



CREATING WEALTH FROM KNOWLEDGE

Malaspina reaches to Haida Gwaii with shellfish training

18 students representing nine First Nation communities ranging from Rivers Inlet in the central coast to Haida Gwaii in the north arrived at Malaspina University-College excited and eager to begin training for shellfish farming careers. They are the first wave in the development of a First Nations led shellfish aquaculture industry in the North Coast of British Columbia.

Staff of the Malaspina Centre for Shellfish Research has been working hard to provide a custom training program tailored to meet their unique needs. The 53 days of training program will take place between September 2007 and May 2008 and encompass 11 aquaculture courses and 1 marine safety course. Training will occur both at Malaspina and in Prince Rupert.

Over the past 3 years, pilot farms in each community have been testing the growth and survival of oysters, blue mussels, Mediterranean mussels and Japanese scallops to determine which shellfish grow best at each site. Japanese scallops have grown exceptionally well at all pilot sites and as a result have been selected as the species which will be the basis of their start-up farming operations. As part of the initial courses, students were toured to Island Scallops Ltd. in Bowser, the hatchery that will be supplying the "seed" scallops, as well as to a shellfish farm on Saltspring Island to view the latest shellfish growing techniques.

"With funding provided by the BC Ministry of Economic Development, we can go the extra mile in supporting the trainees to ensure the best chances for their success" states Don Tillapaugh, CSR Director. "Course instructors provide not only formal classroom training and local tours, but they will also provide mentoring and on-site follow-up visits to students in their First Nations communities. This extra measure of support will be invaluable as students begin this exciting initiative. A previous consultants report has outlined the potential for a scallop industry on the north coast region that could employ nearly 300 people with an annual payroll of \$7.5 million. This is a significant number of potential new jobs where unemployment rates as high as 60% have been reported" says Tillapaugh.

Koren Bear, Manager of the shellfish training program highlights the benefit of hosting the students on the Malaspina Nanaimo campus. "Malaspina has a very strong First Nations program, states Koren, allowing us to integrate First Nations culture into the learning environment. In addition we have drawn upon instructors from related programs who have added a further dimension to the student's experience. This adds to the richness of our program and provides insight to students on other educational avenues available to them at Malaspina.