SAWRIDGE TRUSTS

Sawridge Trusts News

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

SAWRIDGE FIRST NATION CONSTITUTION DAY

24 AUGUST

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Young Man Honoured

Congratulations to Isaac Twinn who not only graduated from High School with top marks—he got 86% in Math and 80% in Biology—but who was also selected to receive a special hockey award from the St. Francis Xavier Hockey Academy. The Michael Fogolin Memorial Award is given to student-players who demonstrate solid academics, solid skills as a hockey player and, most notably, dedication and perseverance. Bryan Keller, Director of St. Francis, said about this award: "Isaac was an easy choice and [the award] is well deserved."

Isaac Twinn receiving the Michael Fogolin Memorial Award from Bryan Keller. Isaac's brother, Sam, accompanied him.

Isaac will be attending the University of Alberta this Fall.

Compassionate Care and Death Benefit

In February 2010, the Sawridge Trusts established its first benefit—the Compassionate Care and Death Benefit. As the name suggests the Compassionate Care Benefit portion provides assistance to a family when one of its members is severely ill and is placed in a care facility that is distant from where the family normally lives. In this case, the Trusts will help with travel, accommodation and meal costs while the ill family member is being cared for in the facility. Once the ill family member returns home, the Trusts will also assist with special equipment or care that may be needed to assist in the complete recovery of the person if no other programs, like the Federal Non-Insured Health Benefit or private health insurance, will cover these costs.

The Death Benefit will supplement costs associated with the death of a family member including the funeral costs, plot and headstone costs and cost of the wake and reception up to a maximum of $12,000. If the Canada Pension Plan benefit, which has a maximum of $2,500, is due, this benefit must be used first before the $12,000 can be used to cover the funeral costs.

More information on this benefit is available from the Trusts Administrator.

Seniors' Support Benefit

The second benefit set up was the Seniors' Support benefit. In April 2010, the first payments were made to beneficiaries who were 65 years of age and older. The Seniors' Support benefit pays $1,500 per month to the elder beneficiary and will reimburse up to $500 per month for transportation and home maintenance expenses.

The Seniors' Support benefit is meant to supplement the small pension income being received by most elders through the Old Age Pension. The reimbursable expenses help these people remain mobile by paying for vehicle operating costs or public transportation. It also helps people maintain their homes by paying for minor repairs and home or yard maintenance.

More information on this benefit is available from the Trusts Administrator.

Health Support Benefit

The Trusts are presently setting up a health support benefit which is expected to be in place by September 2010. This benefit involves three parts: health insurance, life insurance and a Member Assistance Plan.

The health insurance will cover the difference between what is paid through Alberta Health Care and Non-Insured Health Benefits and health care, prescriptions and dental care actual costs for both the beneficiary and her/his dependents.

The life insurance will provide $250,000 permanent life insurance for each beneficiary between 18 and 60 years of age. This insurance will pay out $200,000 to the person designated by the beneficiary and $50,000 to the Trust to fund future life insurance plans.

The member assistance program will provide telephone and in-person counselling and referral and will help people by providing support after they receive treatment and counselling. The program available to all beneficiaries and their families.

Call the Trusts Administrator for more information.

Personal Development Benefit

The Personal Development benefit was set up in May 2010. It is meant to provide financial assistance in covering the costs of services like counselling and personal development courses (not educational development courses). The Trusts will reimburse 2/3 of expenses incurred by beneficiaries for tuition, professional fees, and travel costs to obtain a personal development service.

The maximum annual benefit available per beneficiary is $6,000 per year although for 2010 the maximum amount is only $4,500 since the program has not been available for the whole year.

The type of services that are covered under this benefit include: personal or family counselling provided by a recognized professional, elder or healer; fitness or nutrition counselling and self-esteem building programs.

If other programs provide these benefits, they must be used first before this benefit will be paid.

More information is available from the Trusts Administrator on this program and what it will cover.

Cash Disbursement Benefit

All eligible beneficiaries received a “good faith” cash disbursement of $2,500 in November 2009. This benefit was paid out to indicate that the Trusts were in the process of developing benefits for the beneficiaries.

In order to receive this benefit, a beneficiary has to be an identified beneficiary who is 18 years of age or older.

Those beneficiaries who reach 18 after the first pay out will receive their disbursement when they reach their 18th birthday.

Only beneficiaries of the 1986 Trust have been identified so only those beneficiaries have received this benefit. As the beneficiaries for the 1985 Trust are identified, they will also receive this benefit.

The benefit is only paid out once, regardless of whether a beneficiary belongs to both Trusts so only one payment is made.

Economic Development Based on Reconciliation

Addressing Lateral Violence in Indigenous Country

"Bosnia is like a reserve across the ocean!" exclaimed Algonquin Verna McGregor at a consultation on Economic Development Based on Reconciliation in Bosnia. She noted that the economic development challenges there after civil war mirrored those in First Nations communities.

Echoing those sentiments, lawyer Catherine Twinn of Sawridge Reserve invited Vern Neufeld Redekop to adapt his research proposal for Bosnia for indigenous peoples in Canada. At the heart of Redekop's approach is the realization that it is virtually impossible for economic development to succeed without good, trusting relationships and healthy structures of governance, conflict resolution and leadership accountability, concepts developed by Manley A. Begay, Jr. of the Harvard project on indigenous economic development. There also need to be values of fairness, honesty, transparency and mutual goodwill.

