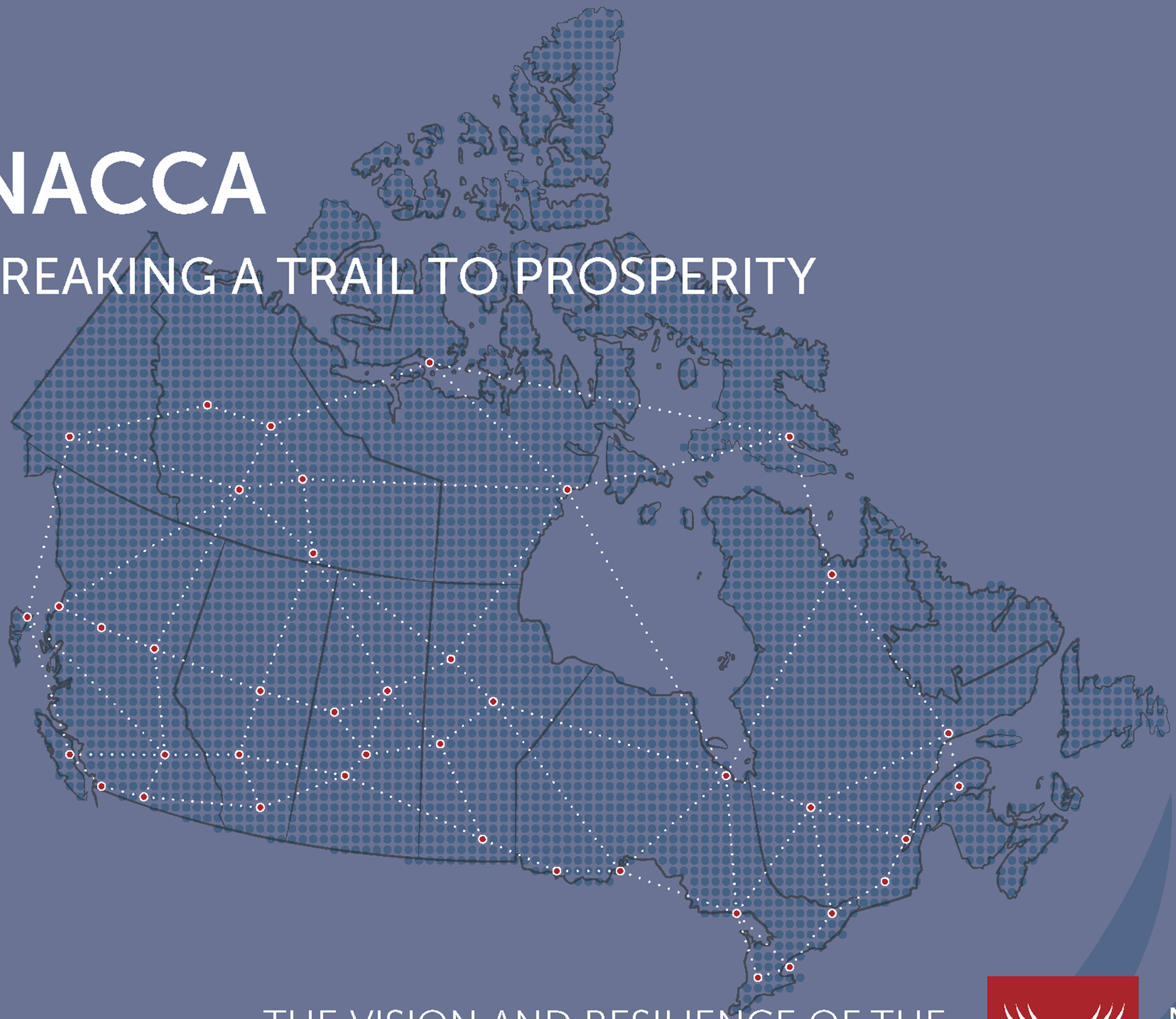
NACCA

BREAKING A TRAIL TO PROSPERITY



THE VISION AND RESILIENCE OF THE
INDIGENOUS FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS MOVEMENT

National Aboriginal
Capital Corporations
Association

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Acknowledgements

The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) would like to extend its gratitude to the founders, builders, supporters and clients of our lending movement. We honour those visionary Indigenous leaders of the 1970s and 80s, who were integral to making Indigenous-owned and operated Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) a reality.

We celebrate our builders, those board members, management, and staff of NACCA and AFIs across the country who have poured their talents into our collective goal of Indigenous autonomy through economic success.

We acknowledge our supporters, both in government and beyond, who have understood our goal and accompanied us on our journey.

Above all, we acknowledge our reason for being, the countless Indigenous business-owners across the country who took the leap into entrepreneurship. Our member AFIs have provided loans to Indigenous businesses in every sector and every region of the country, from sole proprietorships to large enterprises.

The determination and growth of Indigenous business in Canada continues to inspire our work every day.

Nay:weh! Miigwech! Hai! Wela'lioq! Qujannamiik! This book tells our story.

Facing page: Large inukshuk at sunset.

Foreword

We Have to Do It Ourselves

Abraham was still a young trapper in 1940 when he knew that much would change. His way of life, relations with the animal kingdom, relations with peers – most of all, his own purpose in life – would have to change. Abraham understood that adaptation was important to staying in the game. "The fur trading company worked for me," he insisted, pointing to the debt payment schedule he had negotiated with it.

The loan contract covered the period from September to June, whereupon he repaid the loan in full. "None of this 'pay monthly' schedule they have these days. The contract said I would repay the loan in ten months and that's how we did it – more in line with my way instead of the company's."

The traditional businessman spent long hours, enduring cold and danger, to accomplish what he wanted. But he was not alone: he also had his family. A family from the land brought back riches to the community. It brought back fur to trade. It had food, medicine, sugar from birch sap, hide, rope, fur and goose down to share. Some families brought back rabbit coats or blankets, moccasins of moose hide, paddles or axe handles from birch or cedar trees, bone carvings of knives, hooks, needles and other useful tools. Most precious of all, people waited to get a container of the red muskeg berries.

Trappers. National Film Board of Canada.

The family in the natural environment brought back gifts to be distributed – not for money, but for good relations. We followed the age-old economic philosophy that the long-term health of the Nation depends on the health of each member.

The equal distribution and sharing of wealth today were the trapper's investment, ensuring that his family would be looked after tomorrow. "In all things we do, it is for those not yet born."

My own experience with creating a business in the 1980s had its own challenges. To say that a First Nation individual is invisible to banking institutions is an understatement. The banking personnel see a customer in front of them – requesting a loan, financing or whatever services a businessman needs to achieve economic independence. When a First Nation individual sits in front of the financial advisor, unfortunately their identity as a First Nation member stops whatever meaningful discussion could have taken place.

There are times when the bureaucracy can be sidestepped, but not too often. Once, an assistant bank manager gave me a break. We knew each other from brief contacts in meetings or when I visited the bank. After working for many years, I decided to open a small business, enough to keep me busy and put bread on the table. He readily agreed to a reasonable line of credit without the usual paperwork and questions. He knew I would use it and take care of it, which I did.

I used that line of credit for four or five years until I received a curt note from the head office in Toronto. The line of credit was being cancelled. What! No collateral?! The bureaucracy had caught up with me. I did not possess the required assets, nor was I running the business in the usual acceptable fashion. There was no store front, no advertising, although I carried business cards. My business was conducted from my kitchen table.

When my line of credit was cancelled, I behaved in typical fashion. I did not fight back. I did not question the bank about the sudden change of heart. I knew my usual contact had long been transferred to another location. I supposed there was no longer anyone to speak on my behalf. I reasoned that I did not need it anymore. I could survive the dry spells.

This kind of thinking (not to enforce your will) is ingrained in the psyche of the First Nation person. We are different. We are separated by law, policy and placement. At the moment, we are stuck with the Indian Act. We are stuck being a group of survivalists we call Indians. We know "Indians" is the incorrect designation but still, we use it. As we ignore the basic premise, we skirt around the big monster document with its massive administration and accept the manipulation of program dollars to put out political fires.

But there is another set of laws, another Indigenous economy. At one time, the various First Peoples were the masters of their domain. Managing the rhythm of the environment that surrounded them, they accepted what the land demanded and took only what resources they needed. They knew that for the shelter to be warm in winter for comfortable habitation, they needed to care for the fire.

I think we need to keep our re-emerging Indigenous economy uppermost in our minds as we approach that loan officer. The first thing we have to do as First Peoples is to stop feeling defeated. Nelson Mandela said in his inaugural speech: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us."

Many other Nations have been colonized only to slowly and gradually rise up again. Any Nation – community or individual – must periodically undergo a trial in order to be reminded of their own inner strengths, their own uniqueness, and their own power. And we have to do it ourselves.

Dr. Edmund Metatawabin

Preface

Tomorrow is controlled by the people who know their past and plan today.

My grandfather's reality demonstrates resilience and struggle. His economic paradigm was structured around obtaining resources from the land to procure food for his growing family. My father faced the reality of dealing with a mainstream financial institution. It continues in today's economy – even though the same institutions have also begun creating Indigenous-specific products over the past decade.

Here at NACCA, we target an opportunity for Indigenous people to impact the gross domestic product by 100 billion dollars – after we close the many socio-economic gaps in infrastructure, health, education and access to capital that still distinguish us from non-Indigenous Canada. Our communities have begun to understand how the legacy of the Indian Act and residential schools has impacted our reality, and that it will take generations to recover.

We also understand that only we control the outcome. We control how we react to a system that has largely excluded Indigenous people from Canada's economic fabric. We control a great deal of leverage in this country's future access to the wealth of the land. And as 275 court cases have established, we retain rights to our lands. As a result, we now also control how we engage, who we engage, and how fast we want to develop our territories.

Shannin Metatawabin - CEO NACCA

Our ancestors were in business for thousands of years, travelling countless miles across the continent to buy, sell and trade with each other. We must recall their example, holding up the ones who came before. We must acknowledge the players, stakeholders and rights-holders who fought for us to be here today. And we must celebrate our successes, which pave the path to a better future.

With these imperatives in mind, NACCA presents one of Indigenous Canada's "best-kept secrets." This book offers the story of a grassroots Indigenous-led lending movement and of some of the Indigenous businesses it has supported. Together, they present real-world examples of what it means to do it ourselves.

We offer our story to you, tireless builders and workers of Aboriginal Financial Institutions, whose lending supports Indigenous entrepreneurs every day. We offer it to the Indigenous entrepreneurs, families and communities who have drawn on our services – or could in the future. We offer our story to our supporters in government and corporate Canada. Last but not least, we offer it to the world. With our proven track record of commitment and success, NACCA, AFIs, and Indigenous businesses across the country are poised to help make Canada a major factor in the global market.

To all who have made us what we are, we salute you – and look forward to the next thirty years!

Shannin Metatawabin - CEO NACCA

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Introduction

This volume presents the story of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and its member Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs). Where some AFIs have existed for over two generations, the time to tell our story has come.

Researching that story makes clear what the builders of AFIs and NACCA, their national representative organization, have long known in our bones. Our story is not simply about a set of institutions, of one type of financing organization among others. It is the story of a movement – one of courage and resilience, of seeking to empower Indigenous people within an economic system that leaves us marginalized through policy, legal and attitudinal barriers to this day.

