issue. Travel time on buses is too long for students from rural isolated communities. Government created geographic nightmares by having schools 70-80 miles apart. Existing boundaries make no sense.

The Commission on Learning did not address specific rural needs. The funding formula has weird idiosyncrasies and must be reviewed. Small schools by necessity require special funding. Funding for transient students and credits earned should be reviewed.

Government money is required to not only to set up programs but to continue the programs. Pilot projects need to continue on after the pilot period is over. Divisions can’t carry on with these projects on their own.

Highlights of Sessions

Two working groups were held on post-secondary training. The session report back presented the following strategies:

- Revamp rural area funding policies for post-secondary institutions.
- Implement flex work/day release programs Where students can work part-time and go to school part-time.
- Implement transition to work programs to give people the ability to get into post-secondary training or work force.
- Market the trades as another option to university or college.
- Involve industry and business more actively in the education system.

Career and Life Planning

Career and life planning was seen as an important aspect of high school preparation that is currently underdeveloped. Courses such as Career and Life Management (CALM) need to place greater emphasis on career planning, encourage post secondary education in any field, and should be made a priority in the high school curriculum.

Group participants wanted to see the trades promoted more, including the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) as an alternative to the traditional college or university route. Programs like Think Big and the Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) that promote post-secondary learning should be given additional funding and be expanded to include partnerships with NAIT and Finning. It was suggested that industry-education partnerships should be encouraged.

The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website should be revamped to make it easier for students to navigate, including a one stop grant system for student funding applications. NADC's involvement in bursaries was encouraged and more funding for bursaries was recommended.

Funding

Funding inadequacies were addressed, as was the need to better promote northern colleges like Keyano, Lakeland and Athabasca. The creation of a funding model for communities with a population greater than 5000 was encouraged.

Concerns were raised that federal programs targeted to assist partnership building between education and industry has gone by the wayside.

Students still encounter significant barriers in their pursuit of post-secondary education and are disadvantaged by the inflexibility of many programs. A variety of approaches were suggested including a flex work program to allow time sharing between job and school, and a day release program that would provide employees with job specific training written into employment contracts. Evening courses, transferability of advanced placement course credit between institutions were recognized as potential areas for improvement.

Succession planning was seen as a critical approach to ensure a trained workforce can assume experienced roles within the various industries. The trades require new trainees to replace a retiring baby boomer generation. Mentorship programs are one way to train younger employees to replace retiring workers. By partnering with educational institutions, industry leaders could potentially reduce program restrictions and acquire the skilled workforce they require.

Additional Suggested Strategies:

- Focus on bringing in foreign workers or workers from other Canadians. Provide language and cultural education for target groups.
- Put more money into research.
- Fund adult students returning after career change or to advance their education.
- Profile northern leaders in the northern labour market.
- Increase collaboration between colleges and universities to improve student programming.
- Campaign to make students aware that they are valuable members of the community and to encourage them to return to the north after graduation from post-secondary.
- Share facility space.

Working Groups

Human Resources

Highlights of Sessions

Two working groups were held on human resources. The session report back presented the following strategies:

- Deliver education to where people live and recruit locally.
- Early community, businesses and industry involvement in student education, including elementary and junior high involvement.
- Retain northern residents. They are the best promoters of northern living and the northern quality of life.
- Eliminate drug and alcohol problems through preventative education.

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Northern Alberta faces many challenges in attracting and retaining a skilled labour force. Several discussions surrounded the need to recruit locally, recognize home grown talent and promote and capitalize on the positive aspects of northern communities.

It was suggested that municipalities make it a priority to encourage local students to return after they complete their post-secondary education and to involve small business in these recruitment initiatives. Better access to post-secondary education within northern communities is needed, as is availability and access to upgrading programs, internet access and training. This is especially true for students in the trades. Concerns were voiced regarding support for first and second year apprentices, as well as those with three and four years of experience.

Lack of partnerships with industry was raised as an issue. It was suggested that industry needs to develop human resource strategies that include partnering with students training in their field. Training could be tailored to the employers needs; gaps in employment could be recognized and addressed; while ongoing training and educational requirements could be established to benefit both students and industry.

It was determined that there is need for both skilled and unskilled workers. One option presented was that unskilled workers could be recruited, trained by companies and could then be used to recruit others. Concerns regarding high starting wages for unskilled jobs were

raised, such as what is a reasonable pay scale for senior and permanent employee wages in unskilled jobs if new employees are starting at \$15.00 per hour.

Persons with disabilities and youth were recognized as an underutilized work force. Groups suggested promoting northern opportunities and focus recruiting in regions with high youth concentrations.

Another suggestion was to make the north the training field for professions like social work. This would not only benefit the students who would get hands on experience, but communities, who would benefit from the services. Communities have to prepare for these students such as make adequate housing available. It should be noted, however, that the best solution is to recruit experienced professionals who intend on remaining in the community.

The issue of government induced dependence was addressed along with a proposal to the focus on the 'culture of aspiration' that exists within Aboriginal communities. Group members also wanted to see merit recognition, not just affirmative action for Aboriginal groups.

Other strategies suggested:

- Have wage benefit parity of government departments comparable to industry.
- Have industry subsidize human service positions.
- Industry to build in incentives such as affordable housing, health benefits, etc. on a sustainable basis.
- Explore how Aboriginal communities and industry are partnering elsewhere.
- Municipalities and others to identify and promote what communities have to offer.
- Increase the number of apprentices per journeyman and develop creative ways to deal with the "on-the-job" training component.
- Incentives to local businesses to help with local apprentice training.
- Hold a career fair for students to see where they can find employment and where industry/communities can establish partnerships.
- Counties could assist in getting high speed internet hooked up for small providers.

