

NEWS RELEASE

March 20, 2009



RADF Announces \$2.9 Million for Four Rural Projects

Projects Focus on Quality of Life, Education and Business Development

Tofield – Rural Alberta's Development Fund (RADF) announced funding today of \$2.9 million for four new rural Alberta projects. The funding will help rural communities manage their natural areas while increasing tourism, build sustainable and self sufficient Aboriginal businesses, keep youth in school and develop year-round arts and culture opportunities.

Funding of \$1.29 million from RADF will develop a unique parks management model for the newly established Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Recreation Area. The *Eagle Point/Blue Rapids Parks and Recreation Partnership* will be a catalyst for environmentally sustainable economic, educational and tourism development along the North Saskatchewan River in Brazeau Country and the surrounding region.

An investment of \$900,000 in the St. Paul region will allow the development of an *Aboriginal Community Enterprise Project*. This project will aid in the creation of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses and increase regional collaboration.

A funding contribution of \$428,409 will allow the Horizon School Division to develop a *Learning & Work Connections* program. This program will allow at-risk students to earn a living while finishing high school. The Yellowhead Regional Arts Festival Society will receive \$315,000 for a *Creative Campus Development* program. It will deliver collaborative arts and culture programming throughout the region.

"Quality of life in rural Alberta takes many forms. Education, business, the arts and recreation are all important to maintaining and increasing quality of life. We are pleased to be involved with these innovative projects," commented Bob Clark, RADF Chair.

"These initiatives will help improve the quality of life of rural Albertans," said Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development Minister George Groeneveld. "I am pleased to see projects that support aboriginal business ventures, encourage at-risk students to stay in school and support tourism and the arts. The Government of Alberta is committed to advancing social and economic development in rural Alberta"

Rural Alberta's Development Fund is a not-for-profit company that inspires innovation, collaboration and growth across rural Alberta. It is funded by the Government of Alberta and is a key implementation initiative of Alberta's Rural Development Strategy. More information is available at www.ruralalbertasfund.com

- 30 -

Direct media enquiries to:

Godfrey Huybregts, Director of Communications, Rural Alberta's Development Fund
T: 1.877.940.7233 C: 780.953.0525

Encl: Projects Backgrounder

BACKGROUND

Summary of Approved Projects

March 20, 2009



EAGLE POINT/BLUE RAPIDS PARKS AND RECREATION PARTNERSHIP

Fund contribution is \$1.29 million

Funding from RADF will allow the development of a community based and community lead parks management model for the newly established Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area. This unique management model will be the catalyst for environmentally sustainable economic, education and tourism development in the area while building partnerships between all users of public lands.

The non-profit Eagle Point – Blue Rapids Parks Council is a partnership between Brazeau County, the Town of Drayton Valley, non-profit recreation groups, local industry, environmental organizations and the Parks Division of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Expected results include:

- Development of a community-based management plan
- Creation of new tourism-based economic and educational opportunities
- Development of stable and long term fundraising and financial plans for community operators
- Development of a program that can easily be adapted by other rural communities

Contact: Rob Macintosh, Chair, EP – BR Parks Council. T: 780.542.6021

rob@dejanira.ab.ca www.epbrparksCouncil.org

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE PROJECT

Fund contribution is \$900,000

RADF funding will help the development of a long-term grass-roots economic growth and partnership model for Aboriginal communities in the St. Paul region. The project's focus is the creation of Aboriginal owned and operated businesses that can be economically viable and self-sustainable, while building collaborative relationships with non-Aboriginal businesses.

Northeast Alberta Information HUB Ltd., a regional economic development alliance, has partnered with seven Aboriginal community members to manage this program. They include Cold Lake First Nations, Kehewin Cree Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, Elizabeth Métis Settlement, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement and Kikino Métis Settlement. Alberta Employment and Immigration and Alberta Finance and Enterprise are also partners.

Expected results include:

- More self-reliance and independence for Aboriginal businesses and communities
- Increased skills training and economic opportunities for Aboriginal youth in their home communities
- Increased economic development and community capacity for Aboriginal communities
- Development of an economic model that can be easily adapted by other Aboriginal communities in Alberta

Contact: Don Whittaker, HUB Chair, Northeast Alberta Information HUB Ltd. T: 780.645.1155

info@albertahub.com www.albertahub.com

Rural Alberta's Development Fund Backgrounder
Summary of Approved Projects
March 20, 2009

LEARNING & WORK CONNECTIONS

Fund contribution is \$428,409

This investment by RADF will be used by the Horizon School Division and its partners to develop the Learning & Work Connections program. This program will give students who are facing financial, cultural or family pressure to drop out of school the opportunity to finish high school while earning an income. Project staff will liaise with employers and project students and provide coaching and support for students and their families.

Learning & Work Connections is a partnership between the Horizon School Division, Grasslands School Division, the Taber and District Adult Learning Association, Chinook Regional Career Transition for Youth and several local businesses.

Expected results include:

- Decrease in the number of youth leaving school for full-time work
- Increase in the number of youth earning high school diplomas
- Increase in the identification of at-risk youth who may benefit from additional program support
- Development of a program that can easily be adapted by other rural school divisions

Contact: Garth Mouland, Career Practitioner, Horizon School Division T: 403.223.3547
garth.mouland@horizon.ab.ca www.horizon.ab.ca

CREATIVE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

Fund contribution is \$315,000

RADF funding will allow development of sustainable and vibrant year-round arts and culture programs for the West Yellowhead region of Alberta. The program will be centred in Hinton and will bring together smaller urban and cultural arts organizations and deliver arts programs such as theatre, visual arts and music throughout the region.

The program will be managed by the Yellowhead Regional Arts Festival Society. Society partners include the municipalities of Hinton, Edson, Jasper and Grande Cache along with Yellowhead County and several regional businesses.

Expected results include:

- Diversification of the region's economic base
- Increased development of arts and culture in the region
- Increased quality of life for current and potential residents

Contact: Joan Udell, Executive Director, Yellowhead Regional Arts Festival Society T: 780.816.0029
execdir@shaw.ca www.yraf.com