Our story begins with First Nations and Métis leaders, many of them in Alberta. The first visionaries of the AFI movement sought to ensure their people would be able to access the loan capital they required to benefit from oil and gas developments as entrepreneurs in the 1970s. Their efforts helped transform a cumbersome federal Native loan program into the very first Indigenous-led lending institutions that would serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Part One, "The First Generation," recounts the growth of fledgling, independent and likeminded institutions that administered loans to ever-growing numbers of Indigenous entrepreneurs across the country. Throughout, AFIs were determined to remain Indigenous-led and rooted in their communities, while at the same time finding a unified national voice in what became NACCA.

Part Two, "The Second Generation," describes how member AFIs have managed not merely to survive, but even to increase their capacity and professionalism. They have done so without significant new funding. This testifies both to the steadfast purpose of AFIs and the creativity of NACCA's working groups.

By the early 1990s, the handful of Indigenous-led AFIs had grown to thirty-two. Today, there are over fifty. NACCA's members now serve First Nations, Métis and Inuit entrepreneurs in a wide range of sectors and in every region of the country.

In their tenacity and resilience, AFIs are inspired by those who use their services: Indigenous business owners.

Part Three, "Indigenous Success, One Business at a Time," presents the success stories of Indigenous businesses across the country. Ranging from sole proprietorships to complex community-led operations, the business success stories bring home the impact of our member's work.

Over 47,000 loans to Indigenous-owned businesses. An initial investment of $240 million lent, repaid and lent out again for a total of $2.7 billion in loans since the movement's inception. This is a story of economic self-determination. This is a story of Indigenous success.

Facing page: Drum circle.

Early History Of The Movement

The pulse for economic self-determination beats down through the generations, as even the earliest history of the Aboriginal Financial Institution movement demonstrates.

James Gladstone, in traditional dress, in front of Parliament Building after being sworn in as senator - 1958.
Fred Gladstone, calf roping at the Calgary Stampede, 1951.

The Gladstones

One of the first Indigenous entrepreneurs to become involved with government policy was James Gladstone. In 1958, James Gladstone, a member of the Blood Tribe of Alberta, became the first status Indian appointed to the Senate of Canada.

James Gladstone served as a senator from 1958 to 1971. Among the many First Nations issues he championed was the full participation of Indigenous peoples in administering the programs aimed at them. At the time, the federal government was delivering a program that offered small business grants to First Nations through the regional offices of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The grant program evolved into a loans program.

Fred Gladstone, James Gladstone's son, continued his father's push for Indigenous economic self-determination. A renowned calf-roper and rodeo judge, Fred Gladstone was also a driving force in creating a fund to assist First Nations people in establishing businesses related to Alberta oil sands development – the Indian Equity Fund.

The Indian Equity Foundation

On November 1, 1976, Alberta-based Treaty 6, 7 and 8 First Nations incorporated the Indian Equity Foundation to administer the Indian Equity fund. The foundation would provide debt and/or equity capital through unsecured loans to First Nation-owned businesses. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Syncrude Canada both provided start-up capital for the fund, expected to be up to $1.5 million by the end of 1978.

The Indian Equity Foundation may well be the first entity owned and controlled by First Nations to provide financial and advisory services to Indigenous people in Canada. Its goal was to help overcome the obstacles to financing of First Nations-owned businesses presented by the Indian Act.

Established on a five-year trial basis, the foundation usually loaned up to 20 percent of the capital that the First Nations business needed. The business would be expected to find the remainder of its funding from private lending institutions.

Fund to aid Indian projects

James Heron

By Maryhelen Vicars

It's hard for an Indian businessman to get financing, for reasons that have more to do with equity than with racism.

Indian reserve land can't be used as collateral by individuals, and the Indian Act prevents the seizing of certain securities from treaty Indians.

That's where the year-old Indian Equity Foundation comes in.

Established by the federal government and Syncrude on a five-year trial basis, the foundation loans up to 20 per cent of the required capital needed by Indian businesses. This money, a no-interest subordinate loan, then becomes equity so that the businesses can take out loans for the rest of the capital they require from conventional sources.

The foundation is going into its second year with a new director, a list of some 16 projects funded, and more than a million dollars on hand.

The new director, James Heron, a former banker and investment counsellor, says the foundation is a unique financial organization.

Unlike other funding bodies, it is not a "giveaway program," he says.

"It's a high-risk portfolio," he says, "but we do anticipate a low loss ratio."

Although some of the projects which have been considered by the foundation have been large — shopping centres, for example — most are "not big deals", Mr. Heron says. An individual or group requiring capital to purchase school buses or a welding outfit would be more typical.

Mr. Heron says the foundation is also working with some bands on larger developments, helping them to circumvent the Indian reserve collateral problem by assigning a portion of their land for a limited time to a tribal development council. By assigning the land, the improvements can then be mortgaged.

Although Mr. Heron says it's still too early to predict the success of the foundation, there are tentative plans to involve other investors as the organization begins to prove itself.

The foundation works closely with the Indian Oil Sands Economic Development Corporation, banks and other financial institutions in screening applicants for the foundation's help.

"We're looking for evidence of viability," he says, and while the foundation does not provide research and consulting services, it works closely with agencies who do provide such help.

Working on the basis of leverage — "Our foundation puts up a dollar and conventional lenders put up five for a project cost of six dollars" — Mr. Heron calculates the $1.5 million which will be in the fund at the end of 1978 will mean up to $10 million can be invested in Indian-operated businesses.

"Fund to aid Indian projects," Edmonton Journal, Friday November 24, 1978.

Part One: The First Generation

Birth of Aboriginal Capital Corporations

In the early 1980s, Indigenous leaders recommended that the Native Economic Development Program, as it was then known, create Indigenous-led lending institutions under a new five-year program. Designed, governed and managed by Indigenous people, the new institutions would replicate the model of the Indian Equity Foundation established in Alberta in 1976.

In the view of these leaders, such institutions would be more efficient and effective than the "Phantom Fund" provided by the Native Economic Development Program, so-called by First Nations business people because it was very slow to respond to loan applications. The Indian Equity Foundation model also provided increased Indigenous control compared to design and delivery of the program by government.

This is how the Aboriginal Capital Corporation (ACC) concept was born. ACCs received their lending capital from Aboriginal Business Canada, a program of Industry Canada.

In the years to follow, Industry Canada provided the newly established ACCs with an average capital base of $5 million. The program expected them to become financially self-sufficient after five years. This expectation was problematic: many of the ACC business plans (prepared by third-party professionals) indicated that they would require a much higher capital base if they were to achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Facing page: Totem with bears highlighted in black and red.

Fund to aid native businesses

By Randy Burton
of the Star-Phoenix

Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bill McKnight has announced a Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation to provide start-up capital for Indian business in the province.

McKnight was also in Saskatoon to help promote Small Business Week, Oct. 19-25.

The Indian Equity Foundation is to be capitalized with $5.7 million, made up of $4.3 million from the federal Native Economic Development Fund, $750,000 from McKnight's department and the remainder from the province.

"The proposal is to set up an Indian-owned and controlled financial institution which will provide interest-bearing loans and business advisory services for status Indians throughout Saskatchewan," McKnight said at a press conference.

In addition to this program, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology will receive $440,000 for native business training and the Saskatchewan Indian Women's Association will get $324,000 to hire professional business development advisers.

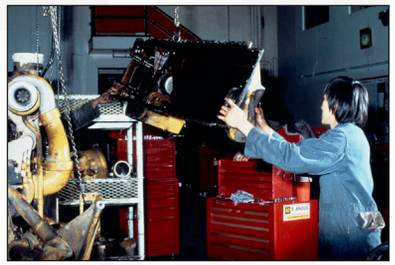
Ken Thomas, chairman of the native economic development advisory board, said the fund will make equity loans of between $10,000 and $50,000 for small business, "and small business will be almost anything in Saskatchewan, both on and off the reserve."

"The major problem with Indian business is the lack of equity capital. They don't have the first 25-per-cent down payment for a company or a piece of property. What this will do is lend them that equity capital."

Bill McKnight

"We understood that we were important for communities. There was no capital in communities, no security for loans, and AFIs were the only players out there at that time.

Cliff Fregin, former CEO, New Relationship Trust.
Involved with the AFI movement since 1992



Individual using a staple gun. National Archives.
Two mechanics. National Archives.
"Fund to aid native businesses," Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, October 18, 1986.
Individual using acetalyne torch. National Archives.

Metis lender moves into own space

Journal Staff

Edmonton

Six years after starting up as a lender to Metis businesses the Apeetogosan (Metis) Development Inc. finally has headquarters it can call its own.

Its rented offices were too cramped so the lending association decided the time was right to put money towards its own needs.

It found 300 square metres at 12527-129 St. for $290,000.

"We thought we may as well start building up some equity," Apeetogosan chairman Garry Gairdner said before Thursday's official opening.

"Basically we've become self-sustaining."

The association has had federal and provincial financing to help pay for its operating costs and advisory services. Government restraint means much of the funds have dried up, Gairdner said.

Loans to aid Indian businesses

The Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation got a boost this week with an injection of $370,100 from the federal government.

The foundation was established last June under the auspices of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI) to facilitate the development of Indian-owned and operated small businesses in Saskatchewan.

A release from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs said the foundation will try to achieve this by making equity loans available to qualified Indian applicants.

These applicants can use this capital to obtain further funds from other financial institutions.

"It is planned that this initiative will encourage very substantial business and commercial activity within Saskatchewan's Indian community, and will in turn lead to increased employment, general strengthening of reserve economies, and the development of entrepreneurial and technical skills amongst the province's Indian population," the release said.

The foundation will fix the sum of $35,000 as the maximum contribution to be made available to any one business. Subordinated interest-free loans will be available to registered Indians, companies, and bands, for commercial or industrial enterprises on or off reserve.

The foundation was established last June with a $50,000 contribution from the federal department. The foundation has a six-member board of directors, which has a three-year mandate to supervise and direct its operations.

NEDP contribution to Indian financial institution

An $85,000 contribution under the Native Economic Development Program (NEDP) to a new, Indian-owned financial institution in the Dauphin region has been announced by the Honourable Andre Bissonnette, Minister of State (Small Businesses), and Minister responsible for the program.

The contribution enables the newly established West Region Tribal Council Investments Inc. to carry out a nine-month special study to develop a comprehensive operational plan.

Expected to be completed in the fall of 1986, the study will develop an organization structure, identify investment opportunities, prepare financial and budget projections and outline operational plans.

The study will also provide an analysis of the financial services to be provided by the corporation to the Indian bands and individuals in the tribal council.

"Successful implementation of WRTC Investments Inc. should prove a major step toward improving the economic development situation of the 3,950 people in the eight bands in the region," Mr. Bissonnette said.

He said the NEDP contribution is further evidence of the commitment of the federal government to assist development of Native economic self-reliance.

"I applaud the initiative being shown by the leadership of the West Region Tribal Council toward establishment of an economic base for their people in the area and I wish them every success in this significant undertaking," the Minister said.

The following Indian bands are members of the WRTC: Crane River, Ebb and Flow, Gambler, Pine Creek, Rolling River, Valley River, Waterhen and Waywayseecappo. Chief Dennis White Bird of Rolling River is tribal council chairman.

The contribution, which represents 46 percent of the total cost of the study, was approved under NEDP Element I which assists establishment of Native-owned financial institutions. NEDP is a five-year, special initiative administered by the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion to assist development of Aboriginal economic self-reliance.