- Get management/ leadership training for employers to create a positive work environment and build loyalty.
 - Practice employee sharing.
 - Use recruitment dollars to retain employees- for example bonuses for loyal employees, instead of a new recruitment campaign.
 - Make contact with newcomers to the community using community services like the Welcome Wagon.
 - Host a get to know you evening where businesses/ industry/ clubs and non-profit can set up a booth and the community can network with each other.
 - Host some conferences in southern Alberta to give exposure of Northern Alberta.
-

Working Groups Housing

Highlights of Sessions

Two working groups were held on housing. The session report back presented the following strategies:

- Promote partnerships between developers, financial institutions, three levels of government, business, industry, and realtors to maximize resources.
- Lobby industry and government to break barriers to enable local producers of building supplies, particularly northern mills, to wholesale supplies locally.
- Enable innovative financing options.
- Encourage industry to sponsor or build permanent housing that could be sold, rented or donated back to the community.
- Lobby government for alternative programs to provide affordable housing for sale such as revitalization of co-operative housing, subsidized mortgages and rent-to-own options.
- Lobby for increased capital funding in rural areas for seniors lodges.
- Discount for municipalities to purchase crown land for development.

It was agreed that there is a lack of available, appropriate and adequate housing for all segments of the population: the hard to house; low and moderate-income earners; seniors; and the Métis and First Nations population.

It was also agreed that there is a general lack of understanding and awareness regarding low-cost and affordable housing. This can lead to barriers in garnering community support due to the “Not in my Backyard” (NIMBY) attitude. It

can also lead to confusion in discussing “affordable” housing.

The government defines “affordable” as housing with rents 10 per cent below market value for purposes of the Affordable Housing Program. The groups noted that this definition does not reflect the reality of what is affordable given the inflation gap between market rates and incomes. It also does not take into account the lack of resources for building private and low-cost housing for ownership given that capital funding is only available for rental developments. The lack of capital funding available for seniors housing was also viewed as an issue particularly for smaller communities.

Government rules and regulations, such as minimum lot sizes and zoning bylaws, were viewed as negatively impacting the affordability of homes. It was suggested that municipalities establish housing priorities and promote more innovative building practices such as revising building codes to better utilize space. Planning needed to take into account location and access to services such as transportation. It was also noted that finding and attracting developers to come to northern communities to build homes was a challenge.

The lack of available land for development was identified as a major issue for municipalities. The cost to secure crown land at the current market value, combined with increasing prices for building supplies and labour, contributes to the high cost of development. Innovative financing options and alternative government programs were offered as a way to provide affordable

Working Groups Housing

housing for private ownership. Establishing partnerships to maximize resources was viewed as critical for any strategy.

Other strategies identified included:

- Review municipal planning practices to determine how to support the development of more housing stock such as higher density development.
- Mandate the establishment of affordable housing areas through the municipal planning process.
- Provide better transportation services to harder to access communities to retain and attract residents.
- Encourage educational institutions to provide more local training of tradespersons and undertake housing projects.

Working Groups Transportation

Highlights of Sessions

Two working groups were held on transportation. The session report back presented the following strategies:

- Develop a funding model which takes into account the economic generation of the North.
- Listen to communities' transportation needs.
- Make an east/west highway the priority for Northern Alberta.
- Support the Northern Highway Strategy with the addition of Highways 855, 58, 88 and 986.
- Coordinate a unified Port of Prince Rupert Access Strategy.
- Encourage levels of government to collaborate on rail competition and affordable service issues.
- Redirect aviation fuel taxes to airport and airstrip operation as airports in Northern Alberta are feeders and supporters of other airports and healthcare systems..

A Key Concern

Considerable frustration was expressed regarding the need for on-going meetings on air, rail and road issues, shifting provincial priorities, and lack of progress largely due to the replacement of key personnel in government

What Needs To Be Done?

Existing transportation strategies are in place and the following activities should be undertaken to implement them.

- All northern organizations i.e., industry, school and health boards, municipalities etc. should stand behind one comprehensive

northern transportation strategy and promote it with one voice.

- The Province should examine the British Columbia model of investing resource revenue in their northern region.
- Transportation permits and taxes should be re-evaluated to ensure that taxpayers are not subsidizing corporate use of roads.
- Funding formulas should use an economic generation per-capita funding formula rather than just a per-capita formula to reflect the economic contribution of the north and the related demands on infrastructure.
- Better access and input into Alberta Transportation's budget planning process is required.

Additional Strategies

Aviation

The need to improve aviation and air services continues to be an important issue.

- Increase funding for local airports to support travel, industry, medical, forest fire suppression and other uses.
- Give municipalities access to the aviation fuel tax for airport operations.
- Establish a technical committee of all northern aerodrome managers.
- Purchase and operate the Edmonton City Centre Airport by a wider based stakeholder group.

Rail Transportation

- Increase competition between rail companies, or facilitate competition where it does not exist.

- Examine options to reduce the CN monopoly and increase competition.
- Improve rail utilization to reduce truck traffic which would improve road safety and reduce wear on roads.
- Lobby northern Members of Parliament to increase federal awareness of northern transportation issues such as rail.
- Facilitate better integration between the different modes of transportation to reduce truck traffic.
- Re-evaluate transportation use payments such as permits or taxes on industry's road use.
- Increase policing to enforce traffic laws.

Road Infrastructure

- Ensure adequate funding for feeder roads as feeder roads to highways are very important, but are being neglected.
-

Working Groups Infrastructure

Highlights of Sessions

Three working groups were held on infrastructure. Session report backs listed the following strategies:

- Seek alternatives to bussing students living on Métis Settlements to schools.
- Advocate designated funding of Northern Roads Strategy.
- Make Alberta Transportation and Infrastructure aware of economic generation of roads and highways.
- Assist with funding rural components of water treatment.
- Shift revenue funding away from per capita basis.
- Have fair revenue generation recognizing revenues generated from the north.
- True regionalization of water and sewer services.
- Legislate flexibility in standards for different regions.
- Increase cell phone service for remote areas.
- Address the high costs of the deregulation of electric power.
- Encourage partnerships on construction projects to address costs and labour issues.

