

The Aboriginal BUSINESS REPORT

A CCAB PUBLICATION



THE GENERATIONAL COMMITMENT

BUILDING BRIDGES TO ABORIGINAL BUSINESS. CELEBRATING 30 YEARS.



CCAB: A 30 YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

**PROGRESSIVE ABORIGINAL RELATIONS (PAR)
CHANGING BUSINESS FOR THE BETTER**

Pictured:
Murray Koffler
Ron Jamieson
JP Gladu



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J.P. GLADU
PRESIDENT AND CEO

I am honoured to be at the helm of such an amazing organization as the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) during this very exciting time in the progression of Aboriginal business in Canada. The cover of *The Aboriginal Business Report* really speaks to the generational journey the CCAB has been on since its inception over 30 years ago.

The reality is CCAB would not exist today without the early and continued support of Corporate Canada. They came to the table in recognition of not only a sense of social responsibility, but also because of the direct benefits to their bottom line that could be realized through the engagement of Aboriginal business.

Through the development of important business partnerships over the years we have come to recognize, respect and appreciate each other's strengths.

Bridges needed to be built. CCAB Co-founder Murray Koffler's aspirations for Aboriginal business taking charge of their future just one short generation later, continues to be realized through the important work of CCAB.

Early in the development of CCAB the commitment of board members like Ron Jamieson helped give rise to a renaissance of the Aboriginal entrepreneurial spirit. He spearheaded the growth of Aboriginal banking, becoming a powerhouse and catalyst for change while mentoring many along the way, including myself.

Changing the lives of our people in the business world happens one person at a time, as is so aptly reflected through the work of this year's National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur award recipient, Kendal Netmaker. Through his company, Neechie Gear, he champions giving back to his community, reflecting on the generosity shown to him by a friend that allowed him to participate in after-school sports. Today Kendal is helping less fortunate youth participate in after-school sports programs by sharing five per cent of his profits each year. This is truly a lesson in youthful corporate good citizenship and a model for others.

As Aboriginal business in Canada has strengthened and flourished, Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame (ABHF) Laureate Mel E. Benson has built a hugely successful consulting firm with a focus on First Nations/Corporate Negotiations. Mr. Benson is a shining example of how the times have changed for Aboriginal people in business in Canada today. As a member of the Suncor board of directors Mel is able to speak to corporate Canada directly while sharing his wealth of experience with his people and all Canadians. With more than 20 ABHF Laureates and our now second Youth Entrepreneur award recipient, celebrating Aboriginal business success at CCAB continues to thrive and grow.

Natural resources are a major part of our foundation, which feed other sectors across the country.

The Aboriginal Business Report

is published for The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB)

2 Berkley Street, Suite 310
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416-961-3995
www.ccab.com

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MediaEdge
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33 South Station Street
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Toll Free: 1-866-480-4717
robertt@mediaedge.ca

Publisher
Maurice P. LaBorde

Sales Manager
John Pashko

Editor
Ali Mintenko-Crane

Sales Executives
Pat Johnson, Nolan Ackman, David Tetlock,
Aran Lindsay, Jack Smith

Senior Graphic
Design Specialist
James T. Mitchell

President
Kevin Brown

Senior Vice President
Robert Thompson

Branch Manager
Nancie Privé

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

While I'm fully aware of the enormous contributions our people make across the board from technology to service industries, I ask that we recognize the historical importance of Canada as a natural resource rich country. Canada's economy relies on those resources. We need to manage them through the use of best practices and technologies while being as responsible and sustainable as we can on the road

to business growth. It is through many of these natural resource industries that Aboriginal business is succeeding and allowing our people to prosper.

The point is that our people have made quantum leaps in the past couple of decades and continue to make substantial contributions to Canada's economy.

Business relationships signal the willingness to explore opportunities so we can grow together. I believe that we can continue to grow Aboriginal business in tandem with corporate Canada, which has recognized Aboriginal business as the next great growth opportunity in the country. That growth is only going to happen when we respectfully come to terms with our past differences, our current challenges and mutually embrace future opportunities.

Building Lasting Partnerships

Graham is committed to engaging with local Aboriginal communities in order to build a better tomorrow. That's why we've formed partnerships like Points Athabasca Contracting LP and Points Athabasca FHQ. Together, we do more than build structures. We hire, train and mentor First Nations people to ensure they succeed in the role that best suits their interest and abilities, and empower them through meaningful participation in the construction industry.

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The CCAB Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program is our online management and reporting program that supports progressive improvement in Aboriginal relations with a certification program that confirms corporate performance in Aboriginal relations at the bronze, silver or gold level. Certified companies promote their certification with a PAR logo that signals to communities that they are good business partners; great places to work, and are committed to prosperity in Aboriginal communities.

The PAR logo provides a high level of assurance to communities because the designation is supported by an independent, third party verification of company reports on outcomes and initiatives in four performance areas: employment, business development, community investment and community engagement – and a juried review by Aboriginal business people. We see PAR as an important window of opportunity.

The Aboriginal Business Report truly reflects generational change as we learn from the past and optimistically embrace the future. ■

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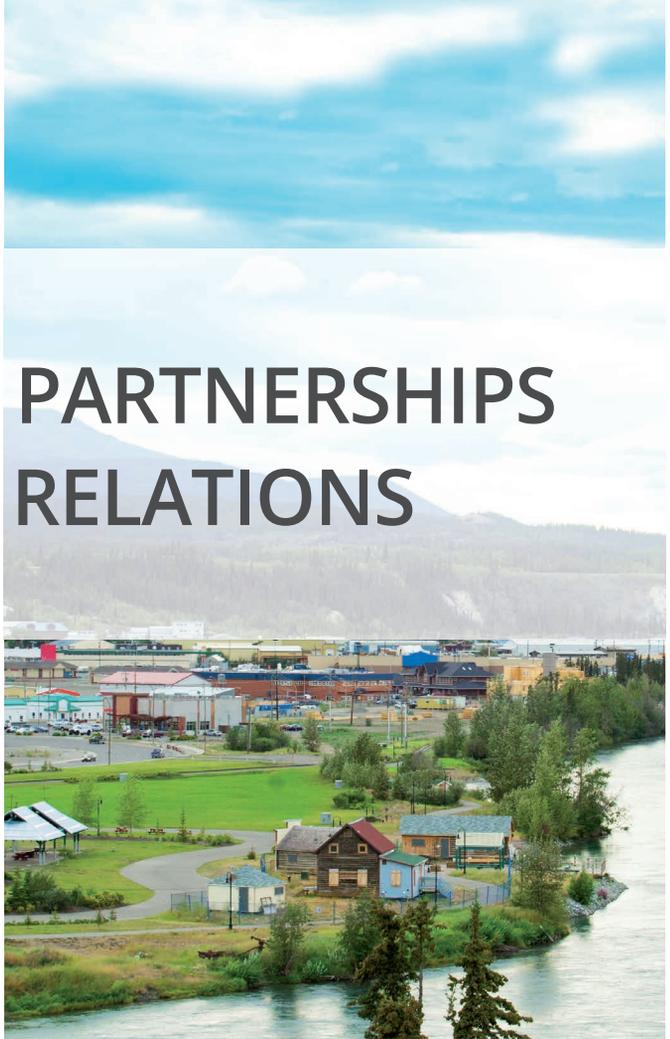
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Education, mentorship and employment

ATCO is committed to bridging employment barriers and creating a lasting legacy through programs that encourage mentorship, education and employment in Indigenous communities.

Community Involvement

ATCO supports and participates in a multitude of events throughout the year that bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to raise awareness, learn and celebrate. Several examples in 2014 include:

- National Aboriginal Day in Canada
- National Aboriginal and Islander Week in Australia
- Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission event
- Circumpolar Northern Games
- North American Indigenous Games.



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ATCO's Kitchen Skills program unlocks career possibilities through salt and pepper

Many people think of skills in terms of marketability in the context of a job hunt – programming, salesmanship and social media marketing. But for others, it's about more than a job search; everyday life skills can inspire a renewed sense of possibilities and a desire to succeed.

This year, ATCO Structures & Logistics brought an ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen training program to the Woodland Cree First Nation in Northern Alberta. The week-long Kitchen Skills program aimed at helping adults and high school students develop knife skills, safe food handling practices and collaboration skills. It was met with tremendous success in inspiring students to begin a career in food services.

Bringing a taste of the kitchen world to the Woodland Cree First Nation was a crucial first step in sparking interest and presenting realistic possibilities in hospitality career. Fourteen high school students and 11 adult community members completed the week-long accredited course. No longer unfamiliar with herbs and spices, they worked as a banquet team to put on a

community feast of roast beef, aromatic salads and hors d'oeuvres that wouldn't be out of place in a metropolitan eatery.

Simon Smith, a teacher at Cadotte Lake High School where the program took place, saw the immediate impact of the program on adults and kids alike.

“Truly, I have already seen the difference it is making before my very eyes,” says Smith. “A successful job skills program such as this helps to build bridges between the Aboriginal community, the corporate sector and the municipal jurisdiction.”

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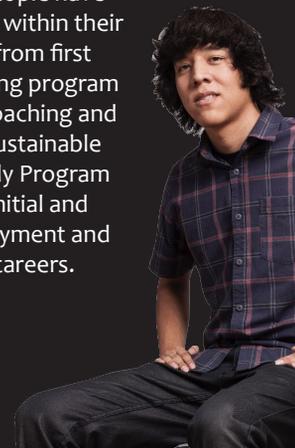
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4. Career mentoring – We make sure there is a built-in support system that stays with each person on the job site. It will help them navigate any daily workplace and personal challenges that may come up while being away from home, or in a new environment. That support is based on the real experience of empathetic people that have gone before you.

The Get Ready Program works primarily with Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis people, including disadvantaged and at risk groups, looking to work in the oil and gas, and construction industries. Many Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis people have too few career opportunities within their communities. We also know from first hand experience that a training program without career placement, coaching and mentoring isn't enough for sustainable career growth. The Get Ready Program helps our people overcome initial and ongoing challenges to employment and ensures long and successful careers.



BY ALEXANDRA GUNDY

CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL BUSINESS: 30 YEARS

Thirty years after its inception, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) welcomed nearly 500 guests into the Ritz Carlton Hotel in downtown Toronto. The 16th Annual Toronto Gala, held in February, was 2014's opening event, and marked the beginning of an astounding year for the organization.

CCAB Co-Chair Ron Jamieson watched as guests began to fill the event space. Jamieson, former Vice-President of Aboriginal Banking at the Bank of Montreal, has been deeply involved in CCAB since the beginning.

"The organization is in stellar condition," Ron says. "But it wasn't always easy. We built the business from nothing," he says.

"And now we have hundreds of stories about successful small Aboriginal businesses. We have some amazing entrepreneurs, and we have deep-seated relationships with major corporations."

Three decades later, Jamieson remembers CCAB's beginnings.

In the mid-1980s, a large number of Canada's one million Aboriginal Peoples lived at the fringes of the economy, with very little or no access to the opportunities that many Canadians took for granted. As CCAB President and CEO JP Gladu has reiterated many times, First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities were essentially shut out of Canada's economy for 400 years. Under the *Indian Act*, the federal government had closely regulated the interaction and day-to-day lives of registered Indians and reserve communities for more than a century. Living standards were low and unemployment was high. The Canadian Human Rights Commission described the situation as a "national tragedy" and said Natives are "drastically under-represented in employment in virtually every industrial sector and every occupation." Poor conditions on reserves had driven many Aboriginal people to relocate to urban centres like Calgary, which lacked the basic services to help them find housing and employment.