Open Letter from Brian White, MP

Dear Friends,

It will soon be two years since the Progressive Conservatives became the Government of Canada. Much has happened since September 4, 1984 - most of it good. However, if you look at the negative publicity that we have received over the past two years, you will see it is minor and petty for the most part, and has unfortunately overshadowed the positive achievements

War. Have no doubt about the fact that it is a direct result of this Government's economic policy.

We receive much criticism from the Liberals and NDP (who, by the way, offer no alternatives), but the facts speak for themselves. In fact, much of the opposition we receive these days tries to deflect Canadian thought from the positive social and economic policy of the Government by dwelling on minor issues that

"Metis lender moves into own space," Edmonton Journal, March 25, 1994.

Two mechanics working on a vehicle. National Archives.

"Loans to aid Indian businesses," Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, March 3, 1982.

"NEDP contribution to Indian financial institution," The Grandview Exponent, July 2, 1986.

Indigenous Entrepreneurship Takes Off

By the early 1990s, some thirty-two ACCs existed, and the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs had approximately doubled to about 5,000.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people were opening businesses at unprecedented rates – in sectors ranging from hair salons, art studios and auto mechanic shops to film, farming, logging and other capital-heavy industries. Indigenous-owned businesses also ranged widely in size, from home-based sole proprietorships to large-scale First Nations-owned enterprises.

During this period, First Nations business and political leaders stressed the existence of barriers besides the Indian Act to the economic development of their people. The residential school system had left its legacy as well. At conferences organized by Aboriginal Business Canada, leaders identified promoting not only access to capital but also literacy and business skills of aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs as priorities. Beyond providing loans, Aboriginal Capital Corporations would need to deliver business support to the Indigenous entrepreneurs they served.

Nkmip Desert Cultural Centre, British Columbia.
Inset: Inkameep Vineyard. Historic Osoyoos Land Development Project sign.

Renewing the Commitment to Indigenous Ownership

At the end of the five-year program that created the Aboriginal Capital Corporations, Aboriginal Business Canada completed a program review. Of the ten ACCs reviewed, it concluded that only two could be considered viable – and only if the capital were increased to an average of $10 million each. ACCs would also require operating subsidies to offset the unanticipated costs of the high-risk developmental loans they were created to provide.

Of the 32 ACCs in existence in the early 1990s, Aboriginal Business Canada expected that one third might become viable, one third would continue to struggle, and the remaining third would fail.

The department sought to facilitate an end to the five-year program. In May 1995, it advised the ACCs that it had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Business Development Bank of Canada, which would result in the ACCs reporting to that entity. Structured as a Crown corporation, the Business Development Bank of Canada was wholly owned by the federal government.

This move spawned discussions between a working group of ACCs and Aboriginal Business Canada, which brought to light a significant gap in their understandings of the ACCs' lending work. Despite some vehement differences aired at some meetings, both sides committed to continue meeting in order to find a mutually acceptable solution.

In 1993, ACCs – which had met at meetings organized and sponsored by Aboriginal Business Canada throughout the 1980s and 1990s – decided to begin meeting without the government. It was at one such event, with the future of their work at stake, that five ACCs resolved to make a joint effort to change the decision of Aboriginal Business Canada. The five quickly expanded into six ACCs from across the country. These six included the following:

- Alberta Indian Investment Corporation (AB)
- Indian Agricultural Business Corporation (AB)
- Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SK)
- Société de Crédit Commercial Autochtone (QC)
- Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation (BC)
- Ulnooweg Development Group (Atlantic)

Though the six ACCs came from different parts of the country, they shared similar views on fundamental matters. Above all, they objected to reporting to the Business Development Bank of Canada, which would jeopardize Indigenous control of their organizations. Representatives met with the Business Development Bank of Canada. After they explained the reason for their discontent, the latter decided not to proceed with the MOU.

All Aboriginal Financial Institutions owe a debt of gratitude to these six Aboriginal Capital Corporations – and the people who served them – for holding steadfast to the vision of Indigenous ownership and control of the ACCs.

> *This is our organization; we are not an extension of anybody. There is passion and commitment here. We will choose our own destiny and will design our products and services to meet the needs of our own First Nation clients.*

Rocky Sinclair, CEO, Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, on the approach of his AFI.
With the movement since 1987

Steve Simon *The Journal*

Wilson Okeymaw's drumming group opens the Indian economic development conference

Native businesses on rise, delegates told

MARINA JIMENEZ
Journal Staff Writer

Edmonton

The entrepreneurial spirit among natives is growing, despite the barriers of illiteracy and lack of capital, an Indian economic development conference heard Tuesday.

MP Willie Littlechild said expertise in the environment and a large youth population will help natives develop economic self-sufficiency and start up businesses.

About 400 delegates and nine chiefs from across Canada gathered in the Edmonton Inn to listen to academic, business and environmental speakers discuss the importance of native business ventures.

Wilson Okeymaw's drumming group opened the day and Peigan nation elder Dr. Joe Crowshoe Sr. — dressed in beaded leather from head to toe — offered a prayer.

"How can we contribute more to Canada? Some say we've given enough by sharing our land and resources to our own detriment."

— Willie Littlechild

With a 45-per-cent illiteracy rate and problems with alcoholism and drug abuse, natives face additional barriers to economic independence, said Littlechild, the MP for Wetaskiwin.

"How can we contribute more to Canada? Some say we've given enough by sharing our land and resources to our own detriment. This is an additional aspect of our challenge."

To foster economic growth natives should:

- Help educate young people.
- Pool their resources.
- Look beyond their reserve borders and pursue international business ventures, Littlechild said.

Tom Hockin, minister of state for small businesses and tourism, noted in his lunchtime address that more natives than ever before are tapping into a federal investment capital program.

Last year the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Program awarded about 750 native business ventures between $72 million and $74 million.

"The number of applications is astonishing. We've seen a 2.5-time increase in the last two years," said Hockin, noting that Albertan natives are the second largest group of users in the country. Money is not allocated on a regional basis.

According to Harold Gray, who works with the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, there are 500 native businesses in Alberta.

But though the entrepreneurial drive is growing, Gray said reserve unemployment rates run at about 75 per cent.

Hockin told his audience the major barriers facing aboriginals are access to capital and lack of business skills. The Indian Act prohibits natives who live on reserves from using their houses as collateral to raise financing.

Hockin said eight Alberta businesses were recently awarded $1.6 million in investment capital. The companies work in film production, environmental services, milk hauling, logging, supplying the oil fields and running a golf course and cattle ranch.

Leader-Post photo by Don Healy

Pat Lacerte works in her shop

Indians entering business world

By BRIAN FODEN
of The Leader-Post

By transforming a garage behind her MacKay Street home into an attractive hair salon, Pat Lacerte has become one of the growing number of Indian entrepreneurs in the province.

"I'm very, very busy. I've got a real good clientele built up," Lacerte said during an interview she fitted in while two clients sat under hair dryers. Lacerte's success is in sharp contrast with her situation a few years ago.

Lacerte and her husband Wilf were both out of work in 1986, and were forced to rely on the food bank. By the time she came up with the idea to borrow $6,000 to use her garage for a money-making operation, Lacerte's credit rating was so low she had a hard time obtaining a loan.

Fortunately, a new credit union manager had faith in Lacerte's plan and approved the loan.

Other Indian business people, such as Russell Gray, also receive loans from the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation to help them establish businesses.

Gray borrowed $20,000 from the foundation. Along with $80,000 from another federal government program, he expanded his automotive service business last year.

Since its inception in 1986, the equity foundation has provided 900 loans worth more than $10 million, general manager Wayne Gray (no relation to Russell) said. The program is one of 30 financed by the federal government across the country, Gray added.

"I would say there's always been Indian entrepreneurs, but I think what you're finding is Indian entrepreneurs are getting into things four or five years ago they weren't getting into, and a lot of them are very successful ventures."

More Indians are establishing businesses off reserves, Gray said, mentioning trucking, hair styling, and automotive service as just a few examples. Several Indian bands are also running successful enterprises, he said.

Among the ventures assisted through the equity foundation was a businessman who supplied condoms through vending machines.

"That was our most unusual one," Gray said.

According to Ken Thomas, chairman of the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy, the number of native business people in the country has approximately doubled in the past five years.

He estimated there are about 5,000 native entrepreneurs in Canada.

Thomas is discussing native entrepreneurship during a small-business conference in Regina today and Saturday. The conference, at the Ramada Renaissance, also consists of discussions on management and exporting practices, capital loans, agricultural diversification and other topics.

Lawyer Vikas Khaladkar, who is also taking part in the conference, said natives often must overcome several obstacles in order to open their own businesses.

"It's much more difficult for an Indian person to get into business," Khaladkar said.

People living on reserves have a hard time obtaining loans because banks can't seize inventory from failed businesses to recoup money lent out if the enterprise is on a reserve, the lawyer said.

Lack of money, education and suitable role models are other problems faced by many natives, Khaladkar added.

"Indians entering business world," Regina Leader-Post, October 5, 1990.
"Native businesses on rise, delegates told," Edmonton Journal, May 1, 1991.

Finding a National Voice

Already before the issue with the Business Development Bank of Canada, ACCs had discussed forming a national organization. By consolidating their efforts and results, they believed, they could better demonstrate their collective impact. They also felt that a unified position would benefit each individual ACC in the long term.

The idea of creating an "Aboriginal Capital Corporation Central," or a national corporate entity to support the efforts of AFIs, emerged at a meeting of AFIs with federal government and Royal Bank executives in Enoch, Alberta.

The Royal Bank issued a letter of interest in providing $40 to $50 million of loan capital to this new central corporation, which in turn would lend it to qualified individual ACCs.

Buoyed by the prospect of obtaining new loan capital, most of the 32 ACCs met in Quebec City in 1996. There they resolved to form the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), a national body dedicated to providing a collective voice and advocating for their shared interests.

The meeting at Enoch First Nation identified certain key features for the new central Aboriginal Capital Corporation it envisaged. The organization should do the following:

- Be a central body, adequately capitalized with affordable capital (2 to 3 percent) that it would offer to Aboriginal Capital Corporations at affordable rates.
- Be able to provide training to staff of Aboriginal Capital Corporations as well as client businesses.
- Have a monitoring feature for funds lent out.
- Offer other services to AFIs as needed, and pursue further revenue sources.

> *L'union fait la force – together we are stronger.*
>
> *Jean Vincent, Chair of the Board, Société de credit commercial autochthone (SOCCA) and current NACCA Board Chair.*
> *Involved in the AFI movement since 1992, recalling the initial motivation to form a national organization.*

BUILDERS OF THE MOVEMENT

Inaugural Board of Directors of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations:

Alphonse Ducharme, Manitoba (Co-Chair)
Darlene Watts, British Columbia (Co-Chair)
William Kordyback, Alberta (Treasurer)
Henry Wetelainen, Ontario (Secretary)
Elaine Chambers, Yukon and Northwest Territories
Donny Maracle, Ontario
Chief Terrance Paul, Atlantic Canada
Chief Ray Bird, Saskatchewan
Mechele Williams (Crocker), British Columbia

NACCA's inaugural working group developed a business plan for the new Association. The working group, once again, represented all regions of the country:

John Bower, Director of Operations, Ulnooweg Development Group
Jean Vincent, President and Director General, Société de Crédit Commercial Autochtone
Clive Diller, General Manager, Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation
Scott Drummond, General Manager, Indian Agricultural Business Corporation
Wayne Gray, General Manager, Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation

The Founding of NACCA

In June 1996 in Quebec City, the Aboriginal Capital Corporations agreed to formalize their network in order to pursue common interests and increase their cost efficiencies. In light of the large and growing demand for their loans, the desire to acquire further loan capital was foremost among their interests.