Telecommunications

Costs; lack of access to cell and broadband internet services; and usage barriers were discussed by participants. The cost of providing the last mile of connecting service is high (e.g. ½ mile of line in Dixonville costs \$27,000).

Participants recommended that better use of wireless technology should be made rather than further investment in wire. They were concerned that there was a lack of towers for cell phone service. Cell access is critical in remote areas under development. Furthermore, broadband access for high speed internet must be provided in rural regions at a reasonable cost to provide an acceptable level of access. Dependency on single line fibre optic cable is a problem when the line is lost.

Communications, such as cell coverage, broadband service, and high speed internet, should be viewed as necessities as any other utility (power and gas) and costs should be amortized over a longer period of time. Strategies ranged from forcing competitors to share tower space for cell phone coverage to providing provincial subsidies for purchase and operation of communication infrastructure equipment in rural communities. Video conferencing equipment is becoming a necessity to eliminate travel costs to attend meetings and foster local training.

Working Groups Infrastructure

Water Treatment and Distribution

Water standards, cost of infrastructure, quality sources of water, training and delivery of services were discussed at length.

Standards

The province needs to be more flexible in their regulations and standards for water treatment, for example, treated water does not need to be used for toilets. It was suggested that different regions require different regulations.

Participants felt that standards for water treatment plants have become too stringent for municipalities to afford constant upgrades. The province should take into consideration the cost of compliance due to increasing the standards for water treatment. Water Treatment Plant standards change so quickly, new plants don't meet standards almost as soon as they're built. Urban centres are required to treat water to a higher standard than what is affordable in a rural setting. For example, rural residents in the M.D. of Saddle Hills and M.D. of Birch Hills use surface water run-off in dugouts that have minimal treatment.

However, water treatment standards are critical for good health. There was discussion over the responsibility level to provide good, treated potable water and that maybe it should be more than a municipal responsibility. It was noted that Sweden's infrastructure is funded federally. If higher standards are required, then provincial and federal funds should be made available or increased to the municipalities to do upgrades.

Additional Costs

There is a lack of water treatment and distribution infrastructure, as well as aging and poor infrastructure that needs to be replaced in rural areas and the cost of construction is continually increasing. Provincial government funds hamlets but doesn't fund rural co-ops. Scarcity of population in rural area makes water treatment plants additionally expensive to support. Water co-ops should be fostered to ensure all rural residents get same amenities as urban, same as natural gas and electrical lines.

Training

If rural standards are raised, municipalities also need funding for system monitoring and

maintenance staff. Upgraded systems are affecting the ability to hire qualified operators. There needs to be clearer training regulations and more flexibility in training times and schedules.

Quality of Water Sources

Good water sources are difficult to find. There should be better protection of water sources (lakes and rivers) for potable water and habitat with a greater emphasis on riparian area cleanup for rivers. There also needs to be an increased consideration of the accumulative impact on downstream affects of water usage.

Service Delivery Partnerships

Senior governments should place greater emphasis on funding regional partnerships of infrastructure and use of rural/remote skilled people to test rural water wells.

Power Deregulation

Participants advocated that the Province should study: the results of deregulation of power; how deregulation has affected communities and individuals; the options of re-regulation; and alternative sources of energy including northern hydro potential.

Community Facilities and Quality of Life

More provincial funding and expertise must be allocated to assist in the development of recreation and other amenities in smaller communities. This is necessary to increase the quality of life and to attract and retain investment and skilled employees.

The implementation of the Alberta SuperNet has the potential to make a big impact on improving the quality of life in northern communities. Financial support, however, must be provided for the last mile of connections, as well as, implementing applications and use of this infrastructure.

Schools and Hospitals

Existing northern hospitals and schools are not being used to the optimum advantage for residents. Further investment is required to build new or to upgrade schools, hospitals and other facilities. There is a shortage of schools in growth areas and Métis Settlements. The impact of centralization and funding formulas results in bussing students long distances.

Tourism Infrastructure

Participants were concerned over the lack of signage identifying tourism areas.

Highways and Roads

Considerable concern was raised over the little progress by Alberta Transportation to build or improve roads such as Highway 88 and the East-West Connector between Peace River and Fort McMurray, in spite of the considerable work that has been placed in developing economic arguments for these roads. Ministries need to be more appreciative of the positive impact on northern communities of investment in infrastructure such as in roads. There were complaints that municipalities were expected to maintain higher standards than the province for items such as bridges. The Resource Road Program is under funded and needs to be a higher provincial priority.

Funding and Regulations

Ministries need to understand the accumulative impact of regulation changes on the funds that communities have available for all infrastructure and other needs. There was a strong consensus that current funding formulas must change from per capita funding. Participants felt that the north does not have fair revenue sharing with the province. A greater portion of the revenue generated in the north should be returned to the north because of the pressures on municipalities due to the development underway.

Municipalities and the provincial government must consider creating partnerships for construction projects to help reduce labour shortages and costs.

Working Groups Environment

Highlights of Session

One working group was held on Environment. Session report backs listed the following strategies:

- Determine what to do about how climate change affects Northern Alberta.
- NADC to strategically align with upcoming provincial land use policy.
- Establish ways to engage communities to identify water and air issues and solutions.

The working group discussed issues related to climate change, economic development, air and water strategies, recycling and forest education.

Climate Change

The group posed the following: how will Northern Alberta be affected by climate change and what do northerners want to do about it? It was noted that the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) had been silent on climate change. It was not clear to municipalities how to have input on this issue.

Economic Development and Sustainability

The group discussed the challenges of balancing economic development and environmental sustainability. It was observed

that the ability of economic development is dependent on provincial strategies, such as the provincial land use policy. It was proposed that the NADC to be strategically aligned with the upcoming provincial land use policy discussions.

