

Where **business**
comes to **learn**.

In the News...

LEARNING STRATEGIES GROUP



SFU

SFU BUSINESS
SIMON FRASER
UNIVERSITY

SFU

OFFICE
FOR

Aboriginal Peoples

SUPPLEMENT

THURSDAY DECEMBER 2, 2010



ECOTOURISM CANADA

The Ahp-cii-uk program helped the Vancouver Island community of Ahousaht revitalize its deteriorating Wild Side heritage trail, which has been reborn as an eco-tourism destination.

The Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations of Ahousaht, Tseshaht and Ehattesaht on Vancouver Island are models of how grass roots initiatives among First Nations, corporations and government can lead to great things.

Just six years ago, Ahousaht, population 850, suffered an epidemic of 65 suicide attempts and two suicide deaths over a 12-month period, with some people attempting suicide more than a dozen times.

Critics say the crisis in the tiny fishing village just north of Tofino highlighted the failure of previous federally developed solutions to create lasting change in First Nations communities.

And it prompted creation of a new approach, the Aboriginal Leadership Initiative, by Health Canada, B.C.'s Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, anti-poverty group Synergos and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

The idea was to empower the communities to come up with their own economic and social revitalization projects while simultaneously building relationships of trust and understanding between the First Nations, government and private partners.

Ahousaht hereditary chief Shawn Atleo, now chief of the Assembly of First Nations, dubbed the initiative Ahp-cii-uk, meaning, "going the right way."

"That's where we came in," says Mark Selman, director of the SFU Business Learning Strategies Group, which was contracted in 2007 to advance the project and enlist corporate support.

Selman recruited business undergrad Bryan Gallagher to work with renowned facilitators and SFU adjunct professors Barry Stuart and Glenn Sigurson to help the three nations choose community-led projects.

He also enlisted a multi-sector team to participate in Ahp-cii-uk, each donating \$10,000 and supplying employees to help.

Ahousaht chose to revitalize its deteriorating Wild Side Trail, which has been reborn as an eco-tourism destination, complete with a welcome figure. Tseshaht developed an artists' market and road safety program, while Ehattesaht has focused on skills development for youth.

The other Ahp-cii-uk partners provided financial support and know-how on marketing and tourism development.

"The whole thing has been a life-changing experience for me," says Gallagher, who plans to continue working with Aboriginal communities after completing his PhD.

"We're now in discussion with other communities about extending the approach," says Selman, adding, "the plan is to have Ahp-cii-uk rolled out nationally."



For more information contact:

Rick Colbourne
Executive Director
Learning Strategies Group

SFU Business
Simon Fraser University
500 Granville Street
Vancouver, Canada
V6C 1W6

Tel: 778-782-5133
Mobile: 604-721-4354
Fax: 778-782-5153
Email: rick_colbourne@sfu.ca