At NACCA's founding meeting, 22 of the 32 Aboriginal Capital Corporations agreed to form the Association. Within a few months, all 32 Aboriginal Capital Corporations had joined.

NACCA was formally incorporated in 1997. Its purpose was to serve as a central hub to Aboriginal Capital Corporations, developing and disseminating products and services to them.

First Working Group of the Aboriginal Capital Corporations

One of the fledgling association's first tasks was to develop a business plan for the organization. This it did through a working group comprised of the same six members that had earlier objected to reporting to the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Based on data provided by member AFIs, NACCA's 1996 business plan quantified a need for an additional $100 million in lending capital, to be managed by an Aboriginal Treasury.

One of the first boards of NACCA.

> *There were a lot of growing pains to form the organization. We spent a whole two days dealing with bylaws at an Annual General meeting in Nuu-chaha-nulth territory.*

Elaine Chambers, General Manager, däna Näye Ventures.
Involved in the AFI movement since 1987 and an early board member of NACCA.

The Working Group: How NACCA Gets Things Done

Usually composed of AFI General Managers, the working group has been the format that NACCA has used whenever it wished to develop new programs and tools to assist AFIs.

Working group members are genuine builders of the movement, helping consolidate its collective vision into a lasting set of programs and tools for use by the whole network.

Access to Capital: An Ongoing Challenge

From their inception to the present day, AFIs have lacked the capital they need to undertake developmental lending to Indigenous entrepreneurs. A high-risk, high-cost activity, it is also precisely the type of lending that AFIs were designed to provide.

The situation again became clear in 1996. Based on historic loan volumes and repayments, a survey of ACCs identified a need for additional affordable capital in the range of $100 million over five years for the network.

Aboriginal Business Canada rejected financing NACCA's business plan, which had been prepared by a volunteer working group and external consultants. The department reasoned that the prevailing fiscal climate did not favour financing the all-encompassing package that NACCA presented.

In the meantime, the network's lending continued, and the number of Indigenous entrepreneurs across the country continued to rise exponentially.

A 1998 study commissioned by Aboriginal Business Canada found that young Aboriginal people were almost two and a half times more likely to become entrepreneurs than Canadians in general, even though the percentage of Aboriginal business-owners was about half the Canadian average.

"Natives embracing entrepreneurial life," Winnipeg Free Press, August 4, 1998.

KEN GIGLIOTTI/WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

Aboriginal entrepreneur Chris Wastasecoot got the presses rolling at Gooseberry Hill a year ago.

Natives embracing entrepreneurial life

By Martin Cash
Business Reporter

CHRIS WASTASECOOT has an advantage that many other aboriginal Canadian entrepreneurs do not have — a role model who was his father.

Wastasecoot owns Gooseberry Hill Press, a one year-old commercial printing company. He started it after working at his father's Point Douglas communications and publishing company, Taiga Communications.

"He was farming out all his printing work, and I figured maybe we could sustain our own print shop," said Wastasecoot, 27.

He is one of 2,355 self-employed aboriginal people in the province, whose numbers represent a 7.1 per cent annual increase between 1981 and 1996.

A major research report entitled Aboriginal Entrepreneurs in Canada: Progress and Prospects, presents one of the more encouraging snapshots of aboriginal economic development in Canada in years.

The report shows that the number of aboriginal people who were self-employed grew by 170 per cent compared to 60 per cent for all Canadians — almost two and a half times faster than the national increase.

Bob Dickson, executive director of Aboriginal Business Canada, the branch of Industry Canada that produced the research, acknowledged the report is the first solid evidence of the growth of the aboriginal business community.

And the results, as far as he's concerned, are significant.

"This is a tremendously encouraging, good news story," Dickson said. "The long-term trend is very exciting to see. If you look at the growth over the last 10 years and extrapolate it over the next 10 years, it is a very encouraging turnaround."

The percentage of aboriginal-owned businesses that are engaged in exporting is higher than for all Canadian businesses, and Dickson said most of that has taken place during the last five years.

While the percentage of all aboriginal adults who own businesses is about half that of the Canadian average, young aboriginal people are almost two and a half times more likely to be entrepreneurs than Canadians in general.

Dickson said that is a relatively recent phenomenon, but one that suggests good things for the future.

"In the past, there were very few aboriginal entrepreneur role models for young people," he said. "Now, it being considered as more of an option for aboriginal youth."

Wastasecoot is also in the minority among his peers in that he has a sociology degree from the University of Winnipeg. The Industry Canada study points out that aboriginal people are only one-quarter as likely to have obtained a university degree as the general population.

When he put his business plan together before he borrowed much of the $75,000 he needed for presses and other equipment — some of it from Aboriginal Business Canada — Wastasecoot was able to show lenders letters of support from Manitoba aboriginal organizations, as well as Taiga Communications, who indicated they would do business with Wastasecoot's new company.

"It was rough at first," he said. "But now I don't have to run around like a chicken with its head cut off all the time. I can actually take calls from people looking for quotes and get out a few times a week to talk to clients."

After less than a year in business, Gooseberry has four employees and has rapidly positioned itself as the aboriginal market's preferred print house in Winnipeg, producing quality four-colour and other print work.

Elaine Cowan, who, like Wastasecoot, is from the Peguis First Nation, also does much of her business within the aboriginal community.

Cowan owns Anokiiwin Training Institute Inc., a private vocational school, along with partner Ray Starr. The institution has anywhere from 60 to 100 students at any one time and about 90 per cent of them are aboriginal. Last Friday Anokiiwin graduated its first class of Microsoft certified systems engineer training.

"We've been getting calls from people already," she said. "They will all find good work."

Anokiiwin is partnering with companies like SHL Systemhouse and the Royal Bank of Canada, which is sponsoring a newly designed course for call-centre agents. Cowan's enthusiasm is an indication of the strides that aboriginal entrepreneurs are making and the economic impact they are already having on development issues for the larger aboriginal community.

BEV WATSON, executive director of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, is one of the organizers of the Aboriginal Business Showcase '98. The event, to take place in early September, will highlight and promote 54 Manitoba aboriginal-owned business.

"One of the things we have all been amazed at is the number of businesses that are out there," Watson said.

The idea has come out of discussions by an organization of independent aboriginal business owners in Winnipeg called Aboriginal Business Leaders and Entrepreneurs, of which Cowan is one of the founders.

Watson said one of the things the organization and the showcase intends to accomplish is a greater profile for aboriginal businesses in the context of mainstream business.

Business is booming

There were 128,685 aboriginal people in Manitoba (45,750 in Winnipeg) in 1996, out of a total of 799,010 across Canada. Here's a snapshot of self-employed aboriginals in the province:

- **Total number:** 2,355.
- **Annual growth rate** (1981-96): 7.1 per cent.
- **North American Indian:** 790
  On-reserve: 355.
  Off-reserve: 435.
- **Metis:** 1,520.
- **Inuit:** 10.
- **Urban:** 985.
- **Rural:** 1,330.
- **Male:** 1,535.
- **Female:** 815.
- **Youth** (age 15-24): 215.

Source: 1981 and 1996 Census.

The Network Proves its Resilience: The Interest Rate Buy-Down Program

Unable to obtain cost-free capital from the federal government, the NACCA working group submitted a new proposal – an innovative concept that called for establishing an interest rate buy-down to reduce the cost of borrowed funds. Initially, Aboriginal Business Canada rejected the proposal. The working group resubmitted it, adding in a training program. After both the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the federal regional economic development agencies agreed to contribute, Aboriginal Business Canada accepted the second proposal.

One condition of funding from the regional economic development agencies was that the Aboriginal Community Futures Development Corporations (ACFDCs) also be accepted into NACCA. These much smaller lenders receive modest core funding from the federal regional economic development agencies.

> *How they took that initial investment and turned it over absolutely amazes me. It is staggering that they survived even ten years.*
>
> *Wayne Gray, active in establishing or managing several ACCs in Western Canada.*
> *Involved in the AFI movement since 1986.*

The network discussed including ACFDCs at its annual general meeting of June 1998. Ultimately, the members unanimously agreed that both ACCs and ACFDCs serve the same Indigenous client group and are committed to improving their economic prospects.

NACCA amended its bylaws to permit full membership in the Association for the ACFDCs. Adding the ACFDC representatives meant considerable refinements to the proposed Access to Capital programming, which in turn would enhance AFI operations and the network as a whole.

BUILDERS OF THE MOVEMENT: The First ACFDC Members

In 1998, four representatives of the ACFDCs began attending Access to Capital Working Group meetings:

- Geri Collins, Community Futures Development Centre of Central Interior First Nations
- Ian Cramer, Southeast Manitoba Community Development Centre
- Dawn Madahbee, Waubetek Business Development Centre
- Don Courchene, Treaty 7 Economic Development Centre

WOMEN IN THE AFI MOVEMENT

Indigenous women have been part of the AFI movement since its beginning. They remain key players today on the boards and technical working groups of NACCA and on the boards of its member AFIs.

Elaine Chambers, early NACCA board member representing the Yukon and general manager of däna Näye Ventures.
Involved in the movement since 1987.

Lucy Pelletier, former NACCA CEO and board chair, now NACCA board member and board chair of the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation.
Involved in the movement since 1993.

Dawn Madahbee Leach, general manager of Waubetek Business Development Corporation and executive committee member of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board.
Involved in the movement since 1988.

An Early Success: The First Nation and Inuit Youth Business Program

In November 1997, NACCA reached an agreement-in-principle with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) to manage the delivery of a business program for at-risk First Nations and Inuit youth. The First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program, the first national program managed by the Association, was designed through extensive consultations between NACCA's first working group and the federal government.

Delivered at first on a pilot basis by seven Aboriginal Capital Corporations, total annual funding for the program was $1.5 million per year over a five-year period. The program included four elements:

- Equity-matching contributions of up to $1,500
- Small interest-bearing repayable loans of up to $5,000
- Mentoring up to $2,000 per project
- Counselling and advisory support of up to $3,000.

In 1999, the pilot phase concluded and the program was extended to 30 AFIs. Thousands of First Nations and Inuit youth-at-risk participated in the program over its first five years.