There are many competing interests so a range of options must be identified and the government, public, and special interest groups engaged to understand them. A participant remarked that “one rule” for Alberta does not work for each municipality or watershed for that matter. A key strategy was to identify and involve groups in establishing engagement issues and identifying challenges for the region of Northern Alberta.

The clash between municipalities and other levels of government was voiced as a concern. The group indicated that too much responsibility is taken away from municipalities. Accordingly, there is a need to establish greater municipal capacity and to advocate for more involvement and empowerment. It was suggested that the NADC set up the debate to talk about who is in charge and how economic, community and environmental interests can be balanced, possibly through a series of town meetings.

Working Groups Environment

A specific example provided related to hog barns. It was expressed that regulations leave municipalities unable to make decisions. It was also noted that enforcement is not proactive but based on complaints if enforcement happens at all. It was asserted that municipalities and local stakeholders must be included in decisions.

Recycling

It was acknowledged that recycling in northern rural communities has a long way to go. It was suggested that ways to recycle in less populated and remote areas be identified and a tool developed by the NADC to enable municipalities to plan and build a business case. Northern Coordinated Action for Recycling Enterprises (Northern CARE) could disseminate the information.

Air and Water Strategies

With land and water strategies in place, the group identified the need for an air strategy. It

was suggested that the NADC could act as a liaison between the public and industry, with a reference made to the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA).

It was suggested that watershed advisory committees be established in Northern Alberta to determine priorities for the region, to then be communicated by the NADC. It was noted that Hay River and Chinchaga River are starting committees while Beaver River in Northeast Alberta already has one in place.

Other strategies proposed included supporting forest and resource values through youth, elders and women.

Working Groups Health

Highlights of Session

One working group was held on health. The session report back listed the following strategies:

- Recruit and retain health care professionals.
- Change funding formula for health regions to address unique northern needs.
- Address mental health needs.

Health is viewed as vital to the quality of life and economic growth of northern communities. Communities need an adequate level of professional staff and facilities in order to deliver adequate healthcare. The group discussed health strategies grouped into the following seven themes:

Recruitment and Retention:

A two-pronged approach to recruitment and retention for municipalities was suggested: 1) work with health regions to attract health care staff; and 2) influence policy change in conjunction with the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC).

It was suggested that the NADC in partnership with the Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP) hold a forum for community health councils on recruitment and retention. It was noted that it was important to retain what you have and then recruit. The best recruiter is a happy, retained employee.

Recognizing and addressing the needs of recruits is critical. Communities have to go the “extra mile” to welcome young health professionals into the rural north. Integrating new people into community while understanding cultural differences and recognizing their unique needs, help recruits connect to the community and feel like they belong. Quality of life is also enhanced by cultural and recreational services and amenities. Finally, it was suggested that ways to assist physicians in the licensing process through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta be examined.

Higher pay to compete with other provinces and to reduce poaching of staff from the public health system to corporations was identified as a strategy.

It was also noted that it was time to think outside the box in terms of incentives and benefits, for example offering subsidized housing.

Finally, encouraging youth to become doctors and providing larger bursary incentives were identified as strategies to “grow our own” healthcare professionals.

Funding formula to address northern needs

Funding by population for northern health regions is the lowest in the province. Advocating change to the funding formula to address unique northern needs is a priority, particularly to account for the large northern shadow population.

Mental Health

The general lack of mental health services was identified as a priority issue.

Education of Professionals

Communities need multi-disciplinary teams, to address health services. Strategies include increasing the number of nurse practitioners in small communities, as well as increasing the scope of their work and that of other healthcare professionals. Increasing the number of spaces to train doctors in Canada and using underutilized facilities for educational facilities to bring more training opportunities to local communities were other strategies identified.

Education of Public

Educating citizens about the proper use of medical services was identified as a key strategy.

Continuing Care

Concern was expressed about a lack of facilities and staff to address long-term care needs and support aging in one's own community.

Working Groups Protective Services

Highlights of Sessions

Two working groups were held on protective services. The session report back listed the following strategies:

Policing

- Allow communities to report shadow population for seasonal industry in the census to be reflected in the policing funding formula.
- Policing funding to follow the population and geography.
- Pressure the government for more funding for policing.

Youth Substance Use Issues

- Devise rural strategies to develop sustainability in addressing youth substance use issues including different funding criteria for rural communities.
- Encourage youth talking to youth (peer matching).
- Increase protective factors for youth with support for parents, schools, communities, and prevention outreach.

Policing

A policing discussion largely focused on the inequitable funding of policing in northern and rural municipalities. The unique challenges of these municipalities are not taken into consideration in provincial policing planning.

Police workloads were considered greater in northern and rural areas. The number of police members per community was viewed as inadequate given the large transient population and expansive geographic areas to police. In Grande Cache, for example, there are only five police officers. Police are required to work and be on-call for too many hours. The amount of administration was regarded as burdensome, consuming funding and taking police officers off the street. It was suggested that more administrative staff is needed to get officers back into the community, working at crime prevention and traffic enforcement.

It was noted that census statistics currently used for funding do not substantiate the need for more police officers but statistics on crime rates clearly show there is a need for more officers.

Working Groups

Protective Services

The transient population uses community services and has an impact on communities, yet this population is not reflected in funding allocations, as there is no standardized process for counting the shadow population. The group recommended that the policing funding formula should take into account the transient population and the geography of the municipality. In addition to changing the census to account for the shadow population, it was suggested that the government be pressured for more funding. It was also suggested that municipalities should be making decisions for policing funding and a large pool of municipalities be created to provide policing services.

