

## **FLAGSHIP PROGRAM READY TO SAIL**

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A new program slated to start at Charles Hays Secondary next year will be the first of its kind in British Columbia. The Paul Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative is a business program designed to teach Aboriginal students the basics of entrepreneurship.

The program, which starts in February 2009, will be taught through the Aboriginal Department at Hays and already has 18 students signed up.

"Those 18 students are going to get an awesome opportunity," said Charles Hays principal Sandy Jones. "In this time of immense cutbacks when we're being cut to the bone, we've got this nice flagship program that really will address some important needs here."

Students in the program will be charged with starting their own business. There will be work incorporated throughout to improve their abilities in math, English, accounting, marketing and leadership.

They will also be provided with mentorship from members of the Prince Rupert Chamber of Commerce. "We're excited to see something like this come to the community," said Deb Stava, Chamber of Commerce president.

"We look forward to working with youth and leaders in the Aboriginal community."

Charles Hays will be the second school in Canada to participate in this program. Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay, Ont. was the first school to use this model.

The pilot program recently came to a successful conclusion with the graduation of the first group of Grade 12s.

"The original intention of the program when started by the Martin foundation was really to encourage Aboriginal students to stay in school and to help them with that," said Jones.

"If you look at the stats, it's not that good for Aboriginal students.

"I think, as a district, we're doing pretty good but this will certainly be an advantage for some of our students."

Jones and a group from Charles Hays students travelled to Thunder Bay last year to visit the school that was running the program. In May, they went to New York City for training.

"We're looking for students who aren't as connected as we'd like with school and get them involved," said Jones.

So far, the program has received plenty of applicants.

"There is a trickle-down effect from having this kind of program. You can see it in the school."