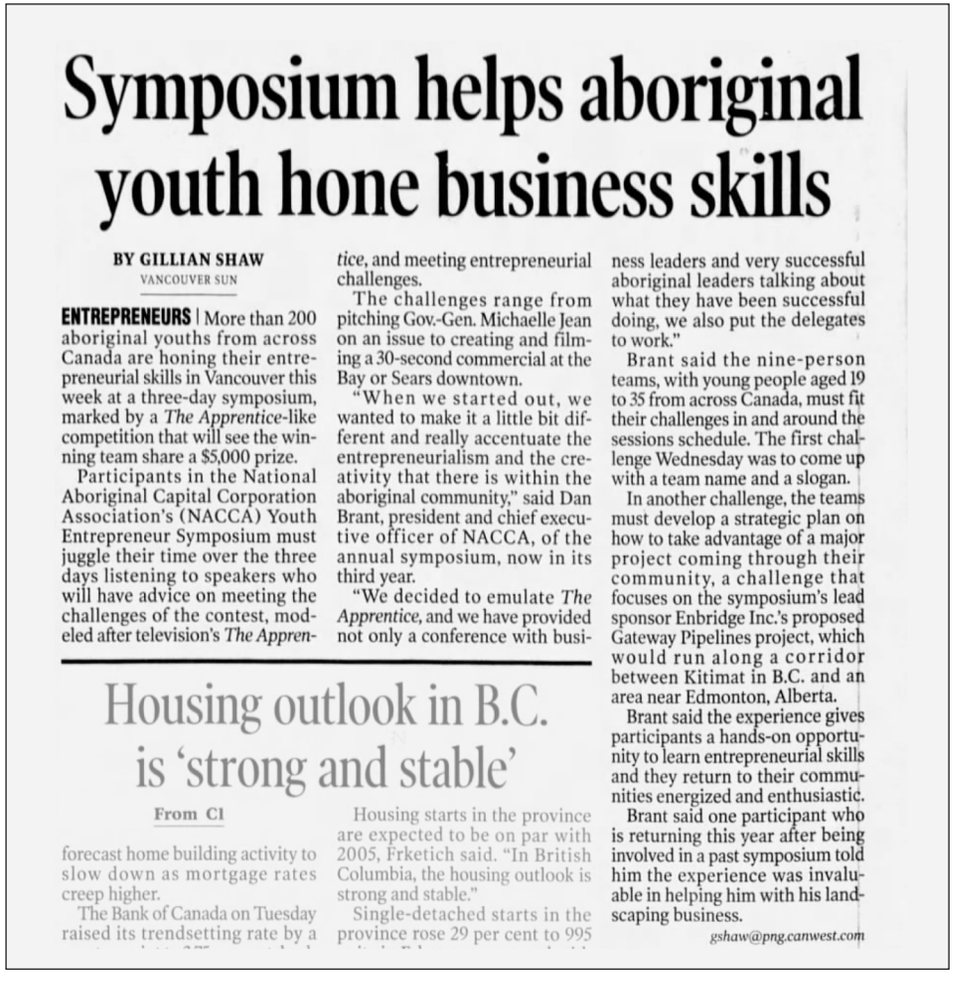
The First Nation and Inuit Youth Business Program was also important for the further development of NACCA as an organization. For one, it required NACCA to open a first office and hold regular board meetings. For another, it offered an occasion for the Association to work out the guiding principles it would use to develop future programs.

Third, the First Nations and Inuit Youth Business program heavily featured consultation with First Nation and Inuit AFIs. This consultation established a need to build in flexibility to allow regions to meet the unique needs of their clients.

Finally, it also featured a capacity-building aspect for AFIs. NACCA sought to assist ACC managers in counselling youth in their entrepreneurial endeavours. The responsible working group developed comprehensive Youth Business trainer's guides in consultation with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Youth Symposium still occurs on an annual basis. It is now hosted by the New Relationship Trust, a non-profit organization managing a fund created in 2006 to help strengthen the capacity of First Nations in British Columbia.

As a condition of administering the First Nation and Inuit Youth Business Program, DIAND insisted that NACCA open a stand-alone office. In January 1998, Grand Chief Bernard Meneen, then-president of the Indian Resource Council, provided office space in Edmonton at a nominal cost.



Symposium helps aboriginal youth hone business skills

BY GILLIAN SHAW
VANCOUVER SUN

ENTREPRENEURS | More than 200 aboriginal youths from across Canada are honing their entrepreneurial skills in Vancouver this week at a three-day symposium, marked by a *The Apprentice*-like competition that will see the winning team share a $5,000 prize.

Participants in the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association's (NACCA) Youth Entrepreneur Symposium must juggle their time over the three days listening to speakers who will have advice on meeting the challenges of the contest, modeled after television's *The Apprentice*, and meeting entrepreneurial challenges.

The challenges range from pitching Gov.-Gen. Michaelle Jean on an issue to creating and filming a 30-second commercial at the Bay or Sears downtown.

"When we started out, we wanted to make it a little bit different and really accentuate the entrepreneurialism and the creativity that there is within the aboriginal community," said Dan Brant, president and chief executive officer of NACCA, of the annual symposium, now in its third year.

"We decided to emulate *The Apprentice*, and we have provided not only a conference with business leaders and very successful aboriginal leaders talking about what they have been successful doing, we also put the delegates to work."

Brant said the nine-person teams, with young people aged 19 to 35 from across Canada, must fit their challenges in and around the sessions schedule. The first challenge Wednesday was to come up with a team name and a slogan.

In another challenge, the teams must develop a strategic plan on how to take advantage of a major project coming through their community, a challenge that focuses on the symposium's lead sponsor Enbridge Inc.'s proposed Gateway Pipelines project, which would run along a corridor between Kitimat in B.C. and an area near Edmonton, Alberta.

Brant said the experience gives participants a hands-on opportunity to learn entrepreneurial skills and they return to their communities energized and enthusiastic.

Brant said one participant who is returning this year after being involved in a past symposium told him the experience was invaluable in helping him with his landscaping business.

gshaw@png.canwest.com

Housing outlook in B.C. is 'strong and stable'

From C1

forecast home building activity to slow down as mortgage rates creep higher.

The Bank of Canada on Tuesday raised its trendsetting rate by a

Housing starts in the province are expected to be on par with 2005, Frketich said. "In British Columbia, the housing outlook is strong and stable."

Single-detached starts in the province rose 29 per cent to 995

"Symposium helps aboriginal youth hone business skills," The Vancouver Sun, March 9 2006.

Setting Up Shop: The First NACCA Office

NACCA's beginnings were modest. For most of the first year, the Director of Operations was the Association's sole employee. He had to purchase a used desk and chair when the office opened, while the First Nations Resource Council donated the use of their telephone and fax system.

One major advance after the national organization opened its doors was the database it began to compile. Previously, Aboriginal Business Canada itself had compiled data on the performance of the Aboriginal Capital Corporations. After 1998, NACCA began to extract data from the audited financial statements that all Aboriginal Financial Institutions provided.

Knowledge Is Power: The AFI Database

Aboriginal Business Canada shared its database with NACCA so that the Association could gain a full history of the ACCs. NACCA gathered its data from balance sheets, income and expense statements, and notes provided in the audited financial statements. The complexity of the database increased as NACCA's membership expanded to include the Aboriginal-controlled Community Futures Development Corporations as well as privately- and provincially-capitalized AFIs.

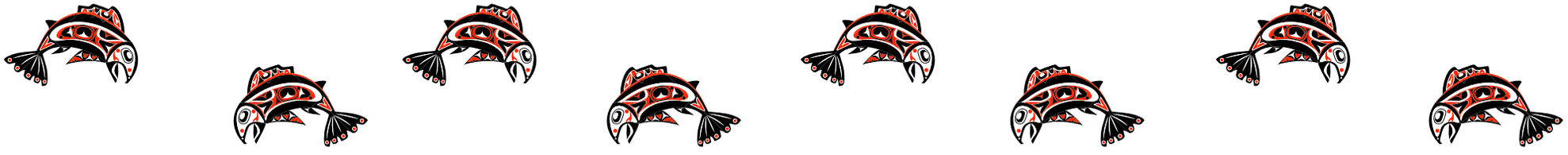
For the first time in the network's history, a consolidated picture of its activity began to emerge. The findings indicated an impact to the economy of $250 million to $300 million each year.

The data enabled NACCA to create an annual Aboriginal Financial Institution Portrait, which informed stakeholders of the collective impact that AFIs made each year.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING NACCA PROGRAMS

As NACCA's first national program, the First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program provided the occasion to develop certain core guiding principles, which NACCA has preserved to this day.

1. Respect the autonomy of each AFI
2. Instill in borrowers a sense of annual financial planning and budget constraints
3. Instill a sense of moral obligation to repay loans
4. Minimize administrative burdens for AFIs
5. Invite input and feedback on program design from all members



PART TWO: THE SECOND GENERATION

By the mid-2000s, some AFIs had existed for a full generation. The next generation would build further on the achievements of the first. Overall, the period spanning from 2000 to the present has seen increasing professionalism of the network and its members, as well as further refinement of the programs designed to serve Indigenous entrepreneurs.

This period has also seen the next logical step foreseen by the early founders of the movement: full control of federal programming by an Indigenous-led organization. In 2014, Canada devolved governance of its suite of Indigenous economic development programs to NACCA and its AFI partners.

Business Service Officers: Tailoring Services to the Indigenous Entrepreneur

At their annual meeting for 2003-04, AFI general managers indicated a need for business service officers. These officers would provide such things as loan pre-care, after-care and business planning workshops to their clients.

In 2005, NACCA commissioned a study quantifying the support tasks required as well as the time that AFI employees required to complete them. Commencing in 2006, Aboriginal Business Canada set up a program to assist with support for business service officers for selected AFIs.

By 2009, a total of twenty-two Aboriginal Financial Institutions had obtained federal funding to hire thirty-three business service officers. NACCA undertook a second study, which indicated the actual tasks and time that officers spent serving their clients. The study produced comparable data identifying the staffing levels required per AFI based on its activity and the geographical area serviced.

For the first time in the network's history, AFIs had a sense of their actual staffing needs.

Facing Page: Inuit mother and daughter, Baffin Island.

THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION HELPS STANDARDIZE SALARIES

AFIs employ 300 to 350 people. From the movement's inception, no effort had been made to share information like salary costs for the positions that each AFI offered. This changed in 1998, when NACCA members requested the Association to conduct a wage range survey comparing salary ranges for various positions throughout the AFI network. The network conducted three such surveys. Over time, the uniformity of salaries improved across the network.

CONTRIBUTING TO INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

The NACCA network had always insisted that the directors of AFI boards be Indigenous. The salary range survey established that Indigenous employment had increased throughout the network. Nationally, 67 percent of AFI employees were Indigenous by 2006, including 57 percent of senior managers and 71 percent of support staff.

Measuring Success

From 1985 to 2006, Aboriginal Business Canada independently ranked Aboriginal Capital Corporation performance from A (very good) to D (needs improvement). The ACCs did not understand the federal government's ranking procedures well, though – in part because they were not quantifiable.

When the Aboriginal Business Canada program unit was transferred to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the latter moved to establish quantifiable measures.

In 2008, a NACCA Working Group reviewed the newly developed measures. Intending to provide a more meaningful management tool, they decided to expand the measures to assess the performance of all AFIs.

The tool measured portfolio risk, loan capitalization use, economic impact, and self-sufficiency. To ensure the most meaningful benchmarks, the tool further categorized AFIs by size (assets of less than $5 million, of $5 million to $10 million, and of more than $10 million). As AFI asset bases grew, a fourth category was added in 2015: AFIs with assets of more than $20 million.

And in fact, the growth in size of AFIs also reflected a growth in the size and number of Indigenous-owned enterprises. The demand

for larger loans was growing, and Indigenous entrepreneurs were expanding into more and more sectors – beyond small enterprises and staple industries, into areas like tourism and telecommunications. Despite barriers still thrown up by the Indian Act, the legacy of residential schools, and lingering attitudes about Indigenous peoples, Indigenous entrepreneurship continued to grow – particularly among young people.

Rating Risk

In 2007, ten AFIs designed and tested a loan risk measurement tool which sought to document characteristics of an AFI and identify various levels of developmental loan risk. Once the tool identified a given AFI's risks, the AFI would know where to focus its support and advisory services. Ultimately, the tool aimed to improve the performance of AFIs as lenders.

Chart: Every dollar loaned made a contribution of up to $3.60 to the GDP.

Again, a NACCA working group oversaw development of the tool. Ten AFIs first tested it to rate the risk of loans provided in previous years. In 2014, AFIs tested the tool again, to prepare for rolling out the Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance Program. Informed by this further feedback, the working group made final improvements. Use of the tool then became a pre-requisite to qualify for Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance programming.