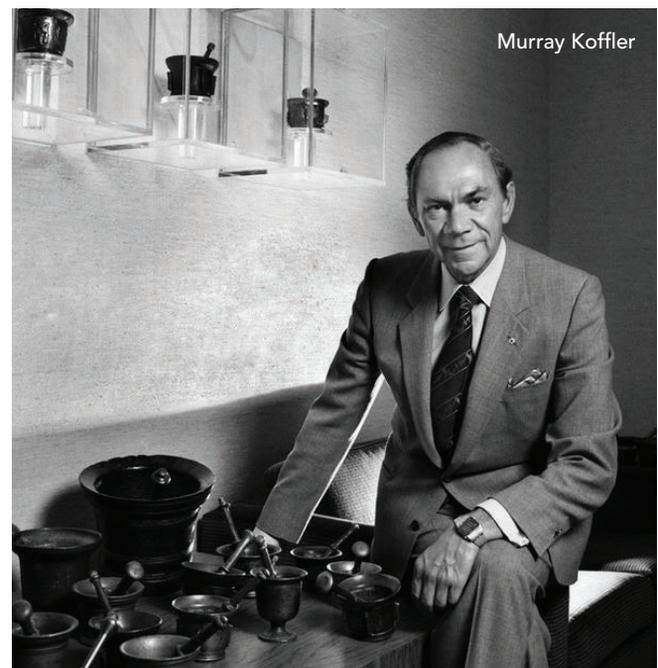
Murray Koffler, founder of Shopper's Drug Mart and co-founder of the Four Seasons Hotel, saw this firsthand while inspecting a partly completed Four Seasons in Calgary

in spring of 1982. While visiting the hotel site, he came across a family huddled in the basement, amongst the tools and construction. This family was indicative of a much larger problem.

Later that day, Koffler dropped in on a local Shopper's Drug Mart, as he often did when travelling. While he was there he witnessed a family of three shoplifting.

"They were young, and they were native, and they were 'shoplifting to beat the band,' according to Murray," Jamieson remembers. "He followed them down the street, around the corner, down an alley. And he saw that they were living in a dumpster, in downtown Calgary."

Koffler estimated that the parents were around 20 years old and had their young son with them. They stole junk food, nothing of much value. Koffler could not forget the petty theft, and he knew that something needed to be done.



Murray Koffler

Photo by Al Gilbert

30TH ANNIVERSARY

He began by reaching out to powerful friends and acquaintances. He called ministers in parliament and demanded answers.

“A guy like Murray, he could do that,” says Jamieson. “Murray could get practically anybody on the phone.”

In 1982 Koffler was building an empire, and had forged several strong relationships with high profile and influential Canadians. He reached out to Barnett (Barney) Danson, the former Minister of National Defence.

“He gave Barney holy hell about what was being done in Ottawa, what was being done at the Department of Indian Affairs,” Jamieson says. “And Barney wasn’t used to being pushed around much.”

Jamieson says Danson fired right back at Koffler. As he remembers it, Danson told Koffler that the business community had a responsibility to make things better too.

Koffler also sought advice from the Hon. Hugh Faulkner, former Minister of Northern and Indian Affairs in Canada’s federal government, who commiserated that the government was doing the best it could, but was failing miserably. Bureaucracy and stereotypical responses had stunted productivity and progress. Massive funds were being expended but cost-effective results were not being achieved.

They wanted to know why Murray and “his business buddies

weren’t getting off their butts and doing something to help,” says Jamieson, “And so we did.”

Koffler was well connected in the corporate and political milieus but needed assistance in reaching key leaders of the Native communities across Canada.

“There’s a lack of connection in general, between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people,” Koffler has said.

In 1982, he convinced a group of influential people from various sectors of society to sit down together to discuss what could be done to bring Native participation into Canada’s business and commercial enterprises.

The group agreed that the reliance on government for so long had had a devastating effect on Natives, who they found had the highest unemployment, lowest level of income, poorest housing conditions, and poorest educational facilities. Koffler found widespread agreement that government, by itself, would never be able to develop a strong, independent business base among Native Peoples. The consensus was a resounding “yes,” that the private sector needed to get involved.

The group met again in 1983 and formed their new organization, called The Canadian Council for Native Business, later renamed The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

In March of the following year, the group finalized the details and legalized the organization that was subsequently

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incorporated under the *Canada Corporations Act* on August 8, 1984.

In the late 1980s, Canadian businesses were feeling the effects of a downturn in the economy, the free trade agreement, and the imposition of the seven per cent Goods and Services Tax. CCAB took the pulse of Aboriginal businesses through a parallel, cross-Canada survey that found that 60 per cent reported a decline in business due directly to the recession. This included layoffs, lower sales and slower growth in the prior year. The study found 10 per cent of Aboriginal businesses reported a decline in employment, not only in their own businesses, but also in their communities. The business people who said they had not been affected gave guarded responses: they felt the Aboriginal economy was always in recession.

"It wasn't always easy, and trying to convince corporate Canada that it was in their best interest from the point of view of increasing their opportunities," says Jamieson. He adds that despite the negative impact of the recession, Aboriginal entrepreneurs strongly believed that Aboriginal people were turning around in a positive way and moving forward. But at the height of a recession, convincing large corporations that helping the country improve the situation for Aboriginal people would in turn actually make them money was difficult.

"It was very challenging," Jamieson says. "As I have said this from day one, the *raison d'être* of the Canadian Council



Young Aboriginal man receiving a scholarship from the Indian Affairs Branch to pursue post-secondary education

Source: Library and Archives Canada/Department of Employment and Immigration fonds

for Aboriginal Business is to form mutual partnerships for mutual benefits of those involved. It's not all about helping the Indians, it's about helping businesses get rich. It's about the benefits that flow each way.

"As national Co-Chairman, I became very involved, and I've had the benefit of working with over 400 reserves in Canada," he says. Jamieson, a Mohawk from Six Nations,



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has been very active in economic development initiatives for Aboriginal communities across Canada.

"30 years ago banks did not do business with Aboriginal people on reserves, and there's a reason for it. There is a section in the *Indian Act* that says 'no Indian living on reserve can pledge their assets security for a loan'," says Jamieson. "Natives living on reserves were unable to access banking services because the Act prevented them from pledging assets to secure loans."

He says the barriers that faced entrepreneurs who lived on reserve made it almost impossible for them to start a business.

"Just imagine there was never a nickel's worth of mortgage money in the city of Toronto. What would you have? You'd certainly have a city, but it wouldn't look anything like it does now," Jamieson says. "Everything is built on mortgages."

Two Aboriginal men walking into the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce



Source: Library and Archives Canada/Department of Employment and Immigration fonds

Since then, Canadian banks have created systems to help entrepreneurs living on reserves to secure financing. Jamieson, who was appointed to the Order of Canada last year, was one of the architects of these systems.

CCAB was not immune to the challenges that were facing Aboriginal businesses.

"There was a time when we didn't think financially we'd be able to keep the organization afloat. It's a not-for-profit, and there were times when we didn't know whether we could pay rent."

Three decades later, CCAB is growing steadily, and now has almost 400 members. Last year, the organization outgrew its old office space, and moved into a much bigger new location at Toronto's Berkeley Castle, near the historic distillery district.

"It's exciting," says Jamieson. "It's exceeded what we envisioned 30 years ago."

CCAB has evolved immensely, and Jamieson says that encouraging ingenuity is integral to the organization's continued financial growth. He has made the decision to leave CCAB in order to make room for a younger generation.

"I think that we've got some young bright Aboriginal people coming up, and it's just time for some new blood to come in, and continue to vitalize the organization," he says. "It's an exciting time, and it's time to bring in fresh faces."

Encouraging young Aboriginal entrepreneurs has become a very important part of CCAB's mandate, and last year the organization celebrated a remarkable young Cree woman who, coincidentally, is the same age as CCAB.

In February 2014, Savannah Olsen became the first ever recipient of the CCAB National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award. Olsen, who was 30 when she won, owns the Old Faithful Shop in Vancouver, and was presented with the prestigious award at the 16th Annual Toronto Gala. The

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CCAB!

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CCAB TIMELINE:

SPRING 1982

Murray Koffler, the founder of Shopper's Drug Mart witnesses poverty among Native people living in downtown Calgary.

1984

The Canadian Council for Native Business becomes officially incorporated. Founding Board members Paul Martin, the Hon. Andre Bissonnette, and Edward Bronfman. Daniel Branff become the first President of what will later be known as CCAB.

1990

CCAB is presented with Ontario's "Outstanding Award for Volunteerism" from the Hon. Lincoln Alexander, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

1995

Paul Summers and Ron Jamieson are named Co-Chairmen. Both had been deeply involved with CCAB since its inception.

1998

Soulodre comes up with the idea of a "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval," that companies could use show that they are doing work with Aboriginal businesses and communities. The "Good Housekeeping" seal becomes the framework for the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program.

2001

PAR is officially launched with 10 companies committed to the program. PAR provides a roadmap for identifying successful corporate behaviour in Aboriginal relations.

2005

CCAB introduces The Lifetime Achievement Award as part of the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame. Since the inaugural awards, the ABHF has inducted 19 laureates.

2012

JP Gladu is appointed President and CEO of CCAB.

2014

CCAB celebrates 30 years of fostering sustainable business relations between First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and Canadian business.

1982

Koffler invites influential Canadians to his farm to discuss the role that Canadian business should be playing in the economic development of Canada's Native communities.

1989

The federal government issues its new Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, which emphasizes the importance of encouraging new Aboriginal business.

1992

With the *Financial Post* and Air Canada, CCAB co-sponsored a hands-on seminar called "Doing Business with Aboriginal Canada." The class looked at success stories and case studies, bringing together Native and private sector business leaders from the U.S. and Canada. This conference was subsequently repeated across Canada.

1996

Jocelyn Soulodre, a Red River Métis from Manitoba, becomes President of CCAB.

1999

The concept of the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program is introduced at a CCAB gala.

2003

CCAB enters into an alliance with the United Nations, through its World Trade University's Institute for Leadership Development.

2011

Erin Meehan, President of ESS North America, joins Ron Jamieson as Co-Chair of the CCAB Board of Directors.

2013

CCAB publishes *Community and Commerce: A Survey of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations in Ontario*, in partnership with Environics Research Group.

Certified Aboriginal Business Program is launched

30TH ANNIVERSARY

award came with a significant prize of \$10,000, a sum that has helped Olsen propel the business forward.

"We've been able to undertake larger projects that would have been difficult to follow through with," says Olsen, from her shop in Vancouver's trendy and historic Gastown district. "Winning the award allowed us to develop our brand in a way that just wouldn't have been possible before."

When Olsen and her partner Walter Manning opened Old Faithful Shop in 2010, they had a very clear vision of what they wanted, but initially faced some difficulty getting the business off the ground.

"The biggest challenge was getting the financing to start the business. Being so young, and having no assets to secure a loan made it so difficult," Olsen says. "Retail businesses are seen as high risk, and we wanted to start when the recession was waning."

Old Faithful Shop is inspired by the general stores of a century ago. Olsen has created a vintage inspired space which carries locally made traditional products alongside modern items crafted by artisans from across North America and around the world.

Forging relationships is important to Olsen. The business draws in a steady stream of customers, and has been consistently profitable since its launch four years ago. Olsen hopes to inspire other young Aboriginal entrepreneurs, particularly other young business-minded women.

"It's so important to be recognized not only as a woman running a small business, but more importantly, as an Aboriginal woman."

