

National training program to maximize billions of dollars of Aboriginal trust funds

The National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association (NATOA) announced April 27th a partnership with TD Bank Financial Group (TD), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Lethbridge College to create an online National Aboriginal Trustee Accreditation Program. The program is intended to deliver standardized training based on Canadian trustee best-practices to enhance Aboriginal fund management across the country. With billions of dollars under management in Canada, the opportunity to create a positive economic and social impact on Aboriginal communities is substantial.

"Responsibly managing and maximizing investments is critical to the economic and social well-being of Aboriginal communities," says NATOA chair Wyatt Arcand. A not-for-profit association, NATOA's participation in the partnership will further its man-

date to assist Aboriginal communities in becoming self-sustaining and vital economic entities. "This partnership and the resulting program will provide all Aboriginal communities with equal access to education and opportunities for enhanced fund management."

TD is a major sponsor of NATOA and recognizes the need for enhanced

trustee and trust management knowledge. "We are thrilled to be funding this initiative as we have been providing Aboriginal trust guidance for quite some time," says Domenic Natale, vice-president of Aboriginal Trust Services for TD Waterhouse. "A training program serves to put participants on a level playing field when it comes to dealing

with trusts and will make a significant positive impact on the Aboriginal community in Canada."

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provided funding for this project through its Community Support Services Program, which offers assistance for projects that deliver support services

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MAXIMIZING TRUST FUNDS

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to First Nation and Inuit community economic development organizations. "In line with our Government's Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development, we are committed to fostering partnerships that will enable Aboriginal communities to become more self-sufficient and prosperous," said the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

"The Government of Canada is pleased to partner with the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association, TD Bank Financial Group and Lethbridge College in support of this initiative."

"Focusing on and supporting capacity-building needs as identified by the community is essential to improving opportunities for First Nations," said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo. "This

collaborative training effort will help First Nations develop the tools required to make informed decisions impacting our rights and our overall community well-being, helping to close the gap in quality of life between First Nations and other Canadians."

Lethbridge College is developing the training program for online delivery, increasing access for participants across the country. "Lethbridge College thrives on providing educational opportunities for a diverse population of learners, including Aboriginal and international students," states Tracy Edwards, President and CEO of Lethbridge College. "We are thrilled to be contributing to such a meaningful and impactful project for the Aboriginal community."

Program development is nearing completion. An unveiling and demonstration will take place at the next NATOA annual general meeting being held May 10, 2010 in Kelowna, BC. ▲