It was mentioned that the Alberta Government was training Special Constables in highway enforcement, weapons and prisoner transport. It was suggested that hiring more Special Constables to work with RCMP would assist with the workload. Finally, it was also suggested that penalties for crimes should be increased, with consequences fitting the crime and parents being held more accountable for the actions of their children.

Youth Substance Use Issues

Detoxification facilities and programs

The absence of detoxification facilities for youth under 18 in Northern Alberta results in northern youth being sent to Edmonton or Calgary for treatment. This is expensive and limits the support parents can offer youth. There needs to be rural strategies with a rural funding formula in order to be sustainable.

The group acknowledged that long-term treatment and support is needed for both youth and their parents. It was suggested that money and resources be allocated to treatment programs that include ongoing support in the community once youth has transitioned from treatment and is over 18 years old. Youth facilities should have a holistic approach and address more than detoxification, such as life and job skills, residential and outpatient treatment and ongoing follow-up. It was also suggested that programs such as “Collective Kitchen”, “Healthy Babies”, “Headstart”, and “Life Skills” be reinstated.

Risk factors

The group discussed why youth were at risk and turning to drugs. It was suggested that the lack of parental support, availability of money due to the booming economy and the view that drugs and alcohol are acceptable in Northern Alberta were contributing factors. High-risk factors identified for youth included poor connections at school, poor social skills and abusive homes, as well as issues with bullying and peer pressure. Concern was also expressed about the 16/17-year-old group falling through cracks in the system, as they might not be in school where programs and staff are available to provide steps towards intervention and police are unable to pick them up and place them in treatment or intervention programs.

To lower risk factors, protective factors including caring parents, schools and communities, need to be in place. The group noted that it was encouraging that more community groups were coming together to recognize issues and take steps to work on them. The following suggestions were made to support giving youth ownership in their school and community: youth talking to youth mentorship, peer counselling in high schools, community education and outreach campuses with other youth, support to young parents, a parent-link program, and building and improving upon prevention presentations and strategies that already exist in schools across Alberta.

The legal system

The group voiced concerns with the apathy of officials such as lawyers and judges who do not seem concerned enough about the youth and the bigger picture. Concern was also expressed about having appropriate consequences for drug possession and crimes. It was indicated that rather than treating substance use problems, the addict is penalized by criminalizing the activity, but it was suggested that a criminal record will affect the victim longer and with more impact than the drug use itself. If intervention can be more effective, it was proposed that the addiction should be treated first, and the crime second. The group also made reference to Youth Justice Committees in Alberta Métis Settlements, noting that the RCMP appear to have better results by having youth working in the community.

What is today's promise and tomorrow's reality?

A panel of five gave their perspectives on what they heard over the three day conference. It also gave conference participants an opportunity to reflect on which ideas and knowledge they could take away to build vibrant northern communities and effective partnerships.

Ian Urquhart

**Associate Professor, Political Science,
University of Alberta**

Dr. Urquhart was most impressed by two things at the conference: 1) the passion and enthusiasm for the north; and 2) the considerable amount of frustration with senior levels of government and the failure of those institutions to provide the resources needed to get on with building the north's future.

It is time to rethink political institutions, suggested Dr. Urquhart, putting forward the idea that Northern Albertans might be better served by a Northern Affairs ministry with more resources. Or maybe it was time to radically rebuild institutions and urge politicians to open the debate on how the north should be governed by asking whether electoral systems and local and regional political boundaries make sense.

Dr. Urquhart concluded by suggesting that more attention should be given to how land and geography shape our administrative and political life. For example, river basins could be the practical unit of organization or administration as opposed to the township system.

Rick Boychuk

Editor, Canadian Geographic magazine

Mr. Boychuk reinforced his message of the importance of art, culture, and beauty in Northern Alberta. He recognized that the north is managing a very difficult period and is experiencing the growth pains and pressures to provide the services needed to accommodate the influx of people. However, he stressed that the north has to think about the intangibles as well, such as the people in the communities who are growing up with great vision and affection for the country and who will immortalize places and tell stories. Writers and artists need support, nurturing and a place in the north's future.

There has been a lot of growth and diversity in the north and people willing to take risks that will serve all northerners well into future, noted Mr. Boychuk. However, he perceived that the biggest obstacle facing northerners, common to humanity, is overcoming intercommunity rivalries to have a more regional perspective.

Bernice Shadow

**Project Coordinator/Researcher, Grande
Prairie Regional College**

Bernice Shadow described her business as partnership building - building collaborative relationships between colleges, departments and people. She talked about the need for youth to remain in their communities and the need for adults to, "instill a sense of pride in our northern children." She also encouraged employers to train aboriginal people and work in partnership with them because these working relationships give aboriginal people strength and help them feel like they have a voice. Learning aboriginal culture is an ongoing process, one workshop doesn't make you an expert.

"There is strength in working together."

Sylvia Kennedy

**Businessperson and President, High Level
and District Chamber of Commerce**

Ms. Kennedy stressed the importance of attracting and retaining people in the North and responded to the question posed by Rick Boychuk the previous day: what does the North have to offer? The north is vibrant and vital and full of freedoms, opportunities, energy, a positive outlook and dreams, asserted Ms. Kennedy. She emphasized the importance of engaging people to take ownership of issues and "grab them" when they first come into the community in order to keep them in the community. She also referred to Monica Coney's presentation, saying that there is a lot of "stuff" (energy) in Northern Alberta but we need to put it all together, stressing the importance of home grown solutions and partnerships. Ms. Kennedy concluded with the quote, "Success is a journey, not a destination," and expressed that she was looking forward to taking the journey with northerners.

Panel

What is Today's Promise and Tomorrow's Reality?

Michael Ouelette

Businessperson and NADC member

Northern Alberta needs to be restructured to maximize each area's individual growth potential, asserted Mr. Ouelette. He urged northerners to look at changing the way things

have been done, for example, undertaking the regionalization of services. Mr. Ouelette also emphasized the need to consider our youth and plan for them in the face of growing social issues. Municipalities have to come together to solve a lot of the problems he concluded.