From Koffler's chance personal encounter in Calgary of 1982, grew a dynamic private sector organization devoted to promoting the participation of Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian economy. ■



Savannah Olsen and June at Old Faithful Shop by Rachel Rilko

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- Gaming
- Governance

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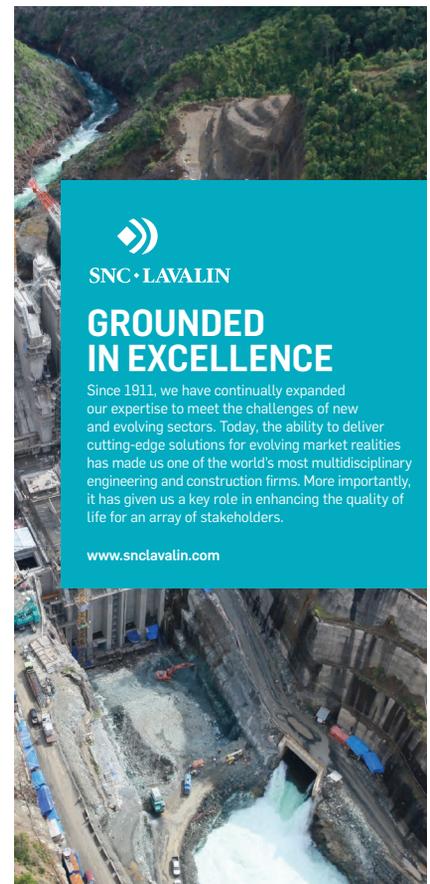
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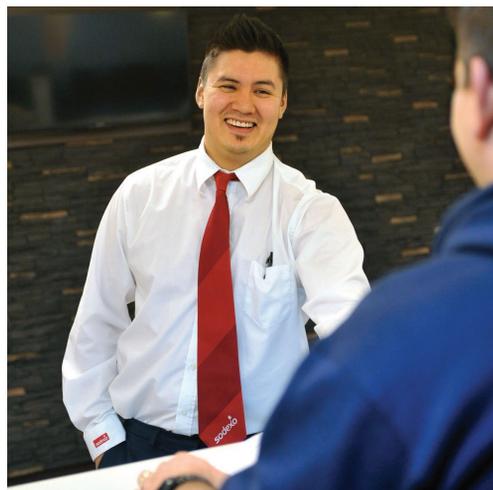
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A SHINING EXAMPLE

MEMBERTOU DEVELOPMENT CORP. IS AWARDED WITH THE ABORIGINAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF THE YEAR AWARD



Situated three kilometres from downtown Sydney, N.S., Membertou Development Corp. is a shining example of a thriving urban First Nation community. It is home to more than 1,400 band members, a state-of-the-art convention centre, newly opened elementary school, gaming centre and hotel, the latter of which is located just outside the reserve's boundaries. The commercial hub, with its diversified economy, will soon boast a multimillion-dollar dual ice pad arena, which will only add to Membertou's gross annual revenues of \$124-million (\$95-million of which is from band-owned and operated businesses). However, it hasn't always been this way.

Just two decades ago, Membertou was in deep debt, so much so that there was concern it wouldn't be able to issue social assistance cheques. Low morale and a high unemployment rate plagued the community and exacerbated its plight. But instead of giving up, Chief Terrance Paul got tough to reverse Membertou's fortunes. He and the Membertou council recruited band members that had left the community years prior to put its financial house in order. They worked to forge a new economic frontier for Membertou, wean the community off federal government handouts, form partnerships with major private sector companies, and implement education and career training programs for its residents to maximize employment opportunities within the evolving business

framework. The result: Membertou has gone from 37 employees on a \$4 million budget and \$1 million deficit to 550 employees on a \$112 million budget and zero deficit. It has successfully launched 13 Aboriginal economic development initiatives since 1995, and its current employment rate hovers between 80 and 90 per cent.

In recognition of its ability to overcome the significant challenges facing the community and reinvent itself, Membertou was honoured with the Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) of the Year Award in 2014.

"We're very honoured to receive this award," says Chief Paul. "It's very significant to Membertou as it indicates and validates what we're doing is the right thing."

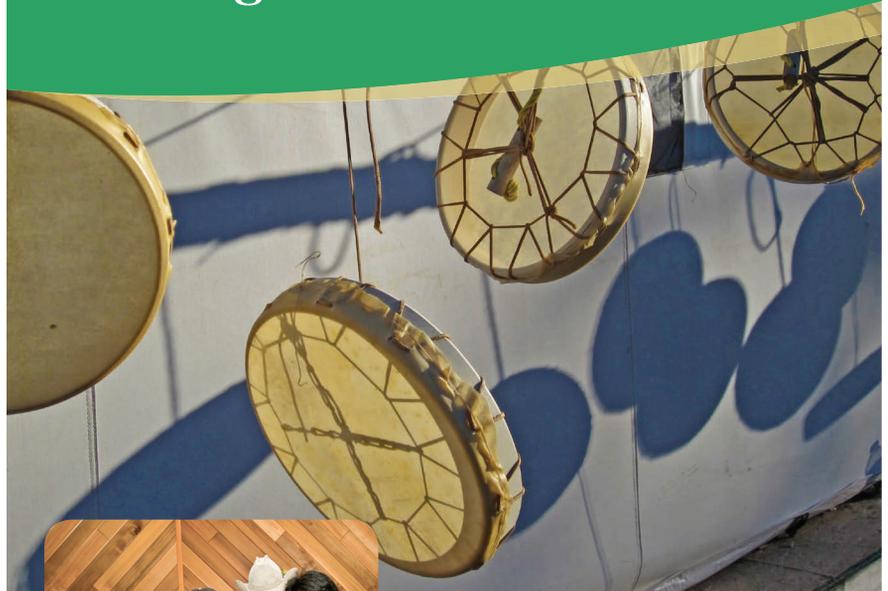
Presented by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and the award's founding and exclusive sponsor, Sodexo Canada, at the CCAB's annual gala in Calgary, the award is designed to shine a light on the important role Aboriginal corporations are playing in boardrooms and First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities across the country.

"Celebrating these growing economic powerhouses is allowing all Canadians an opportunity to look beyond past stereotypes to a new relationship with our Aboriginal peoples focused on equitable, sustainable prosperity for all Canadians," says CCAB president and CEO, JP Gladu.

Barry Telford, president of Sodexo Canada, couldn't agree more.

"This award is dedicated to celebrating the economic well-being, sustainability and improved quality of life that Aboriginal development corporations bring to their communities," he says, offering his congratulations to the first-ever recipient.

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But it's not just Membertou that should be commended for its efforts. Sodexo has a long history of working with First Nations to improve their economic, social and cultural status, and overall quality of life. To date, the food services and facilities management corporation has partnered with 35 Aboriginal communities Canada-wide.

What do these partnerships entail?

While each is unique, Sodexo generally shares business experience and technical expertise with its partners, invests in local talent acquisition, develops and delivers on-the-job training, and promotes the mentor-protégé relationship.

"These joint ventures are a win-win for all involved," says Telford, who cites Sodexo's partnership with the Mikisew Group of Companies as a good example.

Sodexo's relationship with the First Nations community dates back to 2002; however, the two only entered into a formal partnership in 2012, after Suncor approached the pair to provide facilities management services to its Fort Hills camp in northern Alberta. The joint venture, known as Birch River Site Services, commenced in April 2013, and includes the provision of catering, housekeeping, janitorial, maintenance, laundry and food services, among others. The business

expects to see between \$1 million and \$2 million per annum from this venture, depending on occupancy.

"We're very proud of this relationship but what we're most excited about is that as the business grows, other opportunities may develop for the Birch River Site Services Group," says Telford.

If not, all is not lost.

For Sodexo, working with remote Aboriginal communities provides invaluable insight and offers the company greater flexibility in terms of servicing its client.

"They have provided products or services in their area in the past and know the market," says Sodexo's vice-president of supply chain management, Chris Fry. "This helps us secure a more consistent supply chain."

As for the communities themselves, "the partnership helps them establish credibility as a business and allows that business to then develop outside Sodexo," explains Fry.

Committed to collaborating with Aboriginals, Sodexo's partnerships aren't limited to First Nations communities. The company also supports the development of regional

businesses, particularly those related to the service industry.

One such business is Canadian Prairie Garden Purees. The Manitoba-based agri-business produces vegetable, berry and legume puree products for the food industry using an award-winning innovative steam infusion cooking technology. Sodexo not only nominated the woman-owned Aboriginal business for the award but it is currently mentoring the company and testing its products within Sodexo's supply chain – a relationship that likely never would've developed if it hadn't been for Sodexo's commitment to the development and advancement of Aboriginal and minority businesses in Canada.

One of the benefits of being a CCAB corporate member is the opportunity to work with local Aboriginal and minority suppliers, which also provides opportunities to improve community engagement and brand appreciation.

On the flipside, Aboriginal suppliers are given a voice in the mainstream marketplace and, when they partner with Sodexo, they benefit from preferred supplier status.

"When the supplier wins, we as an organization win. And when our client wins, we can all celebrate business achievement," says Fry. ■



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BY KELLY PARKER

A CONVERSATION WITH KENDAL NETMAKER

FOUNDER OF NEECHIE GEAR AND WINNER OF THE 2015 YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

Kendal Netmaker grew up on the Sweetgrass First Nation in Saskatchewan. Single-parented and from a low-income family, he had little opportunity to be involved in any extracurricular activities as a kid. He is also the founder and CEO of Neechie Gear™, a lifestyle apparel brand conceived and built in part to aid and empower Aboriginal youth through participation in sports. The Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame has awarded Netmaker the 2015 Youth Entrepreneur Award and *The Aboriginal Business Report* caught up to the very busy Netmaker for a chat about what brought him to this point, and what drives him to go further.

ABR: I understand you were in university when you started the business?

KN: "I was at the University of Saskatchewan studying to become a teacher. This took off in my last year. I had finished my education classes and my practicum, and then I went another semester to complete a native studies degree as well to combine with the education, and that's when I started this company. I had to learn everything on the go, and I'm still doing that."

ABR: And this grew out of a school project?

KN: "This was actually outside of what I was



studying. I started to enter all of these business planning competitions not really expecting anything out of it, and the next thing you know we're winning some money, and then I just started selling with that money, so that every time I would sell, I would just double it, double it, double it, which is how I was able to raise my capital, by reinvesting it back in.

ABR: What was the idea at the time, as it came to you?

KN: "It was just to create a brand name that would give back to kids the way that I was helped as a kid. The first thing was to create a name, and Neechie is what we call a friend in my language – it comes from a Cree word for 'my friend,' 'my partner,' 'my follower' and so-on. I had no logo, and I just started to print the name on T-shirts, and I found out it was a seller because I started to sell out of those at events. How to start a business, researching brand names and trademarking, GST and all of that kind of stuff came later.

ABR: You say that you wanted to help out kids like you were helped out. It sounds like you didn't have a lot of advantages growing up...

KN: "Yeah. It's something that a lot of kids face growing up on the reserve, and it's something that still happens today, so I kind of took it into my own hands to try to create some opportunities. I actually started by creating my own sports teams – youth under-18 sports teams, mostly



volleyball, competing throughout the province; then we'd partner with different teams like basketball and soccer teams. Then we started to partner with charities like KidSport, which was doing exactly what we do as a non-profit, except that they don't sell anything. We do more of that now as we grow, because I don't have the time to create those teams anymore, but this way, we're still able to impact hundreds of kids, and we have a lot of other partnerships and sponsorships of teams to do that.

ABR: To what or whom do you credit your success?

KN: "(Laughs) Oh, my goodness... I would say that it's probably all of the positive people who have been in

my life and still are. As far as what, it was probably my upbringing mostly. Growing up on the Rez, I was very fortunate and still am, to have my culture – growing up with ceremonies and that kind of thing – and I'm very grateful for that; it's kind of made me the businessman I am today, and influences the way I treat people and clients, for example. There are so many things that have contributed to the success of this brand, and it's all been a learning curve, for sure.

ABR: What motivates you?

KN: "These days, I have two kiddies now, and what I consider to be a big family here with a young boy and a young girl, and my fiancé Rachel is busy as well, so we're a really busy family and they motivate me to stay focused on what I originally intended to do with this company, which was to try to impact kids while at the same time creating a phenomenal brand name that's cool and that people want to wear as well. My family is one of my biggest motivations, for sure.

ABR: 2015 Youth Entrepreneur Award from the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame... tell me what winning this award means to you.