In many cases, the values and structural conditions needed for economic development are sabotaged by lateral violence. This can be seen in the crab effect – community members pulling down anyone who seems to be getting ahead. Lateral violence can be expressed in the phrase, "If you have something that I desire and I can't have it, I will make (damn well) certain that you can't have it either." The result is destroyed businesses, character assassination through gossip, cheating on an employer, or failure to pay money owed.

Manley A. Begay, emphasizes the need for capable and effective governance institutions. These include a mechanism, evident in traditional governance structures, whereby the community through clan mothers or some other group can hold leaders responsible if they get onto a wrong path. Related is political piracy whereby a leader is corrupt, plays favourites, or uses community resources for his or her personal benefit. Political piracy is related to lateral violence. Both of these are based on a web of violent conflict in which various groups within a community justify what they are doing on resentment and hatred born of past victimization.

To address these impediments to economic development, Catherine Twinn, Verna McGregor and Vern Neufeld Redekop have developed a three-day community consultation process. The idea is that no-one but community representatives can turn around a conflict situation. However, many communities are at an impasse and no-one quite knows how to begin a process of change.

The community dialogue does not come in with solutions; rather it provides a framework and a set of questions. Examples are the following:

- What is the relationship between lateral violence and problems with economic development?
- Since economic life works as a system with each part working in relation to others, how can economic development be done strategically so that one initiative will encourage others to get started?
- What values are important if economic life is to flourish and how can they be cultivated?
- What difference would it make to economic development if there was reconciliation?
- What are the dreams, visions and desires of the community for economic development?

During the community dialogue, participants will work in groups of 6 to 8 on the questions. Each working group will have a trained facilitator and a recorder who will write down what is said. At the end of the process the group will have determined some priority items to work on.

A key to the success of the dialogue will be the gathering process. There need to be Elders and youth participating. The group will need the expertise of people in business and those working on economic development. Since governance structures are key, political leaders as well as representatives from different sub groups within a community need to be there.

Questions of value, goodwill, sharing and generosity call for a return to traditional teachings. As such, it is clear that they are questions of spirituality. One way of putting it is, how can a good spirit be established in the community so that people work together toward the greater good of all? This means that the community consultation is not just about coming up with good ideas, even though they might be important, rather it is about a representative group within a community starting to work together on a common initiative.

CANDO is partnering with Verna McGregor, Catherine Twinn and Vern Neufeld Redekop, Associate Professor of Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University to first test the community dialogue process, then to evaluate and refine it, and finally to start a program to make it broadly available in Indigenous country in Canada (and, who knows, perhaps the world). This partnership was greatly strengthened when Victor Buffalo, President, International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development, and Dr. Manley Begay joined the partnership circle. Dr. Manley A. Begay, Jr. is Faculty Chair, Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy; Associate Social Scientist/Senior Lecturer, American Indian Studies Program; and Co-Director, Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development.

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Established in 1985 and 1986 by the Chief and Council of the Sawridge First Nation under Chief Walter P. Twinn, Sawridge Trusts were set up to provide economic development and potential for employment, and create an avenue for self sufficiency, self assurance, confidence and financial independence for the members of the Sawridge First Nation.

Monies from oil and gas development were invested in a number of businesses owned by the Trusts to provide long-term benefits to the beneficiaries and their descendents.

At the time of their establishment, the Trusts were a unique solution to long-term economic development for First Nations. This speaks highly of the foresight and skill of their prime mover, Chief Walter Twinn.

Cost of Benefits

The ability of the Trusts to pay out benefits depends largely on the success of the businesses owned by the Trusts. The businesses have to generate a certain rate of return in order to remain viable and provide the money to pay benefits.

For this reason, the Trusts have to move cautiously to implement benefits since the costs of these benefits could easily outstrip the money that is available.

With the economic downturn in 2008, it has become more difficult to plan any large expansions in benefits plans. The businesses the Trusts own in the hospitality sector are especially prone to being affected by the economy.

The Trustees are monitoring the situation carefully and and making sure that the most needed and affordable benefits are set up first. This is not an easy process and requires looking at how existing assets can be improved as well as how the Trusts can develop new assets to provide the best return for the Trusts and the beneficiaries.

Another factor affecting the cost of benefits is the total number of beneficiaries. At this stage, only beneficiaries from the 1986 Trust have been identified. A process is underway to identify the beneficiaries from the 1985 Trust. If additional beneficiaries are identified during this process, the overall cost of benefits could also go up dramatically and the Trusts have a limited resource that has to be developed for this and future generations.

Along with the identification of beneficiaries, the Trusts are also working on a Passing of Accounts. This is a legal process to identify all the assets of the Trusts since their creation and to chart their progress over time. This report will be presented to all the beneficiaries, along with reporting to the Court, so that everyone knows what the Trusts are doing to develop this limited resource.

As more information comes available, it will all be provided to the beneficiaries so that they can work with the Trustees and the trusts Administrator to get the greatest benefit out of this investment for everyone.

Beneficiary Determination Process!

The Trustees will be going to the Court for the appointment of a tribunal to review the applications that have been sent in to our office over the last several months. If you are one of the applicants, you should know that the Court process is expected to take a few months. The tribunal will then advise all the applicants and will likely begin reviewing the applications over the Winter. The final list will have to be submitted to the Court, probably in Spring 2011 before we can proceed.