



Newsletter

Nov/Dec 2007

OBAC Alternative Energy Strategy - Working Group Up and Running

Building upon the insights gained during the Bioenergy Speaker Series this summer and follow-up discussions across the region, a working group of 20 people interested in alternative energy has been established to guide the development of the Alternative Energy Strategy. A "Backgrounder on Alternative Energy" was prepared and sent to participants to support the group's first discussion by conference call on December 14. Lead consultant, Martin Tampier of ENVINT Consulting, provided the group with the results of a recent telephone survey to gauge the specific interests and concerns about alternative energy in the OBAC region. "The number one interest for all OBAC communities is clearly economic diversification," Tampier told working group members. He added, "There is strong interest in the biomass sector, but also in other technologies. There are a number of projects already successfully underway in the region including geo-exchange systems, biomass, solar, hydro and wind technologies." Working group members feel strongly that there is great potential for more alternative energy development throughout the OBAC region and are keen on seizing these opportunities. Working group members are particularly interested in ensuring that development of bioenergy leads to diversification opportunities in the region. The Alternative Energy Strategy Working Group will meet in person in February with the draft strategy scheduled for completion in March/April 2008. The OBAC Alternative Energy Strategy will be one of a number of diversification options for the region. If you have any ideas to contribute to this strategy, please let us know at: info@ominecacoalition.ca



OBAC Minerals & Mining Strategy - First Working Group Meeting

Building on the work done in September at the OBAC Minerals and Mining Summit, a Minerals and Mining Sector Strategy Working Group held its first meeting in Prince George on December 11 to help guide the development of the strategy. In addition to OBAC staff and several directors, the ten participants at the day-long session came from a range of perspectives and interests including: the First Nations MPB Initiative; local and provincial government staff; post-secondary education; and the minerals and mining sector. Dave Forshaw, a Mackenzie prospector was asked by the group to be the chair. The consulting team from DPR Canada facilitated the group's examination of the historical context of mining in the OBAC region, and the current challenges and opportunities for the sector at community and regional levels. Working group participants began looking at the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges with discussion in the areas of education, training, public awareness, outreach and community relations. Other strategic areas will be examined in the same manner as work progresses. The group also provided input on what will emerge through the process as a proposed vision for the future of minerals and mine development in the region. It was clear at the end of the meeting that there is considerable potential for growth in this sector, leading to new investment, jobs, and opportunity. The Minerals and Mining Strategy Working Group will meet again in early 2008 with the draft strategy scheduled for completion in March/April 2008. The OBAC Minerals and Mining Strategy will be one of a number of diversification options for the region. If you have any ideas to contribute to this strategy, please let us know at: info@ominecacoalition.ca





Several OBAC Directors at November meeting



Mayor Colin Kinsley discusses strategies with Dr. Masatoshi Ouchi, a community development researcher visiting from Meiji University in Japan, and Chelan Hoffman, UNBC graduate student.



OBAC's Next Two Strategies

OBAC has initiated work on its next two strategies. The Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy will look at the opportunities and challenges related to the infrastructure needed to support regional diversification. Preliminary scoping on what was previously a 'transportation' focused strategy indicated the need to include a broader range of infrastructure development including: hydro and power transmission development; rail capacity; artery and connector roads; linkages with expanding airport facilities; telecommunication and broadband development; and possibly, pipelines. The Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy is scheduled to be completed by May/June 2008.

The first phase in the three-phase development of the Future Forest Products and Fibre Use Strategy will be a background document that will outline the challenges and opportunities for development of new forest products and focus on a range of possible uses of fibre in the OBAC region. This backgrounder is scheduled to be completed by February 2008 and will be a building block for Phases II and III, which will run concurrently. These two phases involve inviting forest products specialists to expand on what new forest products might serve emerging new markets, what the fibre needs will be to support this, and a public engagement process to gather feedback from OBAC residents with respect to this topic. This Future Forest Products and Fibre Use draft strategy is scheduled for completion in May/June 2008.