KN: "It's an honour and it's humbling for me. I still feel like there is lots for me to do, so I'm going to take it and enjoy it, and we'll see what the next couple of years have in store for me; I think it's going to keep getting more exciting. ■



The Aboriginal BUSINESS REPORT MARKETPLACE



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BY ALEXANDRA GUNDY

HIGGINS EXECUTIVE SEARCH



Brenda LaRose Higgins



Kimberley Puhach

Higgins Executive Search is a boutique staffing firm with big plans for the future. Brenda LaRose, the founding partner of Higgins Executive Search, started the company about 18 years ago, and she has a clear strategy for where she'll take the business next.

LaRose recently announced the addition of new team member, and future partner, Kimberley Puhach. Although LaRose has no plans on leaving Higgins anytime soon, creating a succession plan is a top priority, and Puhach will play a major role in building and expanding the company.

Since its inception in 1999, the company has placed more Aboriginal executives and professionals than any other firm in Canada, and has partnered with networks all over the world.

LaRose has worked in recruitment and staffing for more than 25 years, but it was an insulting off-the-cuff comment that inspired her leave her job and start her own business. She was working at a large executive search and HR consulting firm in Winnipeg, and had progressed in her career from management search to executive search. LaRose, who is Métis, suggested



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that the firm branch out to focus on recruiting and placing Aboriginal people.

"I told them there was a market in the Aboriginal community for senior level people, professionals, and executives," she says. "And they simply said 'we don't think there is'."

LaRose would not be swayed, and she began to work on recruiting Aboriginal professionals on her own time, outside of work hours. The long hours paid off, and she very quickly landed the company some large accounts. She says that of the approximately 11 people in the firm, about a third of the revenue was coming in from work that she was doing.

As word spread about LaRose's new area of specialization, people started to come from surrounding reserves to seek her help. They would often drop into the office without an appointment, but LaRose always made sure to meet and talk to each of them. She instructed the receptionist to ask the drop-in prospective clients to have a seat in reception, so that even if she was busy she could come out to shake their hand, introduce herself, and take their resume.

"So one Friday the owner of the firm called me into her office," remembers LaRose. "And she said 'we're a professional organization, and we can't have all these Native people sitting in our waiting room'."

LaRose was shocked. She returned to the office the following Monday and resigned.

"That was the reason I started my firm," says LaRose, "the only reason."

In May of 1999 she founded Higgins Executive Search. Word about the new firm that specialized in placing Aboriginal people spread quickly.

"Business just came rolling in. I was so bitter in the beginning, but that awful comment was meant to be, because I never would have started my own company otherwise."

Thirteen years of success followed, and about two years ago LaRose decided to align Higgins with Leaders and Co., a Canadian-based company with an international network. The partnership gave the company access to 90 offices in 50 countries.

"It's outstanding," she says. "It's leading edge stuff that nobody else is doing."

Mary Jane Loustel, who is the National Aboriginal Program Executive at IBM, has used Higgins Executive Search's services for years.

"The process that they use to ensure their clients are matched with the best possible candidate for the job. Higgins ensures that the candidate is prepared to engage and understands the position, the company and the process," she says. "They also always ensure that the client



Arctic Co-operatives Limited



Arctic Co-operatives Limited is a service federation, owned and democratically controlled by 31 community-owned co-operative businesses in the Canadian Arctic. Providing a wide range of operational and technical support services to its Members, its primary role is to co-ordinate the resources and combined purchasing power of these multi-purpose Co-ops as they work together to deliver essential services such as accessibility to food, sundries and supplies.

The federation supports employment and development opportunities for Aboriginal people in the operation and management of these Co-ops through the HR Division's Strategy for Training Arctic Technicians (STAT) Program, benefitting Co-op communities across the Arctic.

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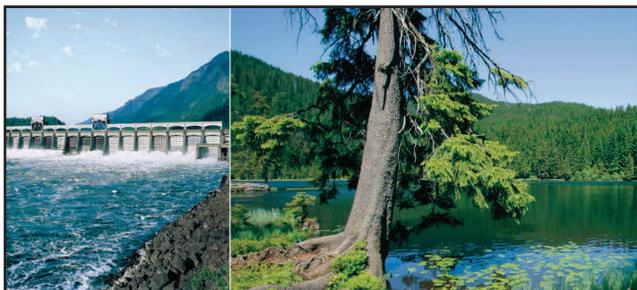
Revenue was up by about a third last year, and LaRose began adding more people to the company. Her son, Brock Higgins, plays an integral part in the firm. He began as an Associate in 2006, has held the position of Managing Partner since 2010, and plans to become a partner in the firm soon.

In the fall of 2014, Puhach joined the company. She has known LaRose for about 20 years, and has spent most of her career in management, sales and marketing.

“Brenda was a mentor to me for a number of years before we made the decision that we would join forces,” Puhach says. “What compelled me to join was how perfectly the company was aligned with my own values as an Aboriginal woman.”

Another aspect that attracted Puhach to the company is the double branding between Higgins Executive Search and Leadership and Co.

“It’s always very interesting to me personally, because as an Indigenous person I have had to learn how to live comfortably in both worlds, in more of a mainstream world, and then more of an Indigenous world,” she says. “This business opportunity parallels what it is that my own experiences,



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Puhach: The most talented people are already happily working, and not exploring other opportunities. That is, until we come knocking at the door. We have access to an entire pool of amazing candidates that companies might otherwise never even find out about.

2. THEY ARE CONNECTED

LaRose: We really don’t do a lot of marketing. Because of word of mouth and repeat business, we have an excellent reputation. And in our community – meaning the Indigenous and Aboriginal community – people know us and they trust us.

3. THEY GO BEYOND THE RESUME

LaRose: It’s all about research, and it’s all about the cultural fit of the organization. We learn the strategic plan of the organization, the culture of the organization, and determine where they’re going. The right candidate has to have the skills and experience, but the behavioural fit must be there as well.

4. THEY FILL ROLES FASTER

LaRose: We are so efficient because we live and breathe search, and we are one of the only firms that is strictly search. Because we don’t offer any other human resource or payroll consulting services, we devote all of our time and passion to finding the best candidate.

both personally and professionally, have led me to. It probably sounds so hokey, but it really does feel like many things in our community were just simply meant to be.”

Puhach, who is a member of the Sandy Bay Ojibway Nation with roots in Peguis First Nation, is inspired by the prospect of long-term commitment to the company.

“The thought of being able to buy into the company and become partner in the future is so exciting to me. I want to share not only rewards, but risk as well.”

Although this is her first foray into executive search, her career change appeals to the entrepreneurial side of her personality.

“I think that first of all, working at that level period, whether it’s indigenous or not, is attractive because it’s a challenge, yet there are so many highly skilled, competent, talented individuals that are out there that are the best kept secrets,” she says. “And perhaps most important to me is opportunity to be able to showcase the Indigenous strengths at those senior levels that, as I mentioned before, much of mainstream Canada has no clue about. I want to be part of introducing our rich resources of talent that exists at those senior levels.” ■

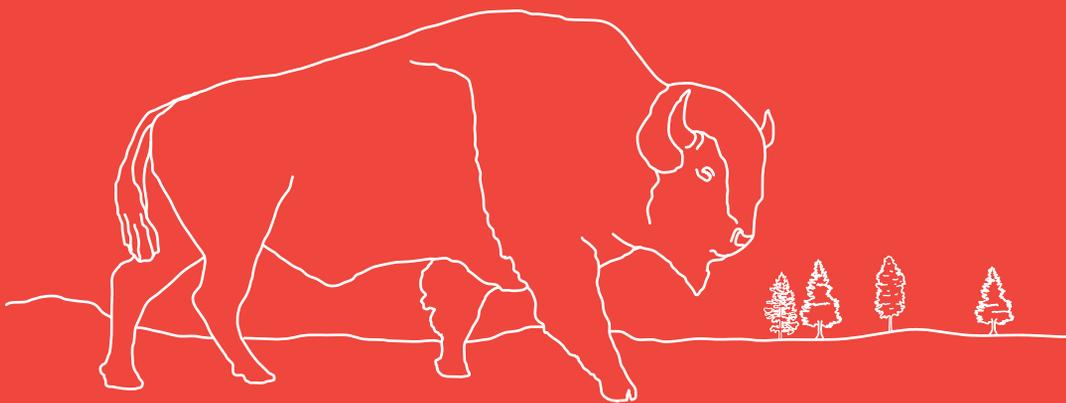
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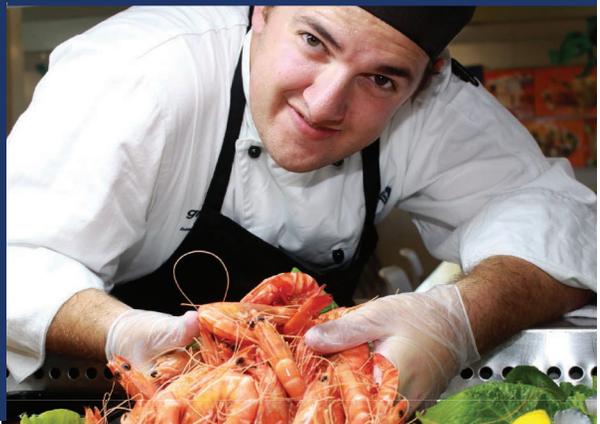
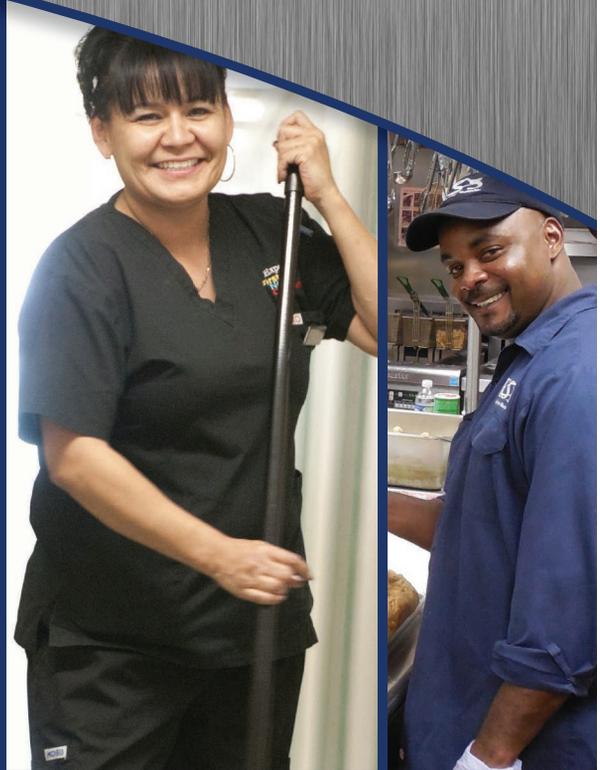
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EXCITEMENT OVER CANADA'S FUTURE

AS THE ABORIGINAL BUSINESS HALL OF FAME AND
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Proud of their participation in the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and sponsorship of the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame, ESS Support Services Worldwide, a division of Compass Group, is excited to congratulate the 2015 Hall of Fame honourees and is enthusiastic about the future.

The Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame (ABHF) presents the Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing Aboriginal persons whose business leadership has made a substantive contribution to the economic and social well-being of Aboriginal people over a lifetime.

In 2014, the ABHF added a second annual award, the National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award. This award recognizes an up-and-coming Aboriginal entrepreneur under the age of 35 and includes a financial award of \$10,000 for use in the entrepreneur's business endeavours.

Award winners are chosen by a committee made up of CCAB Board members as well as industry and Aboriginal community champions. Nominations for the Lifetime Achievement Award may be submitted by anyone. The Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur Award is a self-nomination process both in video as well as a written package.

When asked about the addition of the National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award and what she has witnessed in the past two years, Erin Meehan, President of ESS Support Services Worldwide for North America and CCAB Board Member, beams with excitement: "I have seen passion. I have seen deep-rooted integrity. I have seen unbelievable hard work. But most important, I have seen the kind of spirit in these youth that the elders must be incredibly proud of. The elders' work and teaching has become deeply ingrained in the youth I have had the privilege to work with."