Ministers and Northern MLA's Question and Answer

Introduction

Ministers and MLA's were invited to the Question and Answer Session but due to inclement weather, they were unable to attend. *NADC Chair Ray Danyluk, MLA Lac La Biche-St. Paul and Frank Oberle, MLA Peace River, responded to delegate questions.*

Delegates asked the following questions to be relayed to Ministers and Northern MLA's. The absence of the ministers may have affected the types of questions that were asked.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

The north is always reacting and needs a more sustainable planning regime. Where will Northern Alberta be in twenty years?

The Alberta Aboriginal Policy Framework was approved by the Government of Alberta and released to the public in September 2000, but it seems like no one is aware of it. What is being done to promote the Aboriginal Policy Framework at the provincial level?

Given the importance of the north to the province, is it advisable to have a dedicated ministry for the North to bring together the social and economic issues of the region?

Advanced Education

Funding and evaluations for post-secondary institutions are based on the number of students, number of jobs they get and satisfaction with courses. When will the funding formula reflect the additional role that colleges play in community development and capacity building?

Some post-secondary institutions in the north best serve students in rural and remote Northern

Alberta by being small, but are penalized by the funding formula for being small. What can be done to improve the funding formula for smaller post-secondary institutions in the north?

The Aboriginal dropout rate is high and it is difficult for them to get back to school. The new apprenticeship program does not give them enough money to be able to go to school and support a family. When will Aboriginal students be granted greater funding to allow them to go back and complete their education?

It is difficult to compete with high paying industries and to attract and retain people in rural and northern communities. Does it not make sense to invest in these people who bring new technology and knowledge to municipalities by providing student debt relief to them for each year they live in rural and northern areas? In the last budget, \$250 million was put towards an education endowment fund. The endowment fund should be increased to \$1-2 billion with the interest reinvested in education and youth. Does the province believe in investing some of the surplus?

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

"*A Place to Grow: Alberta's Rural Development Strategy*" is another great document that was recently published, but given the imbalance between urban voters and MLA's and rural ones, how are the ideas such as the ones in this document going to be implemented?

We know how much rural areas contribute to urban centers. What is being done to ensure that urban centers give back to rural communities?

Community Development / Municipal Affairs

Youth are our future. Municipalities and community boards were challenged to make dedicated council and board positions available for youth representation.

Economic Development

The North generates a considerable amount of the province's wealth. When is the north going to start keeping northern resources in the north?

There has been a move towards recognition of the importance of Aboriginal capacity building, education and involvement in the economy. However, incentives to support Aboriginal entrepreneurship such as regulation and grant programs are lacking. Aboriginal entrepreneurship can drive the economy, but how can it be promoted?

The high wages in the oil and gas industry take away workers from other lower-paying industries as well as pulling students out before completion of school. How can other industries compete with wage rates in the oil and gas industry?

Education

Rather than a focus only on students, a more holistic approach needs to be taken to focus education on the needs of colleges, communities, and employers. When will there be a focus on graduating students who are employable within colleges, communities, and industry?

Schools do a good job of promoting post-secondary studies, but not trade careers. What can be done to encourage and inspire students to pursue careers in the trades?

Schools recognize the demand for trades instruction, but vocational facilities are expensive and credit based funding makes it difficult to cover the costs of these courses. When is Alberta Infrastructure going to provide better funding for vocational facilities?

Energy

Government has allowed oil and gas companies to drill whenever and wherever they would like. When is the government going to reassess landowner rights?

Health and Wellness

Manning has a hospital that is only three-years old, but has no doctors. How can we recruit and retain more doctors in the north?

Crystal methamphetamine use is on the rise with our youth. What can be done to get better treatment in the north?

The health funding formula is not fair in the North where the population is so spread out as equal does not necessarily equate to fair. When will the funding formula be changed?

Human Resources and Employment

Colleges have responded to the government's call to be creative in delivering education programs in new and different ways. However, students are unable to take advantage of them due to the rigidity of regulations regarding personal funding related to the Skills Investment Program. What can be done to make these programs more accessible to students?

Infrastructure and Transportation

A considerable amount of time is spent educating various transportation ministers only to have them move to other portfolios or be replaced. What can be done so that we are not starting from scratch time and time again?

The previous minister was supportive of a study on the East-West Connector from Peace River to Fort McMurray. Will this support continue with the new transportation minister?

Roads are a huge issue, but we also need to look at rail, which are run by private companies committed to profit and not the communities they serve. What can be done to encourage rail monopolies to care about the area in which they operate in addition to profits?

Justice and Attorney General

The justice system is in "a bad way". When are appointed judges going to be replaced with ones elected by and for the people?

Ministers and Northern MLA's Question and Answer

NADC Chair Ray Danyluk closed the conference reinforcing NADC's commitment to promote and advance the north. He stated that the NADC will make sure that our politicians and representatives know about the positive

attributes and the challenges of the region, and most importantly, the passions we have for Northern Alberta.

Reception

Storyboards

Conference delegates were treated to an evening reception graciously hosted by the Town of High Level. Throughout the evening, delegates had the opportunity to view a series of storyboards highlighting current examples of community vibrancy and successful partnerships. The purpose of the storyboard display was to generate discussion as well as provide ideas for delegates to take back to their communities. In total fourteen examples were showcased.

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC)
- Alberta North
- Commuter Air Access Network of Alberta (CAANA)
- Forgotten Jewels of the Peace
- Lesser Slave Forest Education Society
- Saskatoon Local Area Plan (LAP)
- Southern Institute of Technology (SIT), New Zealand
- Malaspina; Sayward, BC; Osooyos, BC; Pincher Creek, AB
- Iron Horse Trail
- Mysteries of the Forest Game Board
- Warner Women's Hockey School
- Northern Lakes College Trades and Technology Entrance Program

Storyboards can be accessed through the NADC website at www.nadc.gov.ab.ca.