OBAC to Meet with Provincial Agency Regional Managers in January

On January 16, 2008 regional managers with provincial land and resource agencies will begin working on strategies with OBAC to collaborate on diversifying and growing economic opportunities in the region. A concerted effort to grow the economy in the OBAC region will benefit from working together to understand and address expectations and opportunities. At this session provincial agency regional managers, decision makers in the natural resources sector, and economic development experts have been invited to explore opportunities and collaborate on diversification initiatives for OBAC. This session has two key objectives. The first is to discuss collective interests and mandates to better understand our region's circumstances, strengths, opportunities, needs, and challenges. The second objective is to identify areas where OBAC (through its strategy development and implementation) and agencies (through their service plan implementation) can work together in the short and long term to diversify and grow economic opportunities. A later session will concentrate on social and community services and support agencies.

OBAC Community Economic Development Initiative Project Update

More than 80 expressions of interest from communities and agencies across the OBAC region are going ahead with full proposal submission to Western Economic Diversification (WED) for Community Economic Diversification Initiative (CEDi) funding (<http://www.wd.gc.ca/ced/mpb>). The projects chosen for implementation will be funded from the \$36.6 million CEDi fund announced in July 2007 (http://www.wd.gc.ca/77_9526_ENG_ASP.asp).

A fantastic array of projects have been proposed including:

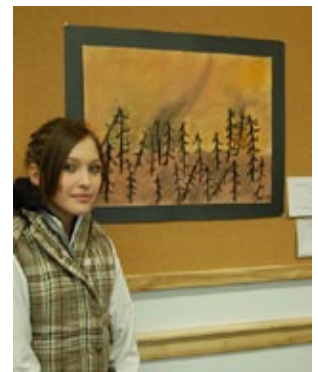
- industrial and commercial land inventory and development;
- assessments looking at developing biomass based developments;
- preparations looking into building a connector road between Mackenzie and Fort St. James;
- field work to gather and make geoscience data available to mineral exploration interests;
- commercializing new and innovative wood products developed in the region; and
- revitalizing a number of the region's small-community downtowns and improving local public tourism assets.



The exciting part of assisting communities with their proposals has been the front-row view of their visions—where they would like to be in the future and what they see as opportunities to diversify their communities in the wake of the mountain pine beetle epidemic. OBAC is looking forward to seeing the federal government's investment in a wealth of projects for this region. WED anticipates making funding announcements in March 2008.

Red and Blue Art Show Brightening OBAC Region

In October we reported that the Red and Blue Beetle Art exhibit would begin making its rounds for three week periods starting in Fort St. James in November 2007, Fraser Lake in January 2008, and Prince George in February 2008. Fort St. James has just closed the first three-week leg in the regional tour. The exhibit opened on November 23 in the District of Fort St. James new municipal office and was well attended. Feedback was very positive—visitors welcomed and appreciated the exhibit and said that they would recommend it to others. Visitors also commented that the information provided about the mountain pine beetle epidemic helped them understand our region's circumstances. One visitor commented, "Such loss left me quite emotional. Then some art pointed towards hope, renewal and regrowth". Another visitor commented that the art left them with "An impression of devastation and hope. It is interesting to see someone else's perspective".



Desiree Whitely, Ft St James student artist and her artwork titled, "Dead pine trees, tinder dry. What will remain?"

The exhibit has been sponsored by a number of organizations including OBAC, and has been coordinated by the College of New Caledonia (CNC) Nechako Campus and features multi-media art work focused on the impressions, impacts, and opportunities from the beetle epidemic. CNC recently received additional funding from 2010 LegaciesNow to tour the show through our region. Be sure to check out the exhibit at the public library and other locations in Fraser Lake between January 7 and 25. You can preview the artwork, check out the discussion, and see what's going with the tour at www.beetleart.blogspot.com.



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