"I am really excited about Canada's future. The world is changing. We need new ideas and new focus to

continue to keep pace with the amount of change I see coming globally. What could be better than to do that with the very people who remain deeply rooted in their culture, traditions and integrity?" she added.

Regarding the importance of recognizing and supporting these young entrepreneurs, Meehan stated: "Aboriginal youth are the largest growing demographic in Canada. The timing is critical to reward the passions and self-motivation of these youth. They will be empowered within their communities and across the country. We need to recognize and support them. They will lead us tomorrow. If we can get them to grow the economy by building businesses and investing back into their own communities, we



Mel Benson

will have a very stable platform for which we can grow our own businesses and economy."

The 2015 Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame Laureate is Mel E. Benson, President, Mel E. Benson Management Services Inc., a consulting firm working in various countries with a focus on First Nations/Corporate negotiations. Mel is also part owner of the private oil and gas company Tenax Energy Inc.

Retired from Exxon International, Mel has been a director of Suncor Energy since 2000, serving on the compensation and environment, health and safety committees. Mel also sits as a Director of the Fort McKay Group of Companies and as a Director of Oilstone Energy Services, based in the USA.

A member of several charitable organizations, Mel prides himself on being active in his community. He's taken numerous leadership positions in this capacity, most recently being appointed to the advisory council for the Alberta Land Institute through the University of Alberta.

Mel is a member of Beaver Lake Cree Nation, located in north-eastern Alberta.

The 2015 National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award winner is Kendal Netmaker, Founder and CEO, Neechie Gear, a lifestyle apparel brand built to empower youth through sports. Kendal has successfully grown his business from a university project to a national name brand.



Kendal Netmaker

Kendal grew up on Sweetgrass First Nation, Saskatchewan. As a single-parented child he came from a low-income family and had little opportunity to be involved in any extracurricular activities. As a result he felt compelled to give back by donating a portion of Neechie Gear's profits to help fund underprivileged youth, allowing them the opportunity to take part in extracurricular sports.

ESS Support Services Worldwide and Compass Group congratulate the 2015 honourees and look forward to the continuing success and positive impact of the CCAB. ■

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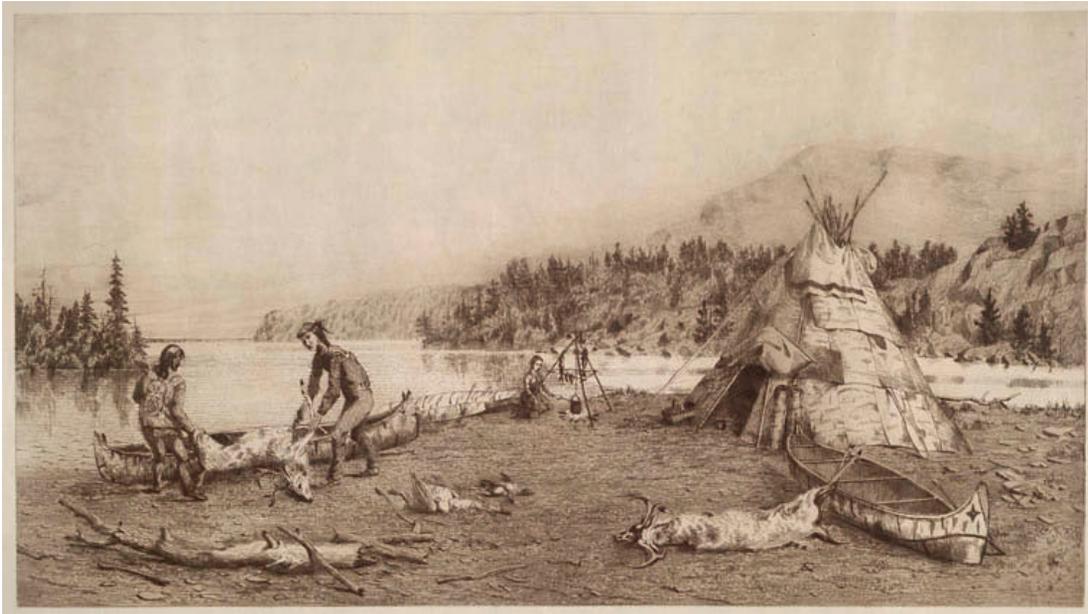


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BY PAUL-EMILE MCNAB, RESEARCH ANALYST, CCAB AND MES YORK UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH RETROSPECTIVE

HISTORY OF ABORIGINAL BUSINESS



Aboriginal Hunters with wigwam and canoe by a river, ca. 1885
Library and Archives Canada

500 years of Aboriginal business: the truth of Aboriginal business success stories and how economic empowerment is changing the lives of our Aboriginal peoples.

The relationship between Aboriginal peoples (the original stewards of the land) and European settlers (the first newcomers) has not been easy. The arrival of Europeans into North America saw Aboriginal peoples adapt and provide indigenous knowledge of their land and waters. They survived this process of colonization by “seeing with two eyes”: One eye on traditional knowledge and the other on the present and the future. Their strategy was to use traditional knowledge to resist those things that were against their traditional knowledge, and to accommodate the others that were coincident with it. Traditional indigenous knowledge is a “practical, everyday reality” based on our Place, as Aboriginal peoples understand it. Traditional belief is often expressed by using the circle to represent life. It was the intersection of technology, modernization and colonialism that coincided with the new business landscape in present day Canada.

As European settlers moved onto Aboriginal lands in the 1830s, a “new Indian policy” was developed by the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head, “who did not believe that Aboriginal people would survive through modern development.” (*Nin.Da.Waab. Jig. Walpole Island: The Soul of Indian Territory*, p. 28). This process is a syncretic and flexible adaptation of indigenous knowledge in both accommodation and resistance to daily and seasonal changes to their way of life.

Oil was first used by First Nations for many centuries, even before the arrival of Europeans, who had just documented its uses when they arrived. Further, it was the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, who reported a petroleum spring near Bothwell when he passed through in February of 1793. Simcoe was told by the Natives that they “used it as a liniment to alleviate rheumatism” (*Hard Oiler: The Story of Early Canadians’ Quest for Oil at Home and Abroad*, p. 33).

As the engine of the fur trade, Aboriginal peoples were in fact the first successful business enterprise after

contact, according to Métis historian Dr. David T. McNab: "Aboriginal cultures and economies are highly diversified and unique to their lands and resources, which has enabled them to resist and survive for thousands of years. Aboriginal peoples have alternate diversified economies based on trade and trading and they have always offered the Europeans valuable lessons in economic development." ("Sovereignty, Treaties and Trade in the Bkejwanong Territory," *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development*, Volume 3, Number 2, 2003, p. 52.) They fuelled fashion and prosperity thousands of miles away in the old world while building an economy in their homelands into the 21st century.

From the very beginning, Aboriginal peoples and their economies were effectively international. Yet, in spite of these international business connections, under the new early 19th century colonial policy, their children were swept into residential schools where they were denied their language and culture. Their image was institutionally belittled and destroyed by continuous government and church interference with their pursuit of security and prosperity for their communities and children.

Since then, Aboriginal peoples have been steadily increasing their roles in the business community across the country and internationally. Along with the strong growth in demographics in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, their contributions to the Canadian economy have increased over the past decade. Aboriginal self-employment is on the rise. Between 1996 and 2006 the number of First Nations, Inuit and Métis persons in Canada who have their own business increased by 85 per cent. These businesses vary in size and scope, and range from urban to rural Aboriginals,

and on and off reserves, from graphic designers to lawyers and business professionals to artists. Strong growth within communities through Aboriginal economic development corporations (EDCs) has been a contributing factor and a relatively new approach. EDCs are the economic and business development arm of First Nations, Inuit or Métis governments, and are a major economic driver for Aboriginal communities. These community-owned businesses invest in, own and/or manage subsidiary businesses with the goal of benefiting the Aboriginal citizens they represent. They are involved in a wide range of industries (including energy, construction, services and natural resources) and markets (including local, domestic and international). Simply put, Aboriginal business in Canada is on the upswing.

In today's business environment, communicating your message can be a global endeavour that crosses both national boundaries and cultural entities. Across Canada we have approximately 633 Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis communities encompassing over 50 languages stretching from coast to coast.

Today, through the efforts of organizations such as the CCAB, Aboriginal business is waking up from a long forced hiatus. The CCAB was founded in 1984 by a small group of visionary business and community leaders committed to the full participation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada's economy. Some 30 years later the non-profit organization continues to offer knowledge, research, resources, and programs to both mainstream and Aboriginal-owned member companies that foster economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses across Canada. ■



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BUSINESS 

BY ANDRE MORRISSEAU

AN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ROTARY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

ROTARIANS BUILDING BRIDGES TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLES THROUGH BUSINESS AND HIP INNOVATION

The Rotary Club is a grass-roots organization consisting of business professionals and community leaders that volunteer time, talent and resources in order to remedy vital community needs. With over 1.2 million members worldwide, Rotary has been making history and bringing the world closer together for over 100 years. Since forming in 1905, they've taken on some of the world's toughest challenges and helped a wide range of international and service organizations get started, from the UN to Easter Seals.

Rotarians in southern Ontario once again have Rotary at the forefront of applying new ideas on the road to creative solutions through the newly created Honouring Indigenous People (HIP) website. HIP was created after extensive consultation with a number of members of the indigenous community and organizations.

"HIP is honouring indigenous people by supporting their educational efforts and encouraging all Canadians to become aware of indigenous issues, history and culture. It is the hope of Rotarians, Rotary clubs and others that partnerships and collaborations will be established with indigenous people in Canada focusing on creating mutual awareness and understanding," stated HIP Chair Chris Snyder.

The HIP board is made up of 50 per cent Rotarians from five Rotary districts and 50 per cent educational leaders and members of the indigenous community. By going to www.rotaryhip.com people have access

to a go-to information website. Here one can find details about the organization, a blog with current news and events, reading suggestions, links, current Rotary projects and their HIP approved projects. It is their hope to connect all 750 clubs across Canada and supportive individuals with the indigenous community and vice versa.

Wilfrid Wilkinson, Past President of Rotary International, has been a Rotarian for over 52 years. In his travel with the Rotarians he has visited India 27 times working with villagers on numerous projects, and making vital connections.

Wilkinson stated, "Here in Canada I found that Rotarians didn't appear to have made the same connections with Canada's Aboriginal communities as I had witnessed first-hand in places like India. It is for this very reason that I salute Rotarians in southern Ontario for taking on the great challenge of working to change this dynamic through initiatives such as the Honouring Indigenous People (HIP) website."

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) joined early on as a Charter Member and active member of The Rotary Club of Toronto Aboriginal Service Committee. They were intrigued by the potential connection between Rotary's business roots and the pursuit of Aboriginal business participation.

CCAB President and CEO, JP Gladu, who recently had the opportunity to deliver the keynote address at a

Rotary Club of Toronto luncheon, stated, "The work that Rotarians are spearheading with HIP allows the ingenuity of business to support commitment to the spirit of mutual understanding."

"The average Canadian doesn't realize that members of the Aboriginal community were not allowed the right to vote in Canada before 1961, nor do they realize that tens of thousands of Aboriginal children were forced into residential schools where many were sexually and physically abused and stripped of their languages, culture and dignity. This is the very education factor that is vital on the road to informing Canadians of past injustices while embracing a path of equitable reconciliation on the road to prosperity for all Canadians."

"The Aboriginal community was the original business success story in Canada driving the fur trade. Since then we've been on a forced hiatus in the business world for the past couple of hundred years, but times are changing. One doesn't have to look far today to find examples of Aboriginal business success in all sectors of the economy. It is through the forward thinking work of the Rotarians that business now has an opportunity to forge a new relationship with the Aboriginal community on the way to a brighter future for all Canadians."

HIP is currently accepting Charter Memberships for a lifetime payment of \$100. For more information contact Chris Snyder at snyder@eccgroup.ca ■

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BY RICHARD WOODBURY

HISTORICAL TSILHQOT'IN

WHAT THE COURT DECISION REALLY MEANS FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE



When the Supreme Court of Canada granted declaration of Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in First Nation for more than 1,700 square kilometres of British Columbia land in June 2014, the decision was viewed as empowering for First Nations people.