Recognition Awards

Jeannie Kalyn accepted the Excellence Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of her longtime friend and partner Tom Baldwin, former Executive Director of the NADC. Tom Baldwin was an enormous contributor to recycling in Northern Alberta. He was a Board member of Northern CARE for 10 years and was

instrumental in developing the organization to reach its many recycling goals. His steadfast goal to improve the quality of life in Northern Alberta was demonstrated clearly in his ongoing commitment to creating recycling initiatives through the various organizations he represented.

His vision, strength, intelligence, leadership, tact and diplomacy created partnerships among a wide variety of municipalities, business corporations, and not-for-profit organizations that have withstood the test of time. Those partnerships created initiatives that enabled recycling programs to be set up in areas that could otherwise not have had the level of service they require.

Through the growing pains of Northern CARE during its establishment, Tom Baldwin was a steadfast beacon of common sense and practicality. He was a true gentleman and visionary, and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Berry Heinen from the Mackenzie Forest Education Society spoke about the Tom Baldwin Memorial Scholarship that was set up by the society.

Special recognition was given to Gary Pollock, Mayor of Swan Hills for his four years of service to the NADC. Mr. Pollock specifically highlighted his involvement with the Northern LINKS program and various opportunity seminars put on by the NADC. These seminars address topics ranging from value-added forestry to post-secondary transitions.

Evening Entertainment

Delegates were entertained by the Etch-A-Sketchers, an eclectic group of young men specializing in sketch comedy and theatre performance. The group has preformed for a number of northern audiences and provided delegates with some comic relief during the banquet meal.

Feature Film

To conclude the evening, delegates were privileged to view the film *Hank Williams First Nation*, which was produced and filmed in the Peace River region of Northern Alberta. The film is based on an elderly Cree man who decides that before he dies he must travel from his remote Indian Reservation in northern Canada to visit the grave of his hero Hank Williams. This is a story of the unique challenges and characters that make up a community.

Preceding the film was a presentation by the film's lead actress Stacy Da Silva. Ms. Da Silva spoke about her experiences on the set of *Hank Williams First Nation*, her passion for youth and her involvement with "Going Miles," a program that brings to light the strength and light of Aboriginal people. She also shared a few thoughts on behalf of the film's director Aaron Sorensen. The film was in some sense a miracle, a project that the experts said could not be done, but is now nominated for a number of awards both in Canada and abroad. Mr. Sorensen believes communities need examples like the film to give reassurance that miracles are available, and that all they need is a bit of faith and craziness. He believes we must not be afraid to stand up and try to do the good things that others say can't be done.



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July 2006

Message from the Executive Director
Northern Alberta Development Council

It was a pleasure for me to share the Conference Proceedings for **Challenge North 2006: Today's Promise - Tomorrow's Reality.**

The Northern Alberta Development Council team is proud to have hosted this successful and exciting event. A combination of northern hospitality, excellent speakers, timely topics and enthusiastic delegates made this conference our best to-date.

The conference was made possible thanks to the generous support of northern communities, industries, business associations, and the Provincial Government. Their support was greatly appreciated. As well, the Council would like to thank the conference delegates for taking the time to attend, while making an important and significant contribution to the discussions at the conference.

The work done at the conference has led to the formation of several NADC working groups that will carry on the strategies identified by the delegates. Work on the suggested strategies will continue and communication back to stakeholders will continue.

The Northern Alberta Development Council encourages you to provide your feedback to the council members and team. The Council looks forward to your participation in the next Challenge North Conference scheduled for 2009.

Dan Dibbelt,
Executive Director

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Regional Economic Development Initiative for Northwest Alberta



Delegates

Name	Company / Organization	Community
Darcie Acton	Northern Lakes College	Slave Lake
Norm Adolphson	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview
Ronnie Anderson	Gift Lake Metis Settlement	Gift Lake
Dale Anderson	Gift Lake Metis Settlement	Gift Lake
Richard Aubin	Municipal District of Smoky River No. 130	Falher
Glen Auger	Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	Caslan
Wayne Ayling	City of Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie
Joan Aylward	Grande Prairie Regional College	Grande Prairie
Cathie Bailey	Town of Grimshaw	Grimshaw
Vic Beland	Town of Grande Cache	Grande Cache
Rachelle Bergeron	La Chambre économique de l'Alberta	Edmonton
Renee Bernier	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Jennifer Bisley	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Marvin Bjornstad	Portage College	St. Paul
Steve Blanton	Town of Manning	Manning
Ben Boettcher	Birch Hills County	Wanham
Chad Boone	Grande Prairie Regional College	Grande Prairie
Dennis Boudreau	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Peter Braun	M.D. of Mackenzie No. 23	La Crete
Diane Brown	Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce	Whitecourt
Norman Brownlee	Sustainable Resource Development	Peace River
Barbara Buck	Saddle Hills County	Spirit River
Allan Buck	City of Cold Lake	Cold Lake
Pamela Burdek	Northern Alberta Development Council	Lac La Biche
Rory Campbell	Alberta Economic Development	Edmonton
Darlene Cardinal	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Elaine Carmichael	Town of Slave Lake	Slave Lake
Carole Carpenter	Town of Smoky Lake	Smoky Lake
Tammy Chavis	Town of McLennan	McLennan
Michael Cheeks	Alberta Economic Development	Edmonton
Jerry Chomiak	Town of High Level	High Level
Molina Chow	Malaspina University-College	Vancouver
Patricia Colling	Alberta Innovation & Science	Edmonton
Cody Courtenay	Malaspina University-College	Nanaimo
Kim Courtoreille	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
John Croken	City of Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie
Kamie Currie	Sirolli Business Centre	Fairview
Gerry Cyr	AADAC	High Level
Satya Das	Cambridge Strategies Inc.	Edmonton
Anne Davidson	Alberta Community Development	St. Paul
George de Rappard	CAANA	Edmonton
Mica Dell	NAIT	High Level
Stan Delorme	Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	Caslan
Audrey DeWit	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Dan Dibbelt	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Matt Dika	Village of Rycroft	Rycroft

