

Date: April 3, 2013



City Council Committee Report

TO: Mayor & Council

FR: Diane Schwartz-Williams, Manager of Northwest Business Centre

RE: Northwest Business Centre Q1 - 2013 Report

Recommendation:

That Council accepts the 2013 First Quarter report for the Northwest Business Centre.

Background:

NWBC Activity Report: January – March 2013

Client Usage and Traffic

- 22 new client consultations; 27 existing client consultations and 107 other client contacts, including emails, phone calls, walk-in's.
- Online engagement – total online engagement of 3619 (including 2417 website page views, 599 unique website visitors, 535 new website visitors, 31 new Twitter followers and 37 new Facebook followers).

Events and Initiatives

- 61 Outreach/Networking events and presentations generating 305 contacts.
- District outreach continues to Red Lake, Fort Frances, Ignace and Sioux Lookout.
- Good media profile and coverage with interviews on Q104, CJRL, CKDR, CFOB, Good Morning Kenora (Shaw TV), Daily Miner & News, Fort Frances Times, Sioux Lookout Bulletin for both Aboriginal Business Day and International Women's Day Events.
- Hosted 2 Aboriginal Business Day events featuring keynote speaker Wab Kinew in Whitefish Bay First Nation and Lac Seul First Nation with over 175 in attendance and the participation of 15 exhibitors and presenters. Although major funding came from the Government of Ontario, our community partners provided the required (Common Ground Research Forum, Grand Council Treaty 3, MNM Aboriginal Relations Unit, K-Net and our two host First Nation Communities). This was the second year this event was delivered in a format that included interactive exercises, presentations, keynote and a trade fair component. Very well received with highly positive evaluations.
- Preparation and delivery of two successful half day workshops by video conference via KNET to 6 remote First Nation Communities with a total of 24 participants – "How to Start a Small Business". This was a follow-up on a pilot project NWBC took part in April 2012. Funded by the Ministry of Northern Development & Mines.
- Hosted 2 International Women's Day events featuring keynote speaker Zahra al-Harazi in Kenora and Fort Frances with over 50 in attendance. Zahra is the owner and Creative Director of Foundry Communications in Calgary, a Top 40 under 40 and a winner of Chatelaine's Canadian Women Entrepreneur of the Year award,

recipient of the Queen's Jubilee medal. She is in high demand, speaks all over the world and as expected her keynote was an inspiring combination of her rise to professional and personal success. This event was made possible through funding provided by the Government of Ontario. Very well received with highly positive evaluations.

- Offered an intensive daylong Outlook 2010 workshop with 8 participants. With funding support from MEDTE-MRI we were able to offer this at highly subsidized cost to participants.
- Delivery of pilot program in partnership with Women's Place Kenora - 'How to Start a Small Business'. This was a 12 week program that took participants through all the stages of planning and starting a business and included hands-on exercises, guest speakers, panel discussions and more. Fourteen women started the program and 10 completed it; a more than satisfactory retention rate. Of the ten completing the course, four are well on their way to completing their business plan and one has actually launched her business. Plans are already being formulated for the next session.
- CYBF (Canadian Youth Business Foundation) Loan Review Committee expanded to include representatives from Red Lake, Ignace, Sioux Lookout, Dryden, and Sioux Narrows. (Fort Frances was already represented.)
- Significant progress has been made to enhance the NWBC social media program, presence and activities. This is largely due to the work of our NOHFC Intern, Monique Delorme and is reflected in the spike in our social media metrics.
- The plan for offering a Virtual Advisor service is coming together with the exploration of technical options, development of a survey and preliminary discussions with some community partners. (This is the other part of the work being done by our NOHFC Intern.)
- Manager participated in a 1 day meeting in Sudbury with five other Small Business Enterprise Managers in the Northern Region; this initial session to be followed by monthly conference calls.
- Travel to Sudbury was combined with attendance at a meeting in Thunder Bay, also attended by Theresa Stephens (MNDM). This meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade & Education and the Ministry of Research & Innovation (MEDTE-MRI), formerly known as the Ministry of Economic Development & Innovation. It is their mandate and funding under which the Northwest Business Centre and other Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBEC's) operate in the Province of Ontario, although it is the Ministry of Northern Development & Mines (MNDM) that delivers the program in the North.
- MEDTE-MRI is presently undergoing a major strategic alliance review that, among other goals, aims to increase the efficiencies of the services provided by SBEC's and partnering organizations and strengthen their working relationships. To this end an extensive consultation program has been developed and working groups with facilitators put in place for a number of designated areas. The Kenora-Rainy River and Thunder Bay Districts have been combined to create one of these areas. Representatives of FedNor, Community Futures, PARO, colleges and universities, MNDM, MEDTE-MRI, NADF, BDC, Innovation Centre, IRAP and others were invited and approximately 20 were in attendance.

Success Stories:

- The NWBC is proud to have worked with two clients who launched their business this quarter – Little Oak Wellness and Tangled Tree Framing & Gifts.

Youth Programs

- Delivery of a one day workshop on Business Plans and Marketing to a group of young entrepreneurs at Shoal Lake #39 First Nation as part of their 15 week Youth Entrepreneurship program.
- Two CYBF (Canadian Youth Business Foundation) applicants successfully presented their business plans to the Loan Review Committee (LRC). The LRC recommended these plans and funding to CYBF, and following their own review process CYBF confirmed funding and mentoring support to two new businesses – Little Oak Wellness in Kenora and Blank Productions in Dryden.
- There has been an increase in the activity related to the CYBF program and the NWBC is presently working with 5 other young entrepreneurs moving through the application process for CYBF.
- Summer Company is open, and applications are now being received. The NWBC has been given funding this year for 4 Summer Companies, an increase of one over last year. To date we have 3 young entrepreneurs who have begun working on their applications.
- Several meetings have been held with Andrew Koch, the Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative Coordinator based in Kenora, operating out of the LOWBIC offices. Andrew is responsible for the implementation of several programs within this initiative that will reach youth in schools from kindergarten level to Grade 12. We are already working together on a couple programs, seeing some efficiencies in coordinated efforts and expect this to increase.
- BIZ Kids Camp dates have been set for 2013 with camps being operated in Dryden (4th year: July 8 - 12); Red Lake (1st year: July 22 - 26); Kenora (9th year: August 12 - 16); Fort Frances (2nd year: August 19- 23). The NWBC is welcoming the Northern Entrepreneurship Initiative and CFDC's in the district as partners in delivery of this successful program.

Budget: N/A

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements: N/A