While hailed as an historic decision, the ruling can be viewed as part of a growing recognition of First Nations rights and title. "I think the decision is really a continuation of a series of Supreme Court decisions that have pretty consistently strengthened the case for Aboriginal rights and title," says Chuck Strahl, the director and chairman of the Manning Centre for Building Democracy, and a former federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Strahl says previous rulings have consistently said both governments and industry have a duty to consult with First Nations groups about potential projects and that the projects must take into account both the traditional and economic uses of the land.

The unanimous 8-0 Tsilhqot'in Supreme Court decision has future implications for economic and resource development on First Nations lands. To understand these implications, one has to look at the wording of the ruling, which said Aboriginal title confers ownership rights including "the right to decide how the land will be used; the right of enjoyment and occupancy of the land; the right to possess the land; the right to the economic benefits of the land; and the right to proactively use and manage

the land," as well as the "right to control the land."

"Those are the seminal phrases that allow, empower and recharge First Nations in how to develop that resource in the way they see fit and that's the exciting aspect of that clause, quite frankly, because... it says First Nations have the right to make laws and have power over the jurisdiction of those resources," says Wayne Garnons-Williams, the senior lawyer and principal director with Ottawa-based Garwill Law Professional Corporation, a firm noted for its expertise in Aboriginal law.

Garnons-Williams says the three main implications of the Tsilhqot'in decision on Aboriginal-industry economic partnerships are:

- 1 Greater security for First Nations in future ownership and control of traditional lands and resources.
- 2 As a result of this greater security in future ownership, there will be a greater understanding by the outside business community that they will be talking and negotiating directly and primarily with First Nations. (At best, the federal government and provinces will be viewed as secondary players.)
- 3 The environmental standards as interpreted by First Nations laws and philosophies will serve as the requirements for long-term stewardship of the land and resources. For businesses to have harmonious long-term business relations with First Nations groups, they will need to meet these standards and apply the host First Nations' philosophies about resource stewardship.

Independent of the Supreme Court's decision (and the second implication mentioned above), there has widely been a recognition in recent times that "From the earliest moments, people that want to do business in these First Nations territories need to involve Aboriginal people as early as possible" in a project's planning stages, says Strahl.

Communication is the key ingredient to building strong Aboriginal-industry economic partnerships. Industry will need to communicate early and often with First Nations groups and develop its plans with them.

Using a hypothetical example, Strahl says if a business approaches a First Nations group and says it has designed something like a new logging plant or mill with plans to locate it on their territory and offers them a deal, this is the wrong approach. The First Nations group should have been consulted from square one.

Roger William is the chief of the Tsilhqot'in Nation. He was also the appellant in the Tsilhqot'in decision, which is why the case is often referred to as the William's Case. William says that as part of developing a plan, the environment must be made a priority and points specifically to concerns

about water, wildlife and fish. "These things are so important to us," he says.

Addressing concerns such as these will be a prerequisite to doing business because the Supreme Court decision indicated incursion on title land is only permitted with the consent of the Indigenous nation or group, or if it is justified by a compelling and substantial public purpose. "At the end of the day, if there's a problem, then those industries won't be able to work with us," says William.

As well, the economic component of the project must be beneficial for the First Nations group. As part of that, an agreement might include things such as part ownership of the project, and job and contracting opportunities for residents.

When establishing a business relationship, industry will need to realize the needs and working methods of each First Nations group will be different. Industry should not assume that because it has done business with one

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TSILHQOT'IN DECISION

First Nations group before, the same approach should be followed this time around. "That's one of the common mistakes," says Strahl.

Building strong Aboriginal-industry economic partnerships will require a relationship built on a foundation of trust, understanding and cooperation.

"It's time for industries to take a step back and listen and educate them-

selves, so that they can be a player in the development of those resources and the development of wealth for the First Nation and the investors coming in," says Garnons-Williams.

He says non-Aboriginal industry needs to understand the First Nations laws and philosophies that have existed, and continue to exist and be applied, in the First Nations' traditional territory.

As part of this, industry will need to be patient and take the time to understand, respect and apply these things in how they conduct business.

As well, non-Aboriginal industries need to grasp Indigenous concepts such as watershed management, the interconnectedness of living things, and how to ensure that the seventh generation is not negatively impacted by the economic/industrial decisions of today, says Garnons-Williams.

"It's no longer just the exploitation of the resource. It's the long-term relationship with not only the First Nation, but the land. It's an entirely different concept industries have to come to grips with – the fact that it's not just a come in, come out, get in get out [approach], it's an interconnectedness that one has to respect," says Garnons-Williams.

Michael Woods, a partner with Woods LaFortune LLP, an international trade law firm based in Ottawa, says Aboriginal-industry economic partnerships will have a "deeper, more rich concept of investment" than industry may have been exposed to in the past. Not only will they be partners in an economic and business sense, they will be real partners in their people-to-people relationships.

Garnons-Williams predicts First Nations across the country will eventually be declared the owners of the lands and resources in their respective territories. The Tsilhqot'in decision is a major first step in that direction. "Now that the Tsilhqot'in decision has begun the process of recognizing Aboriginal ownership in land and resources, the non-Aboriginal business community interested in partnering with First Nations has the opportunity to pay less attention to what the province and federal government have to say about economic development on Aboriginal lands, and to listen more to the real "first stewards" of the Aboriginal land and resources," says Garnons-Williams. ■

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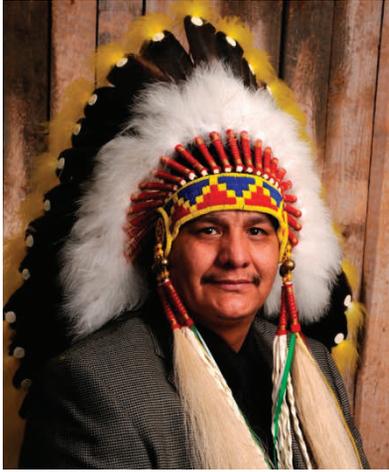
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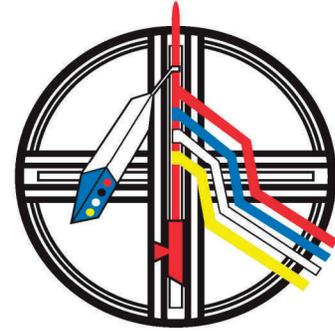


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BY PAUL-EMILE MCNAB AND MAX SKUDRA, RESEARCH ANALYSTS, CCAB

CCAB RESEARCH TO HEIGHTEN AWARENESS FOR **ABORIGINAL BUSINESSES IN CANADA**

THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL BUSINESS SURVEY WILL INTERVIEW OVER 1,000
 ABORIGINAL BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business is currently working on a national research project (National Aboriginal Business Survey 2015) to gather data on the Aboriginal private economy across Canada. This project follows the CCAB's 2011 nationwide survey and the 2014 Ontario provincial survey. All projects are in partnership with Environics Research Group. In preparation for the two-year national project, in the fall of 2014, the CCAB convened a research advisory committee with representatives from across the country. Headed by former prime minister Paul Martin, the group includes singer Susan Aglukark; former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations and current president of the consulting company Ishkonigan Phil Fontaine; former minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Chuck Strahl; Consultant Brenda LaRose, a partner in Leaders & Co.; Teaching Professor at the University of Victoria Brent Mainprize; and Miles Richardson, Interim Director for the National Consortium for Indigenous Economic Development at UVIC.

The CCAB Research department has already produced four leading reports on Aboriginal business, both in the province of Ontario and nationally. This research has led to two TD Economic Reports and has been used in numerous other Aboriginal business reports as well as garnering widespread media attention. In 2006, according to Census data, there were over 37,000 Aboriginal businesses across Canada, an increase of 85 per



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cent since 1996. In 2015, we now estimate that number to be approaching 50,000. Like other businesses in Canada, Aboriginal businesses create employment, economic prosperity, and social well-being. The development of viable business opportunities is essential to the future prosperity of Aboriginal peoples, and for improving Aboriginal employment prospects, especially for the growing number of young Aboriginal job-seekers entering the labour market. Yet there is relatively little information available on Aboriginal business.

The aim of CCAB Research is to inform industry partners, policy development, and academic insight to support Aboriginal business development and

Aboriginal communities. Our national project includes the creation of topic panels bringing together relevant stakeholders across the private and public sectors, academia and the Aboriginal business community. The national ABS includes topic panels and in-person interviews across Canada, which are slated for Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Victoria in April and May of 2015. We will be gauging the scope of Aboriginal businesses, as well as their capacity for growth, while understanding which sectors of Aboriginal businesses are active, and how Aboriginal businesses are performing nationally, including profitability and growth. We'll also be learning about perspectives on how industry and the broader business community can engage with Aboriginal businesses and community members at all stages of development.

In addition to understanding perspectives of Aboriginal businesses, the research would compare Aboriginal businesses against the national

average, and by province or region. For example, the research would consider: comparing Aboriginal businesses on and off reserve, as well as in different regions (i.e. North versus South, remote versus rural versus urban), including sector and business activity, profitability, growth and perception of success. Many Aboriginal businesses are seen as success stories and the development of the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario is a prime example of an opportunity for economic development on and off reserve. Our research explores what makes the growth of Aboriginal businesses successful and what holds it back, to identify potential areas for the partnerships for progress between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal owned businesses.

Furthermore, Aboriginal businesses create jobs for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and help strengthen local economies. Not fully understanding the depth and breadth of these businesses makes it impossible to

gauge or grow their impact and, by extension, limits their full participation in the Canadian economy. CCAB Research identifies and widely communicates the experiences, challenges and contributions of Aboriginal businesses today on a provincial and national level. Promise and Prosperity: The National Aboriginal Business Survey 2015 presents a great opportunity to document the current landscape and the number of Aboriginal businesses in Canada. This will make a significant contribution to the potential of Aboriginal business and building towards a strong and vibrant marketplace across Canada. For more information please visit www.ccab.com/research. ■

Note: Community and Commerce: A Survey of Economic Development Corporations in Ontario will be released in May of 2015 and Promise and Prosperity: The National Aboriginal Business Survey will be released in the fall of 2015.



