

August 8, 2011

Guyanne L. Desforges
Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Desforges:

Re: 2012 Pre-Budget Consultation Process

Thank you for the opportunity to be able to provide a written submission as part of your annual pre-budget consultation hearings.

North Island College resides on the traditional territories of thirty-five First Nations bands which make their homes across the over 80,000 square kilometers on Northern Vancouver Island and the BC mainland coast which forms our service region. North Island College's primary service area includes central and northern Vancouver Island the BC mainland coast from Desolation Sound to Klemtu. North Island College serves a population of approximately 158,000¹ with 12%² of the population represented by Aboriginal peoples.

Over our 35 year history, North Island College has had the privilege of partnering with Aboriginal communities to fulfill our mandate of providing a wide array of developmental, university transfer, career, trades and technology and applied degree programs to the residents of our region. NIC is the only educational institution with a mandate and the necessary infrastructure to provide this broad range of educational opportunity throughout a region that includes a significant number of remote Aboriginal communities. 1,320³ Aboriginal students attended North Island College in 2010/11 which represents 13.4% of our student population.

North Island College 2011-2015 Strategic Plan affirms our ongoing commitment to working with Aboriginal community partners to increase participation in local educational opportunities. We recognize that the fastest growing population in our region is of Aboriginal descent and it is critical to sustain and grow our support and programming to respond to their current and emerging needs. We believe that an increase in funding to support the economic and educational development of our Aboriginal populations is essential to maintaining the gains that we have made and to build on our successes to achieve even greater involvement of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education.

There are many issues and priorities facing the federal government but we want to bring your attention to what we see as the first and most critical priority for our country and for the North Island College region – provision of funding to support economic development and sustainable employment for Aboriginal people within their traditional territories.

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¹ BC Stats. *PEOPLE 35*.

² BC Stats. (2010) *Socio Economic Profiles College Regions*

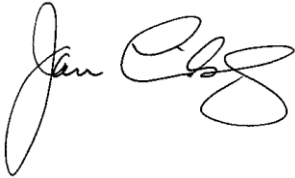
³ North Island College Office of Institutional Research

North Island College has developed a concept for a Natural Resources Education and Applied Research (NREAR) Centre (see attached Appendix A). Through this Centre, it is our intention to develop and deliver specialized training programs that will prepare Aboriginal people to work in a variety of natural resource-based industries. Through the Centre, we plan to engage industry and First Nation Councils as partners in identifying both specialized education/training needs and research projects aimed at development of innovative products or product applications that enhance production or result in the commercialization of new products.

The NREAR Centre concept, developed by North Island College, has the capacity, once fully operational, to serve as a prototype for use in many other regions across Canada where public colleges are serving large Aboriginal populations. The development and proof of concept of the NREAR Centre holds tremendous potential for providing an economic development and sustainable employment model for Aboriginal populations that could be easily replicated across the country.

Investment of federal funding to support economic development and sustainable employment for Aboriginal people in their traditional territories is an important priority for the Government to consider. This priority is particularly poignant given the skilled labour shortage facing the country and the need for strategies that will support sustained economic recovery.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Lindsay", written in a cursive style.

J. Lindsay, PsyD
President and CEO

Attachment: Appendix A – NREAR Centre Concept Paper

cc: Honourable John Duncan
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
MP Vancouver Island North