



Framework B.C. First Nations Economic Development Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

- BC First Nations communities have relied upon their natural resources, such as fisheries and forestry, as primary economic sources for thousands of years. Today, many of the natural resources are rapidly depleting due to climate warming, pollution, urbanization and/or pest epidemics (i.e. mountain pine beetle infestation). Economic growth and diversification provides opportunities for First Nations to encourage new, expanding and emerging economic and business developments to create sustainable communities for the future. The challenge for BC First Nations communities is to develop viable economic development opportunities, entrepreneurial initiatives and build associated capacity.
- To assist in meeting this challenge by enhancing economic investment and development, and increasing self-reliance and capacity, First Nations have called on the BC First Nations Leadership Council to facilitate the development of a BC First Nations Economic Development Strategy.
- The purposes of this First Nations-driven Strategy are: to close key gaps that exist between First Nations and other British Columbians, including income and employment levels, and quality of life indicators; to create a climate to attract investment and generate wealth; and to foster relationships and create partnerships and opportunities for economic development. This Strategy will achieve this purpose by setting out a collective vision, goals and principles, and concrete action items in the following key areas: relationships; legislation and policy; capacity; structural; financial/capital; and sector-specific.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE.....	1
2. CONTEXT	1
3. BC FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	2
a. Vision	2
b. Goals	2
c. Principle	2
d. Relationships.....	2
e. Legislation and Policy	2
f. Capacity	3
g. Structural.....	3
h. Financial / Capital	3
i. Sector-Specific.....	4
4. IMPLEMENTATION.....	4
5. MEASURING PROGRESS	4
APPENDIX A: LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	4

2. CONTEXT

- Political
 - Key agreements
 - Leadership Accord establishing First Nations Leadership Council
 - New Relationship
 - Transformative Change Accord
 - Key agreements signal a new era of unity and strength among First Nations and increased willingness on the part of all First Nations and governments to explore new ways of working together
- First Nations Economic Development
 - Historical background (i.e. historic economies; limiting economic opportunities for First Nations through, i.e. Indian Act; changes in economic opportunities available to First Nations and British Columbians; increase in partnership opportunities; etc.)
 - Statistics with respect to First Nations (income levels, employment, contributions to local and regional economies, etc.)
 - Description of the First Nations economy
 - Description of differences in legislative and policy frameworks on- and off-reserve and pros/cons

- Organizations/entities working on economic development and key documents/reports (including key findings)
- Moving Forward
 - “Stage is set” for progress on economic development
 - First Nations and others recognized need for a coordinated province-wide economic development approach
 - Many partners have come together, committed to improving access to, and management of, economic opportunities by First Nations (if complete, reference Economic Development Partners Agreement)
 - Short description of process to create BC First Nations Economic Development Strategy / Action Plan
 - BCAFN, FNS and UBCIC resolutions
 - Fall 2007 Regional Forums
 - February 2008 First Nations Economic Development Assembly

3. BC FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- The purposes of this First Nations-driven Strategy are: to close key gaps that exist between First Nations and other British Columbians, including income and employment levels, and quality of life indicators; to create a climate to attract investment and generate wealth; and to foster relationships and create partnerships and opportunities for economic development. This Strategy will achieve this purpose by setting out a collective vision, goals and principles, and concrete action items in the following key areas: relationships; legislation and policy; capacity; structural; financial/capital; and sector-specific.

a. VISION

- Components may include:
 - Self-determination / First Nations-driven
 - Eradicating poverty
 - Prosperity and well-being of First Nations and First Nations people, and other British Columbians
 - Respect for cultural diversity
 - Sustainability
 - Collaboration and Partnership
 - Wealth management

b. GOALS

- Components may include:
 - Good governance
 - Sustainable economies and prosperous communities
 - Capacity of First Nations to effectively lead and manage economic opportunities
 - A highly skilled and fully employed First Nations workforce
 - Standard of excellence in operations
 - Profitable and sustainable First Nations businesses
 - Sufficient revenues/resources to support effective governance
 - Maintain traditional economies
 - Create a positive investment and economic climate
 - Provide access to capital
 - Develop necessary research and data to inform action and measure progress
 - Facilitate effective partnerships between First Nations, government, industry and other organizations
 - Maximize efficiencies by working with governments and others for strategic investments
 - Streamline processes / policy renewal to facilitate economic