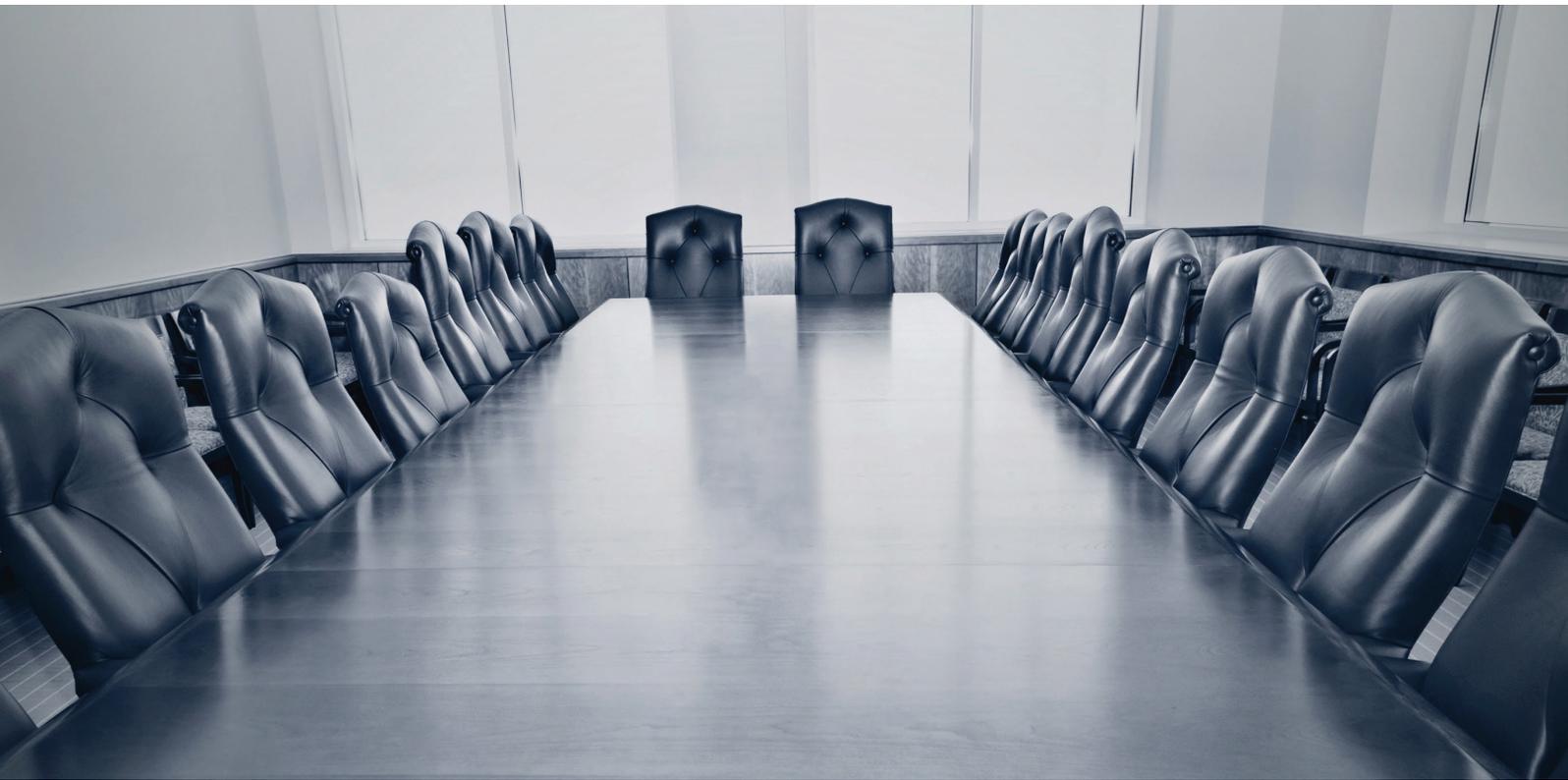
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BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

BOARDROOM DIVERSITY

TACKLING THE ISSUE HEAD-ON

The Canadian Board Diversity Council has helped get 19 people of various backgrounds – none of them 60-year-old Caucasian men – appointed to corporate boards in the last couple of years, and its founder believes they’re just getting started.

The Toronto-based organization recently unveiled its third annual group of 50 diverse candidates who it considers to be ready, willing and qualified to be corporate directors in Canada.

“We wanted to tackle the issue of the lack of diversity on Canadian boards in terms of women, Aboriginal people and visible minorities by making the point that it’s not a supply issue, it’s a demand

issue,” says the CBDC’s Pamela Jeffery. “We thought by identifying 50 qualified men and women each year and making (the list) available to companies, that would be an important step in connecting boards with an able group of potential directors.”

Even though 19 might not sound like a lot, she is quick to note only six to seven per cent of board seats in Canada, or about 200, turn over each year.

“Most boards appoint directors who have already sat on a board of an FP (Financial Post) 500 company. It can be tough to get over that hurdle. We’re pretty pleased with the progress we’ve made to date,” she says.

One of the problems with similar attempts at increasing boardroom diversity is that outsiders expressed concern about whether the criteria were strict enough. To address this potential shortfall, Jeffery and her team collaborated with Deloitte and a dozen CEOs across the country to establish a thorough process.

“We thought 50 was a good number. It allowed us to do the due diligence well,” Jeffery says.

But there is still much more to do, particularly when it comes to Aboriginal membership on boards. Of all the directors of public companies, Crown Corporations and wholly-owned subsidiaries of publicly-listed companies listed in New York, just 0.8 per cent of them are Aboriginal.

Calgary-based consultant Mel Benson is part of that miniscule group. The member of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation in northeast Alberta has been a director at Suncor Energy Inc., one of Canada's leading energy companies, for 13 years.

He's optimistic the times are changing and he'll have company in boardrooms across the country if not soon, then soon-ish. Maybe even in the form of J.P. Gladu, president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, who made the Diversity 50 this year.

"It's a slow process. The journey is underway for a number of companies. The demographics are changing for sure. There's a real recognition that bringing diversity to boards brings with it new and better ideas and a variety of views. It also (better) reflects the shareholders," he says.

Perhaps the most important development on this front is the growing number of First Nations people who are going to university and getting valuable business experience upon graduation, a combination that makes them attractive as potential board members.

"Aboriginal people are slowly getting to be known but there's never been much deliberate effort to go after (them). It was the same for women as corporations generally tended to draw from acquaintances and friends on the board. So, when they were seeking new board members, they liked to pick somebody who looked and acted like them. That's unfortunate, but it's slowly changing," he says.

Stan Magidson, CEO of the Institute of Corporate Directors, a Toronto-based organization that promotes the effectiveness of directors, agrees.

Part of the challenge of getting Aboriginal participation on boards outside of the Aboriginal community is potential candidates need senior management experience in order to add value.

"The extent to which Aboriginal people are participating in that pipeline of executive talent is not that large currently," he says.

At the same time, companies need to evaluate whether they will be working with Aboriginal communities in big-money areas such as natural resources or real estate development.

"If so, it makes abundant sense to have somebody on your board who at least understands the Aboriginal perspective," he says.

Magidson views diversity in a broad context, covering gender, age,



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DIVERSITY

ethnicity and geography. He believes a wide variety of organizations should seriously consider how having an Aboriginal board member or two could benefit them.

"We do know that certain companies have sought out Aboriginal directors because they believe that's an important perspective to have on their boards," he says.

Benson is quick to credit Rick George, Suncor's CEO, with bringing him on board.

"He was looking for somebody with oil field energy experience and somebody who could also reflect the issues of First Nations and Métis people. I never felt that I was there just because I was Aboriginal. Each year you earn your way. I'm very proud that I'm Aboriginal and that I've got the kind of experiences that I've got. I bring some unique perspectives both from the energy sector and my status as an Aboriginal person," he says.

Much of the push for diversity on boards in the last few years has been to include more women. Ashleigh Everett, Winnipeg-based president of Royal Canadian Securities Ltd. and a director of Scotiabank and MTS Allstream, says it appears to be

working, at least in her experience. She is one of four women on MTS's 10-person board and one of five female directors on Scotiabank's board of 15.

"A lot of the larger companies are taking a leadership role," she says.

It only makes sense that corporate boards have a diverse range of people on them because then they'll reflect Canada's population, she says.

"You have to look at your stakeholders. For most corporations, your stakeholders are multi-faceted. Your customers, employees, shareholders and suppliers all have a range of ethnic backgrounds, male, female, people with disabilities. It's important that the people responsible for running a company reflect that reality, not just a subset of it. You have to understand your customers and relate to your employees and your market," she says.

Everett believes the responsibilities of directors have become increasingly complex since the implosion of Enron, the Houston-based energy company that went bankrupt amid widespread accounting fraud and corruption in 2001, and that requires stronger boards and better decisions.

"There is much more pressure on boards to really look at strategic issues and compliance. It demands that issues are fully debated at the board level to reach the best decision. Diversity at the board table enhances those discussions and debates," she says.

Magidson believes diversity in the boardroom leads to richer decisions, too. There is plenty of evidence that shows companies with diverse boards have an increasing amount of black ink on the bottom line, too.

"You avoid group think where everybody comes from the same background and perspective," he says.

Four years ago, Magidson called on corporate Canada to embrace diversity and institute diversity policies. He believes the resulting initiative from the Canadian Securities Administrators to adopt a "comply or explain" approach to board diversity is positive because it requires public companies to deal with their diversity – or lack thereof – issues.

"It puts (diversity) on the agenda at the board level. It's not mandatory, they didn't go with quotas. They're allowing each organization to approach diversity with what is the best for it," he says. ■



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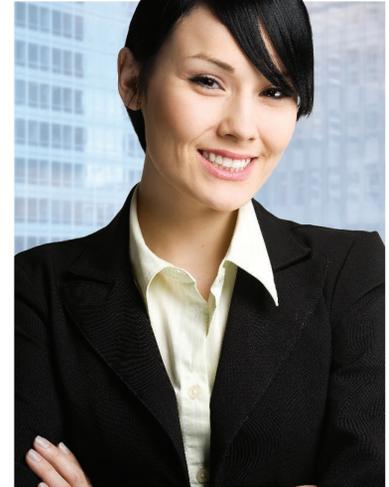
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EARTH MATTERS

BY GEOFF KIRBYSON

A HOW-TO ON **BOARD DIVERSITY**



The six most expensive words in business just might be “we’ve always done it that way.”

In a rapidly-changing world, businesses need to be nimble and able to adapt quickly or risk bankruptcy, so flexibility is crucial.

Many corporate boards around the country, however, have needed to go to a yoga class or two since, well, forever. Quite simply, they have been the domain of middle-aged – and older – white men for far too long.

But how do you convince the old boys networks that they can’t fill their vacancies with their friends anymore?

Luckily, Ashleigh Everett, Winnipeg-based president of Royal Canadian

Securities Ltd. and a director of Scotiabank and MTS Allstream, says there is mounting public pressure on boards to more accurately reflect society.

The Ontario Securities Commission has helped with its “comply or explain” legislation to influence boards to have diversity policies.

“Corporations are competitive, they want to be seen to be doing the right thing. Once they get more diverse, they realize there are benefits,” she says.

There are also many boards that have seen the writing on the wall – and dream of the black ink at the bottom of their income statements – and taken steps to invite new faces around the boardroom table.

Everett says the board recruitment process can involve a search firm, in addition to an internal search and word of mouth (although we know how successful those strategies have been historically). You may also want to bring a marketing or risk expert on board.

“We’d prefer if it was a woman or somebody with a diverse background, then those names start coming in,” she says.

Another good initial step is putting together a skills matrix, says Stan Magidson, CEO of the Institute of Corporate Directors, so you can understand the areas of expertise and background that you’d like to have among the directors. For example, every board has to oversee finan-

cial reports, so it's essential to have one or more people with finance or accounting backgrounds. Lawsuits are a fairly common occurrence so having somebody with a legal background can be invaluable, too.

"If you're an organization that is going to be doing business that impacts Aboriginal communities or requires engagement with Aboriginal communities, you'd be well advised to have somebody like that on your board," he says.

"I think a board that is very homogeneous and not diverse should be asking itself, 'is there not some benefit for us to be changing here?' If you're all from one demographic and age bracket, have you truly sought out the best and widest talent pool that you could?"

The federal government released a report last June outlining a 30 per cent target for board diversity by 2019. Pamela Jeffery, founder of the Canadian Board Diversity Council, would like to see that percentage of

women around boardroom tables a year earlier than that.

She would also like to see every board have at least one person from a visible minority on it. Since the average board has nine people on it, that works out to 11 per cent right off the bat.

But considering visible minorities comprise 19 per cent of Canada's population and Aboriginal people make up another four per cent, there's a lot of room for improvement.

She also advises hiring a search firm so that a rigorous process, including a skills gap analysis, is undertaken.

"You don't want a bunch of white guys sitting at a table asking who they know. (The search firm) can assess the skills at the table and go out and find the skills that they need," she says.

It also helps to have a diversity champion, says Mel Benson, a long-time board member at Suncor.

"You've got to have somebody that wants to drive it and you need to look at a path forward, that's the first thing. What is the journey going to look like?" he says.

Changing demographics are driving some of the changes, too.

"The new youthful society doesn't look at these things in the same way (as the old society used to). They're going to look for more representation in society. My kids look at things differently than my generation did," he says.

It's also not enough to have diversity for diversity's sake. Just because somebody has a different ethnicity than the majority of the directors doesn't necessarily mean they'll be a good fit or that their skills are needed.