Development of the risk rating tool gave rise to a list of the key characteristics of Aboriginal Financial Institutions. This work recognized AFIs as geographically-situated regional lenders that provide largely (but not exclusively) developmental loans to Indigenous clients whom mainstream banks typically find too risky. AFIs are owned by, and accountable to, the Aboriginal communities they serve.

Cultivating a Community of Practice

A key raison d'être of the national association is to provide a permanent forum for sharing best practices among its members. An important step in realizing this goal occurred in 2006, when NACCA developed an Aboriginal Financial Institution Best Practices Guide. By this time, AFIs had built up a community of practice as lenders that they wished to see serve all members.

Aboriginal Financial Institution Best Practices Guide

The network had certain core objectives in documenting best practices. These were to do the following:

- Promote cooperation and sharing of knowledge and tools among AFIs
- Foster an environment of continuous learning and improvement
- Position AFIs in leadership roles, thereby enhancing funding opportunities
- Facilitate promotion and advocacy of AFI activities and interests
- Encourage voluntary commitment to shared principles and best practices
- Strengthen the overall credibility of the AFI network

Produced in collaboration with AFIs, Aboriginal Business Canada and DIAND, the resulting guide drew from the best practices of both AFIs themselves and from other profit and non-profit organizations in Canada. It addressed areas including governance, risk management, human resources management, client success and community impact.

Business Service Officer's Guide

AFIs that received business service officer funding revealed that many of them required a guide. The guide focused on interactions of economic and community development officers, business development officers, business service officers, and loan officers. It also addressed procedures for workshops, pre-loan and aftercare phases.

Program Renovation and Devolution

The evolution that eventually resulted in the transfer of the federal government's suite of Indigenous economic development programs to NACCA and 14 AFI members was a long time in the making. The program renovation process began in 2008 and ended with devolution of the suite of federal programs aimed at Indigenous economic development in 2014.

In 2009, NACCA's board identified four strategic pillars that would be critical to the network's future. In keeping with tradition, NACCA formed four working groups to help develop priorities under each pillar: ensuring sustainability, building capacity, attracting capital and client service. The renovation added to them a fifth: governance. The four working groups then formed a single Technical Advisory Group that would provide input into all economic development programs.

Program devolution occurs...

2014 was a watershed year for the network. After a decade of discussions with government, NACCA finally introduced the Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance Program, which the national organization would manage. At the same time, the federal government transferred its suite of client equity programs to fourteen AFIs. The next year, it transferred its management of a renovated program, the Aboriginal Entrepreneur Program, to NACCA.

A final innovation in 2014 was the launching of a new awards program recognizing outstanding AFIs based on the value of new small business loans they provided.

BUILDERS OF THE MOVEMENT

The Performance Measures Working Group included Rob Rollingson, Indian Business Corporation (AB); Greg Fofonoff, Saskatchewan Métis Economic Development Corporation (SK); Bill Hogan, Visions North Community Futures Corporation (SK); and Mari Bishop, Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund (ON).

The Risk Assessment Tool Working Group included both AFI and federal government representatives: David Vince, Two Rivers Community Development Centre (ON); Jean Vincent, Société de Crédit Commercial Autochtone (QC); Todd Hoskin, Ulnooweg Development Group (NS); Gerry Huebner, Aboriginal Business Canada; and Dominique Collin, DIAND.

BUILDERS OF THE AFI MOVEMENT

The working group on the capital attraction tool was comprised of both AFI and federal representatives: Jean Vincent, SOCCA (ACC); Todd Hoskin, Ulnooweg (ACC); Greg Fofonoff, SMEDCO (ACC); Ray St. Arnaud, Akaitcho (ACFDC); Kevin Schindelka, NACCA; Ian Donald, NACCA; Brock Dumville, DIAND; and Abdul Abdullahi, DIAND.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

Started in 2009-2010, the Technical Advisory Group still exists today. Its original members were David Vince, Two Rivers Community Development Corporation; Mike Ivy, Apeetogosan Métis Development Inc; Brian Davey, Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund; Steven Morse, Métis Voyager Development Fund; Terry Brodziak, Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation; Alan Park, Tribal Wi-chi-way-win Capital Corporation; and Jean Vincent, Société de Crédit Commercial Autochtone.

Governance becomes a priority...

With the transfer of economic development programming, governance of the Association gained new significance. Transfer of the programs was overseen by a new Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program Committee, an advisory committee to NACCA's board composed of both AFI and federal government representatives. NACCA also undertook a competency-based nomination process to ensure the recruitment of high-quality candidates for its board, as well as changes to the board's regional composition.

... And lending capital is STILL required.

In 2014, the need for additional loan capital for the network remained the top priority. Despite program devolution and NACCA's best efforts, additional capital still did not materialize. In the view of many long-time participants and supporters of the Indigenous lending movement, the ongoing lack of new loan capital remains the greatest challenge facing the network.

NACCA struck a working group to guide development of a program that could attract capital investment. Comprised of AFI General Managers and DIAND representatives, the program's goal was to attract mainstream and Aboriginal private sector capital, which would provide affordable, ongoing capital to meet the network's growing lending demands.

Strategic Thinking: 2015 to the Present

The past five years of the movement's history have been very active ones. After program devolution, NACCA's annual budget grew from $5 million to $35 million. The Association's responsibilities to its network members grew in kind.

In 2016, the Association commissioned new research from the Conference Board of Canada to investigate the cumulative impact of the AFI network's lending. That same year, it hired a new CEO and further improved its database. Using the Conference Board reports and the most recent data from the database, NACCA established the contribution of the AFI movement.

A NACCA board at work.

For example, from its beginnings in the early 1980s to 2016:

- The network had generated almost $2.7 billion in loans to Indigenous businesses, turning over $240 million in government capital contributions several times.
- Of all loans made, AFIs had written off only about 5 percent of them – well below the 10 percent average loss rate for a microlender.
- For every dollar the network loaned, it made a contribution of up to $3.60 to the Gross Domestic Product.

AFI activity was benefiting not only Indigenous entrepreneurs, but the Canadian economy as a whole.

Buoyed by its cumulative track record and new responsibilities, NACCA developed a five-year strategic plan to guide its activities in 2017. The plan resulted from a consultative process that included AFI General Managers as well as NACCA's board of directors and staff.

The plan set out four key priorities for the NACCA team. The process that began in 2000 – of further enhancing the professionalism and reputation of the AFI network – would continue, as would the quest for new capital.

NACCA would also continue to prioritize service to its members through such actions as holding regular conferences and developing tools to assist AFIs.

A final priority of the strategic plan was to inspire confidence in the network, where many have called the AFI movement Indigenous Canada's best-kept secret.

The Indigenous Lending Movement: Support and Success

As far back as the early 1980s, the AFI movement's work has helped create the foundation for thriving Indigenous economies. As it moves into its third generation, the network will continue to encounter challenges. It is not always an easy task to balance the community-based character of AFIs with the need to collaborate nationally to achieve shared objectives, or to ensure that all Indigenous heritage groups and regions are fully accommodated at the national level. In all these tasks, it will be key to stay focused on the voices of the AFIs in setting network priorities.

But it is also important to bear in mind the achievements of the past forty years. With the founding of AFIs in the 1980s and 90s, loan capital was no longer government money; it was Indigenous people's money. This shift in control marked a first step in the road to Indigenous economic self-determination.

The shift also marked one of many improvements in efficiency. The transfer of ownership of the loan portfolios from government to Indigenous-run institutions introduced a moral inducement to entrepreneurs to repay the loans. This in turn reduced the loan loss percentage rate to 5 percent below that of conventional microlenders.

Working with capital provided largely in the 1980s and early 1990s, AFIs have turned $240 million into over 47,000 loans to Indigenous entrepreneurs totalling approximately $2.7 billion since the mid-1980s.

The sheer determination of their founders, builders, and clients has ensured that Aboriginal Financial Institutions remain active today – and are still able to provide developmental loans and support services to Indigenous entrepreneurs across the country.

Decades of passionate and dedicated staff working for our Indigenous people, with lessons learned from our ancestors, setting the stage for our future generations. This is Indigenous success ... this is Indigenous prosperity for all.

What is our greatest accomplishment? We are still here! We've kept giving loans and kept our heads on, even when we should have floundered.

Lucy Pelletier, former Board Chair of NACCA and Board Member for the past 10 years.
Involved in the AFI movement since 1993.

All these AFIs are covering off their own administration with no assistance. It is a miracle they are still here.

Cliff Fregin, former CEO, New Relationship Trust.
Involved with the AFI movement since 1992.

It's an amazing accomplishment, the fact that they are still around after 30 plus years. When you look at the balance sheets, it is just remarkable.

Wayne Gray, former General Manager of ACCs throughout Western Canada.
Involved in the AFI movement since 1986.

NACCA's Indigineous Business of The Year Award. (L-R) Shannin Metatawabin, Robert and Katherine Tebb, Susan Margles, Tammy and Faron Calihoo.

PART THREE: INDIGENOUS SUCCESS, ONE BUSINESS AT A TIME

Introduction

The AFI movement has endured for almost two generations, witnessing both highs and lows in the development of Aboriginal law and policy. Progress has seemed slow at times, but there have been many accomplishments in every business sector in Canada. As we continue our journey, it is important to remind ourselves of these accomplishments. Great strides have been made.

Aboriginal Financial Institutions have succeeded through four key factors:

1. The Indigenous leaders, who recommended that the federal government establish Aboriginal Financial Institutions to improve loan program efficiencies.
2. The federal government (and some provincial and territorial governments), who capitalized Aboriginal Financial Institutions.
3. The boards of directors, managers and staff of Aboriginal Financial Institutions, who steer their organizations with prudence, professionalism, and creativity to ensure their resilience.
4. Above all, the clients of each Aboriginal Financial Institution, whose numbers and demand for capital is steadily growing.

Facing page: South Nahanni Airways.

The clients of the AFIs truly are our reason for being. To serve them, we have worked throughout the decades, with each other and with government, striving to develop beneficial programs and secure new capital for the network.

The stories that follow are about our AFI clients. For each region of the country, they profile thriving Indigenous businesses – enterprises that create jobs and prosperity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and non-Indigenous Canadians as well.

I hope you will find these stories of successful Indigenous-owned businesses that AFIs have funded across the country as inspiring as we do. Entrepreneurs, communities, families – their work inspires ours every single day.

Jean Vincent, Board Chair, NACCA

YUKON

AFI

däna Näye Ventures

däna Näye Ventures is a Yukon-based, First Nations-controlled institution that provides business development and financial services to all people throughout the Yukon and in the Northern British Columbia communities of Atlin, Good Hope Lake and Lower Post.

dananaye.yk.net

- Dickson Fashion Designs
- Chantal Dowden and the Bra Boutique
- Fishwheel Charters

Dickson Fashion Designs: Balancing Traditional and Artisanal Skills

Heather Dickson formed Dickson Fashion Designs in 2015. Using her cultural traditions of hand beaded designs and the traditional granny hanky, her product line transforms these into an art accessory.

Four years later, Heather's "Granny Hanky Headbands" have become a huge hit – not only for her local market but across North America. The demand for her products grew so quickly that she decided to provide employment opportunities to other equally talented First Nation beaders to produce beaded designs so the company could keep up. Heather currently employs beaders from across Northern Canada and uses their designs on her products.