- development
- First Nations institutional development

c. PRINCIPLES

- Components may include:
 - Respect
 - Commitment to Action
 - Unity, Collaboration, Coordination and Partnership
 - Communication, Transparency, and Accountability
 - Cultural Match – Nation Building Approach
 - Stable institutions and policies
 - Fair and effective dispute resolution
 - Separation of politics from business management
 - Competent First Nations public service
 - Flexibility

d. RELATIONSHIPS

Synopsis of Issue:

- The development and maintenance of effective working relationships is a fundamental component, at all levels, in successful economic development ventures.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Nurture relationships:
 - Between First Nations
 - With federal and provincial governments
 - With other communities (including municipal and regional)
 - With industry (including corporate BC and unions)
 - With training and educational institutions and others
 - At international, national, regional and local levels
- Work with governments to align programming with this Strategy
- Partnership agreements
- Communications / Networking protocols
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with governments with respect to the implementation of this Strategy
- Develop an Economic Development Partners Agreement with First Nations organizations, industry, and others to provide advice with respect to the implementation of this Strategy
- Host regular Economic Development Forums (i.e. annual)

e. LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Synopsis of Issue:

- The legislation and policy that applies to First Nations and First Nations individuals differs from legislation and policy that applies to other British Columbians and Canadians, and has unique benefits and drawbacks. In general terms, this legislation and policy has not been renewed for many years and reform is required to facilitate a welcoming climate and environment for First Nations economic development, including through removing impediments to wealth generation, land development, and access to capital.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Engage with federal and provincial governments to reform land claims negotiations policies
- Work with federal and provincial governments to develop BC-specific recommendations on economic development
- Engage with federal and provincial governments in joint policy reform and development, as those opportunities arise
- Provide support to First Nations to develop and establish policies and plans for economic development
- Provide support to First Nations with respect to governance stability (including the enforceability of laws)
- Identify options to streamline processes for land acquisition and development

- Apply streamlined and consistent process with respect to the purchase of lands for First Nations economic development in BC
- Increase access to lands and resources for First Nations
- Address material and performance business bonding barriers
- Develop legislation and policy with respect to procurement
- Increase the flexibility of program design to create space for local solutions
- Address issues with respect to security for borrowed funds
- Identify and address capital infrastructure policy barriers that relate to economic development
- Enable free trade
- Interim Agreements
- Development Cost Charge legislation
- Tax Driven Investment legislation

f. CAPACITY

Synopsis of Issue:

- Many First Nations face challenges with respect to capacity in business and economic development at all levels – individual, corporate, leadership. Building capacity at these levels, through a variety of mechanisms, will help to ensure that economic opportunities – once identified – are maximized through effective management.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Individual
 - Training and Apprenticeships
 - Internships
 - Employment partnership agreements
 - Post-secondary
 - Entrepreneurship
- Corporate
 - Executive exchanges
 - Secondments
 - First Nations Public Service Initiative
 - Financial planning and business training
- Leadership
 - Good governance practices (including constitutions and by-laws, code of ethics)
 - Leadership development (including workshops and training for Council)
 - Information and knowledge base to assess economic opportunities
- Community
 - Significant participation in community affairs
 - Significant participation in development of community laws and policies
 - Community planning (strategic and tactical)
 - Establish business development corporations
 - Capacity for land development
 - Educate the community about roles and responsibilities in politics and business
 - Identify regional capacity development strategies
 - Human resource planning and development
- Provide basic infrastructure (i.e. broadband connectivity)
- Develop information and communications tools in a variety of media (including websites)
 - Best practices
 - Toolkits
 - Guides
 - Good governance practices
 - Develop common/accessible information base, network and tools

g. STRUCTURAL

Synopsis of Issue:

- Many different organizations (including First Nations organizations and government departments and ministries) exist to facilitate First Nations economic development; improving coordination within and between these groups may reduce duplication, assist in addressing gaps in services, increase available resources and create efficiencies in funding.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Establish a BC First Nations Economic Development Council to coordinate the implementation of this Strategy
- Improve coordination within and between governments with respect to economic development programs and services
- Work with governments to improve responsiveness and effectiveness of program and service delivery structures and approach within federal and provincial governments
- Assess feasibility of establishing a First Nations corporation to own and manage assets
- Expand Aboriginal Capital Corporations
- Consider amalgamation possibilities regarding Aboriginal Capital Corporations
- Consider the establishment of Economic Development Zones
- Consider the development of a “one-window” approach to coordinate, and for accessing support and information for, capacity-building at all levels
- Consider the establishment of regional offices (i.e. First Nations Chambers) to provide support to First Nations economic development through providing information, templates, advice, etc.