Grant Dixon	Town of Rainbow Lake	Rainbow Lake
Oliver Doherty	Fishing Lake Métis Settlement	Fishing Lake
Lorraine Donovan	Town of High Level	High Level
Stu Dornbierer	Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd.	Vancouver
P.M. (Paul) Driedger	Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23	La Crete
Al Dumas	MD of Northern Lights #22	Manning
Lorne Durocher	Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	Caslan
Joyce Dvornek	High Prairie School Division #48	High Prairie
Susan Ellis	Yukon Department of Economic Development	Whitehorse
John Eriksson	M.D of Big Lakes	High Prairie
Carmen Ewing	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Kurt Ferguson	Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement	Paddle Prairie
Darlene Firth	MD of Northern Lights #22	Manning
Ellis Forest	Town of High Level	High Level
Wayne Forrester	Town of High Prairie	High Prairie
Michele Fournier	Town of McLennan	McLennan
David French	Alberta Children's Services	Edmonton
Gary Friedel	CAANA	Edmonton
Allen Geary	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Paul Gervais	Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development	Edmonton
Tom Ghostkeeper	Métis Settlements Strategies Training Initiatives Society	Edmonton
Richard Giele	Malaspina University-College	Port Alberni
Brenda Giesbrecht	Northern Gateway Regional Division	Valleyview
Peter Gilchrist	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview
Michael Gismondi	Town of Athabasca	Athabasca
Trevor W. Gladue	Northern Lakes College	Grouard
Don Good	Town of Peace River	Peace River
Julie Gour	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Stephanie Grocholski	Little Red River Forestry	High Level
Doug Hart	Grande Prairie Regional College	Grande Prairie
Shane Hartman	Malaspina University-College	Nanaimo
Peter Hawryliuk	Northern Lights Health Region	Fort McMurray
Tim Haysom	Western Economic Diversification	Edmonton
Margaret Heath	City of Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie
Bernadette Hebert	Village of Nampa	Nampa
Roxanne Heinen	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Helen Henderson	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Glenn Hennig	Northeast Persons with Developmental Disabilities	St. Paul
Larry Houley	Peace River Regional District	Dawson Creek
Corinne Huberdeau	Northern Alberta Development Council	Lac La Biche
Sandy Isaac	Village of Rycroft	Rycroft
Ernie Isley	Town of Bonnyville	Bonnyville
May-Britt Jahelka	Albian Sands Energy Inc.	Fort McMurray
Gary Johnson	Regional Economic Development Initiative	High Level
Graham Kedgley	Northwest Corridor Development Corporation	Vancouver
Scott Kelly	Manning & Area Economic Development Society	Manning
Kurt Kimball	AADAC	Wainwright
Agnes Knudsen	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River

Delegates

Carolyn Kolebaba	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Bill Kostiw	Clear Hills County	Worsley
Lynn Kreke	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Jean-Marc Lacasse	City of Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie
Boyd Langford	Town of Rainbow Lake	Rainbow Lake
Jerry LaRose	Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	Caslan
Evens Lavoie	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Carl Leary	Ainsworth Eng Can LP	Grande Prairie
Dalton Longson	County of Grande Prairie No. 1	Clairmont
Ron Longtin	PREDA	Berwyn
Wendell MacEachern	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Phyllis Maki	Lakeland Community Development	Bonnyville
Val Marshall	Alberta North	Slave Lake
Jan Mazurik	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Clarke McAskile	Town of High Level	High Level
Karilee McCrae	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Dan McDonald	Malaspina University-College	Nanaimo
John McDonough	Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development	Edmonton
Marianne McKee	Travel Alberta North	Athabasca
Mike Mihaly	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
R.A. (Bob) Miles	Northern Sunrise County	Peace River
Peter Mitchell	Athabasca University	Athabasca
Laureen Mury	AADAC	Cold Lake
Bill Neufeld	Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23	Ft. Vermilion
Mark Norris	GLG Consulting Ltd.	Edmonton
Frank Oberle	Peace River	Peace River
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Larry Pana	Alberta Economic Development	Edmonton
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Bonnie Paulovich	Peace River School Division	Manning
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Garry Peterson	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview
Gary Pollock	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Greg Radstaak	Smoky River Economic Development	Falher
Joanne Rever	Northern Lakes College	Grouard
Jim Reynolds	Town of Fairview	Fairview
John Ritchie	Kikino Silver Birch Resort	Kikino
Maurice Rivard	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Kris Rollheiser	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
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Tim Shipton	GLG Consulting Ltd.	Edmonton

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Tim Stone	Saddle Hills County	Spirit River
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Jill Tomlinson	Alberta Human Resources & Employment	Peace River
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Gail Tucker	Sustainable Resource Development	High Level
Gail Ungstad	Human Resources and Employment	Slave Lake
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Sam Warrior	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
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Sue Welke	Alberta Urban Municipalities Association	Edmonton
Allan Wells	Elizabeth Métis Settlement	Cold Lake
Joulia Whittleton	M.D. of Mackenzie No. 23	Fort Vermilion
Don Wilson	Travel Alberta	Edmonton
Michael Winrow	Footner Forest Products Ltd.	High Level
Sam Wipf	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview
Sara Wong	Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation	Edmonton
Perry Woodward	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Corrina Wozny	Village of Rycroft	Rycroft
Harvey Yoder	Northern Alberta Development Council	Peace River
Merv Zadderey	Town of Fox Creek	Fox Creek