Heather has found the perfect balance between her traditional skills and her artisan skills and takes great pride in combining them within her business. This artistic balance provides her with a strong connection to her First Nation heritage, keeping her rooted to her cultural identity in a modern world.

Dickson Fashion Design has now expanded into an imprinted design clothing line as well as additional beaded fashion accessories. The result is an original handmade product that is both respectful and inspiring.

Heather has received numerous awards and recognition since the inception of her business and continues to inspire other youth to embrace their culture in today's world. She credits däna Näye Ventures for helping her realize her business: "When I first started my business, I was so overwhelmed with how I was going to make my idea a business. DNV helped me to understand basic business skills and terms and to use them in Dickson Fashion Designs. That support was key to my success and helped add Entrepreneur next to Artist on my resume/CV!"

She now assumes the role of Youth Entrepreneur in Residence with däna Näye Ventures. She will be promoting entrepreneurship to youth in Yukon Territory as well as providing support and mentorship throughout the process.

dicksonfashiondesigns.ca

Heather Dickson. Image courtesy of däna Näye Ventures.

YUKON

Chantal Dowden and the Bra Boutique

For Chantal Dowden, one size definitely does not fit all. This is true both for her inventory and her future business plans.

Chantal is the owner and operator of The Bra Boutique, a specialty shop located in Whitehorse. First opened twenty-one years ago by its original owners, Chantal has owned the boutique for the past three years.

Chantal worked in the store prior to purchasing it and is a certified bra fitter. Chantal says that she takes great pride in supporting customers from the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Inuivik, Alaska and Northern British Columbia.

The business carries products for a variety of customers, ranging from pre-teens to seniors, with a massive inventory of styles and sizes. The Bra Boutique features bras, lingerie, shape-wear, undergarments for special occasions, swimwear, wigs and sportswear. The boutique includes certified professional bra fittings for everyone, and a unique offering for customers who have undergone mastectomies. This includes post-surgical garments for cancer patients and others.

Chantal hired her first staff person in May 2017. The boutique accepts both pre-scheduled and walk-in consultations. "It is strictly an in-store business geared to providing excellent customer service," Chantal says. And her plans for the future? Her goal for the company is to expand her inventory to a larger selection of swimwear, loungewear, sleepwear and lingerie. When asked about being an entrepreneur, Chantal says, "I love it. It affords me the opportunity to be an active participant in my own community by providing a service that no one else provides."

thebraboutiqueyukon.ca

Image courtesy of Chantal Dowden.

Fishwheel Charters: Giving Visitors an Authentic Indigenous Experience... and Fresh Bannock

Since the early 1970s, the Taylor family dreamed of opening Fishwheel Charters. Tommy Taylor recalls that he was only nine years old when he first talked to his parents about the business idea. He never forgot the idea growing up, and in 1996 he decided to make it fly.

"There was funding available through däna Näye, and no other First Nations people in the Dawson region were doing tourism," Tommy says. With support from däna Näye, Tommy started Fishwheel Charters. He began to offer Yukon River boat tours, fish guiding and the fish wheel experience.

A local fisherman with an expanse of knowledge of fishing and regional history, Tommy, a citizen of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, shares traditional fishing stories and the more recent fish wheel history introduced by the Chinese as they built the railway in the 1880s. The business offers Yukon River experiences between Dawson City and Whitehorse. Over the years, Tommy has offered sled dog tours, snowmobile tours, and boat charters. His most recent business expansion was new river boats that could seat up to 12 people. With trips running daily, seven days a week, Tommy says that business only continues to increase.

His advice for other business owners? "Follow your dreams," Tommy says. "It was a dream of mine to start Fishwheel and it became a reality. You would be surprised in the end at how good it turns out to be. My dream became so real that I almost can't keep up!"

fishwheeltoursyukon.com

A fish wheel, also known as a salmon wheel, is a device set into rivers to catch fish. It looks and works like a watermill. But, in addition to paddles, a fish wheel is outfitted with wire baskets designed to catch and carry fish from the water and into a nearby holding tank. The current of the river presses against the submerged paddles and rotates the wheel, passing the baskets through the water where they intercept fish that are swimming or drifting. Despite being a foreign technology, the fish wheel has become a culturally embedded tool for self-subsisting Indigenous peoples of the Northwest area of North America, who have incorporated it in some ways with their traditional ecological knowledge (Wikipedia).

Image courtesy of Fishwheel Charters.

NUNAVUT

AFIs

Atuqtuarvik Corporation

Baffin Business Development Corporation (BBDC)

Kakivak Association

Kitikmeot Community Futures Inc. (KCFI)

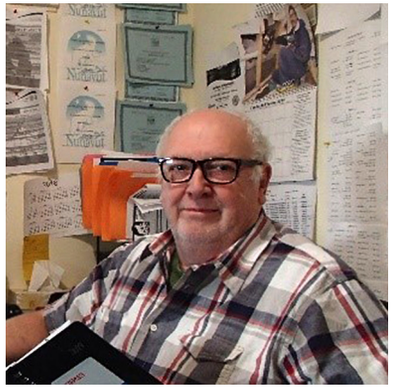
Kivalliq Business Development Centre

Kitikmeot Community Futures Inc. (KCFI) is a lending agency focused on creating and maintaining small businesses in the region. Its mandate is to create and/or maintain employment in the region by promoting and assisting new, viable small businesses or helping existing businesses through a wide range of services ranging from strategic planning and monitoring, technical and advisory services, business counselling and assistance by providing loans.

kcfi.ca

CAP Enterprises

CAP Enterprises: Tending a Healthy Business in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut



Back in the 1990s, Charlie Cahill was an economic development officer working for the Government of the Northwest Territories in Gjoa Haven, Northwest Territories. When Nunavut was created in 1999, Charlie and his family relocated to Edmonton. The GNWT had him return to Gjoa Haven for a project in 2002. There he encountered his old acquaintances Peter Akkikungnaq and Ben Porter, both operators of heavy equipment. The two Inuit men asked him to go into business with them, Charlie recalls – to give it a try for five or ten years.

The first year they did about $20,000 worth of business with an old loader. The next year they did $60,000 and the year after that $150,000. "Every year, we just got busier and busier." The three created CAP Enterprises, a name combining the initials of their last names. In 2007, they bid on a contract to build houses for the Government of Nunavut. By 2009, the business had 80 or 90 employees – about half of them Inuit – working for six to eight months per year.

That same year, a heavy blow fell. After getting a routine flu vaccine, Charlie became paralyzed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome and would spend the next two and a half years in a wheelchair. The company fell into debt and by 2012, it almost had to close down. Slowly, Charlie returned to health and the company did as well, gaining airport maintenance projects until, by 2014, it had paid off its debts. Again, its owners borrowed – this time half a million dollars – to build a new office building to be completed in September 2019.

CAP Enterprises now has about 45 full-time employees. Thirty of them are local Inuit people. At ages 75 and 78, Peter and Ben are now silent partners. Charlie takes four months off every year but is still active in running the business. The only large company of its kind in the area, it provides equipment rentals, property management, and such services as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and heating repair. The company also offers a full bed and breakfast, with ten separate houses that can accommodate up to 34 guests. Clients include visiting companies as well as the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Water Board, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

According to Marg Epp of Kitikmeot Community Futures, her client company's growth has been "no small feat given that we are remote and fly-in only." Charlie agrees. To thrive, their company had to evolve away from the "roller coaster ride" of large construction projects to focus on the lower key, steadier work of property management, renovations and repairs.

Charlie Cahill. Image courtesy of Chelsea Henry.

NUNAVUT

The secret to their success? As a former economic development officer and business owner, Charlie has clear views on the question. Business owners need tenacity, business training, and some luck to succeed. They need to work hard, sometimes ten to twelve hours per day and seven days per week. Last but not least, they need financing from a good banker. “When you are a marginal business starting off and getting a foothold no bank will take you.” This is where institutions like Kitikmeot Community Futures and the Nunavut Business Credit Corporation become essential. They provide capital and business training to owners – and, in cases like CAP Enterprises, future employers in remote areas – who could not hope to get off the ground otherwise.

huskydog.com

Gjoa Haven, Nunavut.
Image courtesy of Chelsea Henry, with permission from Charlie Cahill.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

AFIs

Akaitcho Business Development Corporation (ABDC)

Deh Cho Business Development Centre (DCBDC)

Dogrib Area Community Futures

NWT Métis-Dene Development Fund (MDDF)

Sahtu Business Development Centre

Thebacha Business Development Services (TBDS)

Akaitcho Business Development Corporation (ABDC) is a non-governmental community lending organization based in N'Dilo, Dettah, and Yellowknife. It seeks to create a strong local economy in the North by building partnerships with other community organizations and providing entrepreneurs with technical advice, business skills development counselling and access to business capital.

akaitchobdc.com

Yellowknife Veterinary Clinic and Boutique

The Deh Cho Business Development Centre (DCBDC) is a non-profit organization established to provide business and economic development throughout the Deh Cho region, improving the economic well-being of the communities and their residents, one business at a time. The experienced and knowledgeable staff of the Business Development Centre offer financing, business planning and counselling, training and technical services.

dcbdc.ca

South Nahanni Airways

South Nahanni Airways

Laverna Martel-Harvey and her husband Jacques Harvey own South Nahanni Airways, an air charter company based in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories. After the two met in the Edmonton area, this Métis from the Dehcho Territory and French Canadian from Lac Saint-Jean made aviation history. To her knowledge, Laverna is the first Aboriginal woman to be running an airline company.

They started South Nahanni Airways in 1995. The year before, Jacques had been the chief pilot for a charter company in the summer months, flying out tourists for rafting tours in the Nahanni National Park. After that company went under, his clients asked him to take them out on his own. Laverna, who had been managing properties for a local housing authority, soon joined him to form South Nahanni Airways. Her help with the marketing, booking and dispatching freed up her husband to focus on the flying.

They started out with one leased aircraft, then were able to lease to purchase a Twin Otter, which they now own. They received a timely loan from the Deh Cho Business Development Centre to buy a set of floats. In 2010, a competitor's company went up for sale. They bought it, gaining six additional aircrafts, and have been in demand ever since.

The year for South Nahanni falls into two parts. In the summer, 90 percent of their business is tourism. From the fall to the spring, most chartered flights are for travel of residents and government employees, who depend on them for transport in the winter. Many companies send pilots to Jacques for training. Depending on the season, South Nahanni now has seven to ten employees – about one third of them Indigenous. Most of the pilots trained by South Nahanni have gone on to airline companies to fly jets.

What is the secret of their success? They work well together, Laverna explains. With Jacques focusing on the flying and Laverna

South Nahanni Airways. Image courtesy of Laverna Martel.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

South Nahanni Airways

providing the administrative support, they contribute both pieces needed to run a successful business. South Nahanni's clients know they can rely on it, whether they are outfitters, firefighters, park employees, or Indigenous community members. Jacques also has five-star security clearance; he has flown both Trudeau prime ministers as well as two past Governors General of Canada through the park.

As for plans for the future, Laverna says they would like to lease a property in the Nahanni National Park, setting up a high-end chalet when the opportunity arises. Deh Cho Business Development Centre cannot provide them with larger loans, but has been there at pivotal points in the growth of their business – first to buy the floats, then for needed working capital, and again to purchase a new engine for the aircraft. "Everything we required had a short timeframe to get it done. But Deh Cho stepped up and made it happen quickly. We would have lost opportunities without them."

southnahanniairways.ca

South Nahanni Airways. Image courtesy of Laverna Martel.