h. FINANCIAL / CAPITAL

Synopsis of Issue:

- Access to capital is a major challenge with respect to First Nations economic development. Opportunities for ongoing revenue streams must be identified, as do funds for large or special projects. Financial mechanisms to stimulate economic opportunities for First Nations and First Nations peoples must be implemented.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Institute recognition of First Nations as governments with respect to interest rates, credit rating, guarantee for major projects, bonding, financing, and taxation to stimulate economic development opportunities
- Revenue sharing
- Gaming
- Benefit agreements
- Venture Capital Fund
- Equity Fund
- Bonding
- Utility agreements and partnerships
- Lending circles
- Taxation
 - Tax base for First Nations governments
 - Tax credits and incentives
- Provide legislative/policy authority for First Nations to collect Development Cost Charges and Annual Cost Charges
- Hold investment forums with respect to First Nations economic development opportunities
- Identify new funds for capital infrastructure
- Consider micro-credit applications in village and urban settings
- Explore cooperatives as a tool for economic development
- Find ways to maximize existing funds
 - New Relationship Trust

- Aboriginal Capital Corporations
- First Citizens' Fund
- Federal and provincial governments
- AHRDAs
- First Nations Finance Authority

i. SECTOR-SPECIFIC

Synopsis of Issue:

- Economic opportunities are created in a wide variety of contexts, across a wide range of sectors. Which opportunities are available to First Nations may depend on traditional practices, geographic location, availability of resources, and other factors. For some sectors, detailed action plans that have an economic development component, have already been established. In others, some First Nations may be able to offer insights and advice to guide a province-wide approach.

Action Items / Strategies:

- Explore cooperatives as an economic development tool in sector-specific areas
- Coordinate with, and support, existing sector-specific institutions and/or action plans as they relate to economic development opportunities
 - Culture and Language
 - Tourism
 - Gaming
 - Energy
 - Fisheries
 - Forestry & Mountain Pine Beetle
 - Education
 - Training, Apprenticeships, Management
 - Health
 - Social Services
 - Technology
- Water
- Mining
- Land Development
- Environment & Climate Change
- Construction
- Transportation
- Wholesale and retail
- Hospitality (food, grocery, lodgings)
- International trade opportunities

4. IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish a BC First Nations Economic Development Council responsible for the implementation of this Strategy on behalf of BC First Nations.
- Consider the establishment of regional processes and institutions, overseen by the BC First Nations Economic Development Council to support the implementation of this Strategy.
- Establish a forum (i.e. Partners Group) composed of First Nations, governments, private sector, sector-specific experts (i.e. gaming, mining, forestry, education, tourism, etc.) and other organizations to provide advice and support with respect to the implementation of this Strategy.
- The BC First Nations Economic Development Council will work with governments and others to identify resources to support the effective implementation of this Strategy.

5. MEASURING PROGRESS

- This Strategy is intended to be responsive and dynamic. To gauge the effectiveness of this Strategy, and ensure that it remains relevant and applicable over time, progress must be measured on a regular basis through the establishment of:
 - Timelines
 - Outcomes
 - Measures
 - Targets
- A baseline of information must be established as an early priority, to assist with measuring progress over time
 - Develop report on First Nations economic activity and contribution
 - Conduct qualitative and quantitative analysis
- The BC First Nations Economic Development Council will report regularly on progress, including through the assemblies of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs

APPENDIX A: LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint Strategy
- BCAFN Rolling Title and Rights Strategy (Economic Development section)
- BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan
- BC First Nations Energy Action Plan
- BC First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan
- BC First Nations Community Economic Development Forum Report
- Counsel on BC Aboriginal Economic Development: A New Way of Doing Business: A Vision for Aboriginal Economic Development in British Columbia
- Economic Development of First Nations Communities: Institutional Arrangements (Chapter 9, 2003 Auditor General of Canada report)
- Excellence in Action: Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Economic Development: Symposium Report January 23 to 25, 2007
- Harvard Study on American Indian Economic Development
- Making the Grade: A Guide to Success for Corporate-Aboriginal Initiatives
- Measuring Aboriginal Participation in the BC Economy
- Sharing Canada's Prosperity – A Hand Up, Not a Handout: Final Report – *Special Study on the involvement of Aboriginal communities and businesses in economic development activities in Canada (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples)*