"It's diversity for a better business purpose and execution," Magidson says. ■

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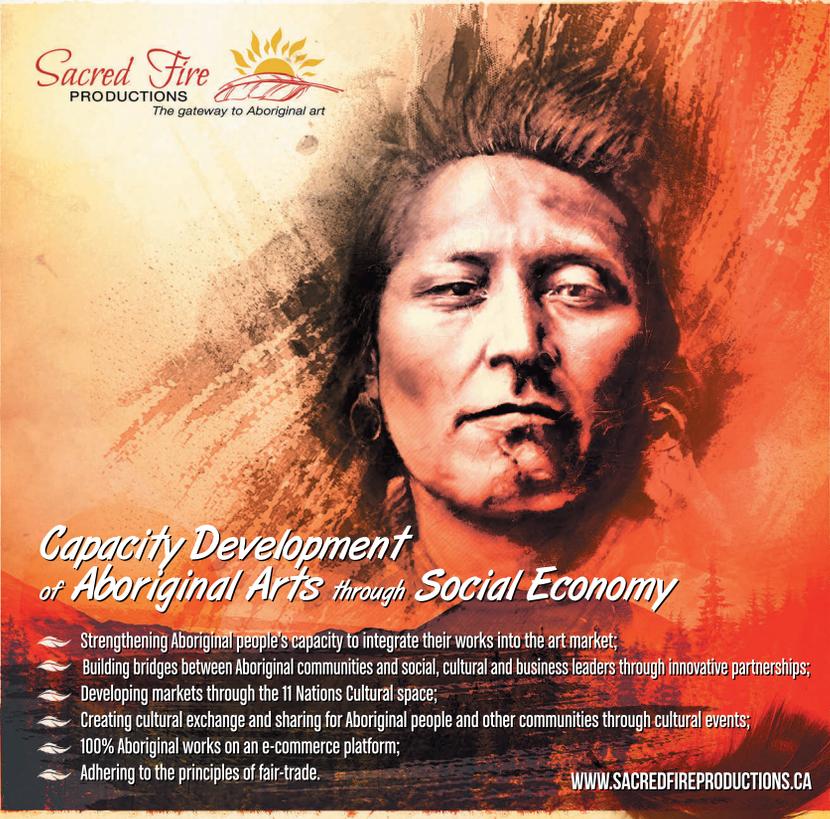
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BY MAX SKUDRA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

DRIVING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY



Max Skudra and Paul-Emile McNab, CCAB Research Analysts

First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities have been creating corporations which own and operate companies for their members. These Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) have proven to be successful at bridging the gap between community aspirations and the private economy. At the heart of this success is an amazing diversity, which allows EDCs to grow and even thrive in a dynamic marketplace while still representing their people. This diversity can be seen not only in the businesses an EDC operates, but in the very makeup of the company. It is what makes EDCs

both effective and appropriate for First Nations, Inuit and Métis economic development. There are hundreds of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities spread across the country, each one having unique goals, aspirations, strengths and opportunities. This complex environment makes “cookie-cutter” strategies or policies for economic development self-defeating.

EDCs excel in this diversity by designing bespoke responses to the questions asked by both the market and members. What gives these answers substance is a commitment to community aspirations and concerns.

Through public meetings, outreach, and engagement, successful EDCs ensure that corporate operations and structures are in line with local goals by making sure members understand, debate and help shape the strategic direction of EDCs. While governance varies, many communities balance community and commerce by ensuring that their EDC boards are representative of their membership as a whole through ex-officio political representation, ensuring that Chief and Council are kept informed of corporate decision-making. By reserving seats at the board – a rotating position dedicated to Youths and Elders – these important

perspectives are included in decision making. These boards are representative of communities as a whole, helping EDCs reflect their values while pursuing aggressive day-to-day business operations.

The focus on community consultation and tailored governance structures can also be seen in the strategic direction EDCs take. These strategic plans allow EDCs to clearly show local members what the company is planning and what its impact will be. One business leader notes that a strategic plan “provides accountability and helps communicate so people can give buy-in or not.” These plans also provide clarity for corporate partners.

While EDCs operate with the overall benefit of their communities in mind, each firm has defined this in their own way. Many EDCs focus on bottom line success, but reinvest a percentage of their profits into community trusts, to address the needs of members, as defined by members. Some EDCs leverage this surplus, as well as their business skills, to support legal and business agreements. The Wabun Development Corporation is the business arm of the Wabun Tribal Council, representing six First Nations communities. Shawn Batise points out that Wabun has recently completed their 6th IBA for member communities, as well as supported the development of dozens of MOU’s and Joint Venture agreements between communities and corporate Canada.

Alternatively, EDCs fund education, sports or cultural activities which would otherwise have to be cut, whether it be sending a group of youth to hockey tournaments or bettering an elder’s quality of life. The jobs created provide opportunities for local youth to grow professionally while staying in their communities. Opportunities for youth go beyond direct economic opportunities. From summer camps to education bursaries, EDCs are able to support local youth to develop themselves, helping them to unlock their potential.

The ability to tailor strategy to match the goals of community members has not limited the phenomenal success of EDCs in the corporate world.

THE JOBS CREATED PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL YOUTH TO GROW PROFESSIONALLY WHILE STAYING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Companies like Primco Dene, under the leadership of James Blackman, have managed to support their community with social programs and achieve impressive economic growth, becoming a regional business leader that has remained committed to their roots.

To achieve these goals, EDCs create businesses as diverse as the communities they represent. From airlines to drilling companies, from heavy industry to high speed Internet, EDCs develop firms that fill market needs and enrich their peoples. A young councillor from Curve Lake First Nation, Zac McCue, points out how

important it is to provide community members opportunities at all levels of the corporate structure, creating career paths that lead from the trades to the boardroom.

Beyond all of the remarkable accomplishment of EDCs in the last few decades, what is truly impressive about these companies is that they are able to represent the diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities themselves in the corporate world. It is this achievement that creates and maintains the social license of these firms to continue to operate in their people’s names. ■



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Since the introduction of the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program 14 years ago, it was and remains the only corporate responsibility assurance program with an emphasis on Aboriginal relations. The PAR program continues to expand as Business Canada realizes the value of working collaboratively with Aboriginal business and communities and its effectiveness as a tool for business certainty and economic growth.

The PAR program encourages companies to evolve and participate in the growing Aboriginal business economy across Canada. Companies are realizing that a strong Canadian economy should include the participation of the Aboriginal community, which is the fastest growing segment in the Canadian population. With this in mind, companies are starting to embrace the four performance areas within the PAR program to conduct successful business relations with Aboriginal communities and businesses. These four performance areas include: employment, business development, community investment, and community engagement.

PAR companies continue to expand upon the initiatives undertaken over the past 14 years of the PAR program's existence. These companies recognize the importance of Aboriginal participation in the Canadian economy and have demonstrated their commitment to working across cultures. Their efforts have resulted in leading practices that have contributed to PAR

companies establishing and improving relationships with the Aboriginal communities and businesses.

PAR companies are required to maintain or improve upon their key performance areas.

The PAR program certifies companies at the committed, bronze, silver or gold levels. PAR companies undergo an independent external verification and review by a jury of their performance in Aboriginal relations. This process provides a high level of assurance to communities that a certified company is committed to the prosperity of Aboriginal communities, businesses, and individuals.

**...IT IS EASY TO
SEE THE FUTURE
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PAR is part of a management toolkit to support Business Canada in its response to the increased significance of Aboriginal businesses and communities to the economic prosperity of Canada.

"We're very proud to receive the PAR certification. This certification is well regarded amongst Aboriginal communities, and will be beneficial to Nexen's Aboriginal stakeholder engagement

efforts going forward." – Connie Landry, Program & Planning Advisor, Aboriginal Relations, Nexen.

Becoming a PAR certified company comes with many benefits. Canada is experiencing a new social and political environment as it pertains to Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal issues are top of mind for the Canadian public, more than any other time in history. In light of this new social reality, more and more Canadian businesses are becoming interested in opportunities of working with Aboriginal peoples.

The exponential growth of Aboriginal entrepreneurialism reveals a sophisticated and ambitious businessperson that is looking to partner, collaborate and succeed. Couple this with the groundswell of international support for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability initiatives, it is easy to see the future is bright for Aboriginal businesses.

The PAR program certification is a competitive advantage in establishing corporate reputations in CSR. This certification allows PAR companies to raise their profile and promote their Aboriginal relations success with the use of the PAR logo. The PAR program certifies that companies are leading corporate citizens that have proven the business case for sustainable Aboriginal relations.

Meaningful relations with Aboriginal businesses increase the business bottom line. Now more than ever, the PAR certification is relevant in Business Canada's resource growth, and business diversification takes on a greater role on the road to equitable prosperity for all Canadians.

For more information on the PAR program go to www.ccab.com. ■

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17th Annual Toronto Gala

February 3, 2015

Vancouver Hot Topic Series: The William Case

March 12, 2015

Winnipeg Hot Topic Series: Highlighting the importance of women in leadership

April 23, 2015

Annual Calgary Gala

May 14, 2015

Aboriginal Business Luncheon: Trades perspective: A look at the road ahead to bolster Aboriginal participation

Halifax, NS
June 18, 2015

Aboriginal Business Luncheon: The evolving face of Aboriginal business

Thunder Bay, ON
September 10, 2015

13th Annual Vancouver Gala

September 24, 2015

Toronto Hot Topic Series: The role of universities in increasing Aboriginal labour market participation

October 22, 2015

Fort McMurray Hot Topic Series

November 19, 2015

For more information please visit https://www.ccab.com/upcoming_events



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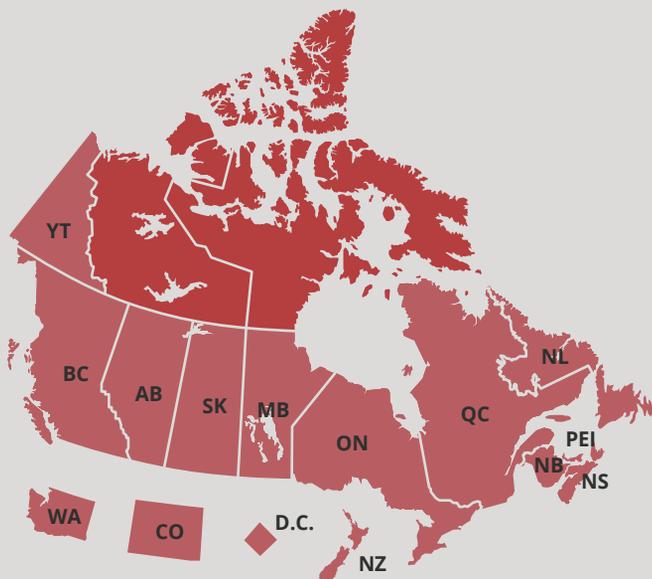
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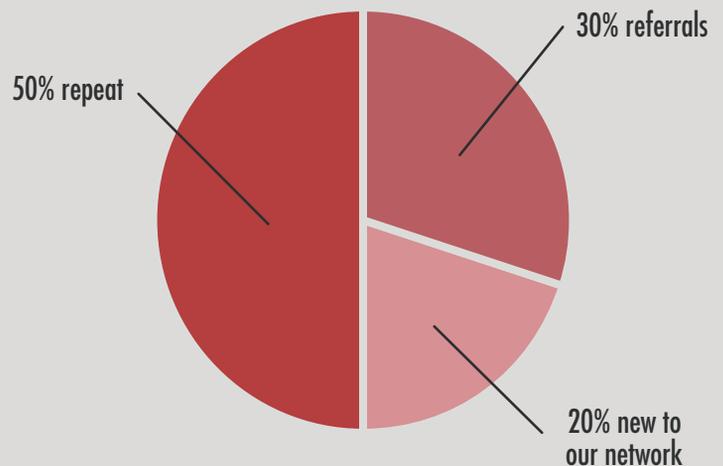
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