



# PREFACE

The concept of starting a Think Tank on Wealth Creation had its initial origin in the cumulative experience and knowledge of the past two generations, that of my Father and Grandfather. Certainly, the determination to undertake this sort of activity, also came from the recognition that there is an absence of an effective economic model that is friendly to sustainability (without creating dependency), and free market growth. This thought was the catalyst that brought and held the Think Tank together.

My late Uncle Heber Maitland, a Haisla and long-term elected Chief from Kitamaat, would often voice his frustration in dealing with the federal government, and in particular, the never-ending battle with the Department of Indian Affairs. He would often state, “we are nothing more than servants in our own house.” This statement has often come to represent similar frustrations for me at government’s lack of desire, commitment, and vision to change its policies with respect to Native Peoples. Early on in the Think Tank process, the Think Tank participants changed and adapted the phrase to read, “becoming masters in our own house.”

The objective of the Think Tank on Wealth Creation was to examine how wealth is created and how the journey of economic prosperity could be reached in a free market economy on reserve. What conditions and barriers exist that prevent the creation of wealth and prosperity? Inversely, what conditions must exist to build a meaningful and sustainable economy, especially absent from the creation and reliance on characteristics of dependency.

In doing so, we quickly arrived at the conclusion that we must also simultaneously examine why poverty exists, why people are poor, and what changes would need to be implemented which are absent from the insidious tools of dependency and expectation. Using international models and experiences, comparisons were drawn into the discussion for this purpose. Together with the diverse mix of the Think Tank membership, we were able to identify, explore, compare, and explain patterns common to the objective of creating sustainable free market economies.

Over the course of the term of the Think Tank, we firmly arrived at the conclusion that there are definite identifiable elements that lead to economic prosperity in a free market. Conversely, there are also factors that inhibit and are destructive to economic

growth. Common to such factors includes mixing politics with business, having an ill defined governance structure where little or no rules exist, having an absence of private property, assuming that all politics is equal to good economic sense, and having a system that is replete with high transaction costs. In short any model that encourages and creates dependency creates high expectations, instability, and discourages investment and business growth.

While there is tremendous resistance to change, it is imperative that we define ourselves outside of, and away from the Indian Act. While there may be some merit to retaining some aspects of our “fiduciary relationship” with the federal government, it, nevertheless, remains our challenge to construct economies of prosperity that takes a different road than in the past.

The various cornerstones of this research by the Think Tank, as found in this publication, is a result of intense dialogue, and years of experience. While we utilized the expertise of Mr. Graham Allen and Dr. Ronald Mitchell of the Think Tank to record and pen our conclusions, credit goes to every member of the group, both past and present. It is necessary to acknowledge and give credit to Mr. Allen and Dr. Mitchell for their tremendous contributions, as their skills were an asset. I am extremely grateful for those that participated actively and consistently throughout the entire term of the Think Tank. My job as Chairman was made easy due to the bright minds, openness, flexibility, and patience, especially as this related back to my own impatience and desire, at times, to want to “storm the castle.” This publication is a result of the combined efforts of the entire membership on the Think Tank, and I thank you.

We also had the wonderful opportunity of invited special guests such as Mr. R. Derrickson, West Bank, and Mr. Edmund Wright, Nisga’a Lisims Government, who added value and considerable experience and insight to our discussions. Lastly, public gratitude must be given to the leadership and Executive of the Skeena Native Development Society for their support of this vision and encouragement of this process. This includes Ms. Marjorie McRae, President, Mr. Clarence Martin, Vice-President, and Mr. Raymond Jones Secretary/Treasurer. Without their express support, this work would not have been possible.

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