

THE NISMA PROJECT SOCIETY
REPORT TO Clayoquot Biosphere Trust
2005/2006 SEASON

Our Goals for the Nisma Project were and are to:

-Promote an environmentally conscious view of Tla-o-qui-aht territory and the world in general.

-Reconnect youth with the land they live in by actively involving them in regular outdoor activities.

-Promote healthy habits and lifestyle choices in eating, behaviour towards others and behaviour towards nature.

-Build self-esteem through a sense of belonging, achievement, and co-operation.

-Provide an environment where kids can safely get exercise and increase their knowledge of local cultural practises and technologies to do with plants and natural materials.

The Nisma Project Society has definitely achieved what we set out to achieve at the beginning of the project. While our project expects the full impact on youth and their families to be seen after years of the program, there have been several excellent examples of the immediate impact that the activities we provide for youth have had. For instance, one family that we know of started to do their "own" Nisma Trips. There was one weekend that we were not able to offer a program, and the following weekend the three children from the family reported to us that their mother had taken them all out to do their own outdoor activity, which was very exciting for them. In another instance, one of the groups was in the national park doing a nature walk. One 8 year old girl was lagging behind the group, with a leader when she met some out-of-area visitors on the trail. The little girl struck up a conversation with them, and proceeded to tell them about a fungus called "Witches Butter" – an edible jelly fungus – that she had learnt about on a trip the previous weekend. Soon the little girl was telling them all about various plants that were growing on the trail side, knowledge that she had learned in just a few weeks. This kind of enthusiasm is amazing to see from a young First Nations girl, who used to think that pretty much everything was "Gross"! Another example we'll share is of the effect of the programs on the families involved. We heard from several of the kids that their parents had started to use their Nisma trips as incentive for them to do their schoolwork or household chores. Apparently the kids enjoyed their experiences so much that it

became a lever for parents around the home. The Nisma trip leaders weren't quite sure how they felt about this development, but it certainly seemed to work for the parents, since the kids seemed to make it to the trips! The last example is a general statement we got from almost all the kids. The trip leaders were thanked repeatedly, and sometimes emotionally, for taking the kids out on the activities. The repeated reason was that if they didn't have Nisma trips to go on, they would stay home all weekend with nothing to do. A few of the kids would come every week, looking quite depressed and sad, but by the end of the day we sent them home smiling and asking "where are we going next week?" It's hard to convey some of the home situations that a lot of kids came from, the Native reserves in the area suffer from many endemic social problems. The Nisma programs are a part of the progress towards community health that Native communities in our area are striving for.

There are many similar examples of impacts on the kids. We will work on a way to measure the results more scientifically in the future if necessary.

1. What impact has this grant had on your organization and your available resources?

The funding we received from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust was instrumental to our ability to run our programs. We were able to meet all of the requirements of our original plan. The support from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust was also very helpful in leveraging other funds for the Nisma project.

The Nisma Project Society now has equipment to help the kids stay comfortable while they participate in the trips. A majority of the kids who came out on trips came wearing cotton sweatshirts – in the rain, in January on the west coast. With a portion of the funding the society purchased raincoats, reusable water bottles, and backpacks. This equipment will be used again next fall when we start the Nisma programs again.

2. Were additional funds obtained from other sources to assist you in this strategic project? Please identify them.

The Nisma Project Society received other funds from: The Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Greenpeace, and The Victoria Foundation.

3. How many children and families have benefited from this program and how have they been empowered? Please provide stats.

There have been 25 families and over 50 youth who have benefited directly from this program.

