

First Nations in Law, NITA and NEXUS '91

by Vernita Helin

The Native Investment & Trade Association (NITA), is a non-profit organization, established by native law students at the University of British Columbia. It emerged from the idea by its founding President, Calvin Helin and Vice-President, Greg Favelle to marry First Nations' goals of self-reliance with the interests of private enterprise.

Calvin Helin, after completing the Native Law Program at UBC, is currently articling with the law firm Ladner Downs. Greg Favelle is embarking on his third year law at UBC.

The purpose of the Association is to promote, establish and maintain trade/investment opportunities in native communities.

In May of 1991 NITA was host to the first national First Nations Trade and Investment Show-- NEXUS '91. The Association received generous sponsorship from Aboriginal Business Programs (Industry, Science and Technology

Canada), and an impressive host of private sector sponsors.

By all accounts, NEXUS '91 was a smashing success. It received massive interest from local, national and international media. In effect, the trade show provided a world class stage for native people to strut their entrepreneurial stuff.

NEXUS '91 showcased many of the diverse and dynamic players in the growing First Nations business sector. The several thousand visitors who attended the trade show were able to see the flourishing native business ventures of the Samson In-

Continued on page 28

Drum Group

Continued from previous page

teachers in the school system for our children.

I decided to invite a member of a drum group to come in and explain the meaning of the drum and sing a few songs as well as explain the meaning of the regalia worn. However, things did not turn out that way. Another class caught wind of this and they were interested in being a part of this presentation. It didn't stop there, the whole school was interested. This was fantastic! I contacted the drum group, "Arrows to Freedom" and they were all willing to come in and perform.

My sponsor teacher suggested that since I invited the drum group, it would be nice if I introduced them to the school. Another new experience. All went well and I survived. Sometimes it is difficult to take on something new, but it's important to give yourself that little extra push and you find it's not so bad.

Everyone was extremely impressed with the performance. The teachers themselves said that there was a great deal that they learned in those few hours. More importantly, the First Nations children were bursting with pride. The drum group brought in children from other schools that they had been working with. These children danced and they were fabulous! Some children from our school could not resist the call of the drum and they also joined in. One of the drum group members explained everything as they went along with their performance. In one of the dances they involved some of the teachers as well as some of the non-native children. It was a lot of fun and it generated a lot of good feelings. Our people have so much to offer and to teach. At the end of the performance, the children from my class proudly presented painted rocks as gifts to each member of the drum group.

The next day we discussed what they learned from the performance.

At this time a supervisor from UBC came in to observe while I was teaching. He was impressed with how much the children obtained from the performance. Everyone came away from the performance with a lot more knowledge and also a very powerful feeling of who the First Nations peoples are. The students drew pictures of what they learned from the gathering. Everything turned out in a strong, positive way for everyone.

There were many other things I shared from our culture. We did use one of the rocks for our sharing circle. We talked about the way our Elders told their stories. Stories have been passed on from generation to generation. We discussed how important it is to listen to the person who has the rock. Feelings, sharing, respect and many other things were a part of this learning experience. I could go on about the legend lesson that I did but I was asked to write an article, not a book. □

Law, NITA

Continued from page 27

Indian Band of Alberta; the Was-kaganish Cree of Northern Quebec; the Inuvialuit Development Corporation and the Nisga'a Nation of B.C. Overall, NEXUS '91 led to direct business and numerous excellent leads for the approximately 70 native exhibitors in attendance.

The Business Seminars covered a series of topics ranging from off-shore investment in native com-



Miles Richardson, President, Council of the Haida Nation, addresses "Business At Home" at Nexus '91 Business Seminars (May 24, 1991).



NEXUS '91 -- Native Fashion Designer Dorothy Grant blends Robert Davidson originals and personal flair to create fashion "coup de maitre".



(L - R) Laura Marcellus of B.C. Hydro presents award to essay winner, Susan Smith of Prince Rupert, at NEXUS '91 trade show (May 23- 25, 1991). UBC third year Law student, Greg Favelle, and MC, Darrell Dennis look on.

munities to banking on reserve lands. Large crowds at opening and closing ceremonies were treated to a host of top-notch performances by native dancers, comedians and fashion designers from across Canada.

In response to considerable demand, plans are currently underway for NEXUS '92. Greater efforts will be made to involve private sector participation from across Canada and to attract more major off-shore



Calvin Helin, Managing Director of NEXUS '91 and President of the Native Investment and Trade Association.

investment interests. NEXUS '92 promises to be a bigger and better trade show. Native entrepreneurs and business organizations interested in participating in this upcoming event may contact the: **Native Investment & Trade Association, 6200 Comstock Road, Richmond, B.C., V7C 2X4. Phone/Fax: (604) 275-0307.** □