Yellowknife Veterinary Clinic and Boutique: Finding People Who Care

Dr. Michael Hughes runs a small animal vet clinic in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. One of only two such clinics in town, his clinic serves mainly dogs and cats. It is "less than a full-scale animal hospital," he explains, "but more than a clinic in a mall." With a well-organized lab, dental x-ray and orthopaedic centre, his facility is equipped for fairly in-depth surgery.

A Métis from Nova Scotia, Michael had worked at another vet office in Yellowknife, but left the area in 2011 to return to the Maritimes. "I had people calling me to come back, saying, 'you have to come back to Yellowknife and open your own clinic.'" Michael knew that the need was great and his services could make an impact. He returned to Yellowknife on National Aboriginal Day in 2012.

With start-up funding from the Akaitcho Business Development Corporation, he opened the Yellowknife Veterinary Clinic and Boutique soon after. His wife Jeanie was teaching in Nova Scotia. She came out to help him start the business, returned to the Maritimes to teach one more year, and then came back to help out with the vet business permanently.

How have things gone since 2012? Since arriving, the Hughes have relocated their clinic closer to the centre of town, at a building where they live as well as work. His working hours are long, spanning from 7:30 am to 9 pm on a weekday, and an additional day on Saturday. Michael is also always on call. He would welcome some relief if a veterinarian colleague were willing to stay in the area long term. In the meantime, though, he has received able support from his staff and his wife Jeanie. Within the next few years, he wants to have paid off all his debts.

And the need for quality care remains. Michael sees his business's greatest accomplishment to have been the difference he made in attitudes about the care of animals. Some clients have even confided that they would not own their pets without his presence there.

Throughout his time in Yellowknife, he has really appreciated the help of Aikaitcho. The business development officer there is very calm and measured, he says, prepared to listen. He reports having enjoyed a "100 percent good experience" with them, something he could not say for other lenders. Of his vet clinic, Michael says that "I cannot pay people who do not care. I end up finding the right people – people who care." It appears he found the same type of people to support his business start-up as well.

Facebook

Jeanie Hughes with patients. Image courtesy of Dr. Michael Hughes.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

AFIs

- Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre
- All Nations Trust Company (ANTCO)
- Burns Lake Native Development Corporation (BLNDC)
- CFDC of Central Interior First Nations
- Haida Gwaii Community Futures
- Métis Financial Corporation of BC (MFCBC)
- Native Fishing Association (NFA)
- Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC)
- Stó:lō Community Futures Corporation (SCF)
- Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation (TACC)
- Tribal Resources Investment Corporation (TRICORP)

The Entrepreneurs Equity-Matching Initiative

A Partnership of the New Relationship Trust with BC Aboriginal Capital Corporations

Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC) assists in developing and establishing business enterprises on Vancouver Island by providing commercial financing, training and advice to both Indigenous entrepreneurs and community-owned businesses. NEDC was incorporated in 1984 to assist Nuu-chah-nulth to achieve economic and social independence. In 1997, it expanded eligibility to include all Indigenous peoples who reside and seek to operate businesses on Vancouver Island.

nedc.info

- House of Himwitsa
- Veridis Plumbing & Heating Ltd

Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation (TACC) was established in April 1992 by commissioners of the Tale'Awtxw Economic Development Association (TEDA) commissioners. TACC is mandated by the 54 Coast Salish Nations to provide small business financing and support services to Indigenous people within the traditional Coast Salish territory, as well as Campbell River, Comox, and Lil'wat. TACC has supported the success of over one thousand Aboriginal businesses throughout the Coast Salish territories since 1992. It was Dennis Alphonse, one of the founding directors from Cowichan, who suggested the name Tale'awtxs, which means "money house" in Halq'emeylem.

tacc.ca

- Veridis Plumbing & Heating Ltd

House of Himwitsa: Sating an Appetite for Coastal Art and Smoked Fish

"It's not a 9 to 5 job, 5 days a week – that's not what passion is." Cathy George knows this first hand. For the past thirty years, she has followed her own passion, buying and selling works of art by First Nations artists of the West Coast.

Cathy and Lewis George of the Ahousat First Nation own the House of Himwitsa, located in Tofino. Their waterfront property on the Clayoquot Sound includes an art gallery, 5-suite lodge, and store that serves smoked salmon, oysters and mussels to appreciative tourists.

Cathy honed her passion working in a neighbouring gallery owned by First Nations artist Roy Henry Vickers. Even before that, as a server at a local restaurant, she spent her tips on art pieces whenever visiting artists came through. This was in the early 1990s, she says, when tourists were beginning to seek out the traditional art of First Peoples.

Noting this appetite, Cathy and Lewis began looking for a venue for a gallery they could run themselves. Their first space was in a renovated former take-out restaurant in town. They repaid their first loan within 18 months, putting all their remaining profits back into their inventory. It took the Georges four more years to find the perfect property – a rare waterfront lot owned by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. Work on the House of Himwitsa began in September 1993. By March 1994, the venue was open for business.

With the growth of Tofino's reputation as a tourist destination, competition for business is now fierce. Cathy and Lewis strive to provide a broad selection to tourists of all budgets. They also do their best to "work smarter," Lewis notes – for example, staying open past closing time if departing visitors need them to. The smoked fish store, also on the Vancouver Island Food Tour, remains a big draw.

Eight of ten staff members of Himwitsa are First Nations people from the area. Cathy and Lewis are proud of this contribution, as well as of enhancing the profile of area First Nations artists. Artists receive 50 percent of whatever the gallery takes in.

And their financing? Both conventional banks and the Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation have been essential partners over the years. In some cases, the two have worked together closely together to meet their lending needs. This collaborative lending spirit has benefited many – not only the Georges themselves and the local economy, but enthusiasts of West Coast art and smoked fish the world over.

himwitsa.com

House of Himwitsa. Image courtesy of Cathy and Lewis George.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Veridis Plumbing & Heating Ltd: Striving for Excellence in the Cowichan Valley

In 2010, Corry Belcourt took a leap of faith. Encouraged by his father and a business officer with the Nuchah-nulth Economic Development Corporation, this journeyman plumber, gasfitter and pipefitter applied for a start-up loan. After his application was approved, he knew he had to take the opportunity. "If I don't do this now," Corry recalls thinking, "I'll never know if I can."

Nine years later, Veridis Plumbing & Heating Ltd. serves residential and commercial customers across Southern Vancouver Island. The full-service company strives to live up to its motto: "Reliable, Honest, Efficient." As a union signatory contractor, the company also prioritizes good-paying jobs and safe working conditions.

The company now has seven employees, to whom Corry attributes much of his success. Further factors have been the support and advice of his father, also a plumber/pipefitter, and his desire to ensure that the company preserves a reputation for professionalism and integrity. The latter goal has also led Corry to assume roles beyond his business – on the board of the Vancouver Island Mechanical Contractors Association, for example, and various provincial government advisory committees.

The reputation goals are also personal. Corry, who faced some difficult years as a youth, wants to act as a good role model for his 15-year old son. The former youth representative of the Métis Nation of British Columbia has family roots in the Red River Valley. He still returned to visit his grandmother in St. Eustache, Manitoba, until she passed away a few years ago.

Veridis Plumbing & Heating Ltd has gotten increasingly involved in charity, donating to the Cowichan Valley Basket Society and the local hospice. In June 2019, the business celebrated a milestone when it relocated from Corry's home to a showroom on the Trans Canada highway south of Duncan. The showroom offers a physical presence beyond the company's four service vehicles. Now, customers can put their eyes and hands on the products the company offers.

Throughout his entrepreneurial journey, Corry has received vital financial support from two British Columbia AFIs. Beyond start-up funding from the NBDC, loans from the Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation have helped him ensure that his business will last in a small yet competitive market.

veridisplumbing.com

Image courtesy of Corry Belcourt.

The Entrepreneurs Equity-Matching Initiative – A Partnership of the New Relationship Trust with BC Aboriginal Capital Corporations

The New Relationship Trust (NRT) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the capacity of First Nations in British Columbia. The Trust was created in 2006. With an original sum of $100 million, the Province of British Columbia committed to realizing a shared vision of a new relationship with BC First Nations.

The NRT is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors and operates independently of any government. One of its five key capacity development areas is economic development – where BC Aboriginal Capital Corporations come in.

In 2010, the NRT created an Entrepreneurs Equity Matching Initiative to assist First Nation entrepreneurs in obtaining financing for their businesses. The NRT partners with BC's five Aboriginal Capital Corporations (ACCs) to provide matching funds to emerging First Nations businesses. The organization distributes funding among the five ACCs, which administer the loans according to their regular processes.

How has the initiative fared? Ten years later, according to the NRT's former CEO Cliff Fregin, the partnership has proven beneficial on all sides. His organization benefits from distribution of its funds through the lending infrastructures of the ACCs. For their part, ACCs can provide more loans through the funds provided by the NRT. And successful First Nation applicants obtain grants of up to either

$5,000 (for First Nations entrepreneurs) or $25,000 (for First Nations businesses) to match the loans the ACCs provide to establish, modernize, or expand their businesses.

Aboriginal Financial Institutions are the "ideal partner" for this kind of work, says Fregin, who was Chief Operating Officer of NACCA before taking on his role at the New Relationship Trust. With their fully developed lending infrastructure and their connection to the communities they serve, these AFIs deliver the initiative in a way that is both efficient and Indigenous-led – consistent with the vision of the New Relationship itself.

newrelationshiptrust.ca

Image courtesy of the New Relationship Trust.

ALBERTA

AFIs

Alberta Indian Investment Corporation (AIIC)

Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. (AMDI)

Community Futures Treaty Seven (CFT7)

Indian Business Corporation (IBC)

Settlement Investment Corporation (SIC)

Alberta Indian Investment Corporation (AIIC) is owned by all First Nation communities in the province of Alberta. Formed in 1987, AIIC has provided First Nation-owned businesses with an unparalleled source of loan and equity financing throughout its history. The organization has been instrumental in business development activities throughout the province within First Nations economic development. In addition to providing loan capital to Alberta First Nation entrepreneurs, AIIC has also entered into the restaurant/hospitality industry, owning both the Wingate Inn and the Homefire Grill.

aiicbusiness.org

RKM Contracting Ltd

Indian Business Corporation (IBC), established in 1987, creates economic development through developmental lending and financial services to First Nations entrepreneurs in Western Canada. The AFI believes that access to capital for First Nations peoples provides opportunities for success and development.

indianbc.ca

Buffalo Rock Mining

Luxx Ready to Wear

RKM Contracting Ltd: Moving Timber and Earth for Three Generations

Kelly McLean is a hard worker and a business multi-talent. Whether farming, logging or moving earth for oil and gas clients, the family-owned business he now leads – RKM Contracting Ltd – has weathered the storms of three volatile industries since the mid-1980s.

Kelly learned this quality, of digging in for the long term, from his father Reg. Of Métis heritage, Reg bought a grain farm in the mid-1970s, working both the land and his job for the provincial government. Kelly's mother Genny, daughter of late Grand Chief of the Dene Tha Nation Harry Chonkolay, worked at the School Division in Fort Vermillion, Alberta.

Reg bought two skidders in 1978, and the family got into logging for a local sawmill. Kelly started logging as a teenager and loved it. After they landed a large logging contract with a Dene Tha First Nation-owned mill, the McLeans incorporated their business. They approached the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation for the first time in 1992, receiving financing for the equipment they required to meet contract demands.

The family logged until 2007, when they decided to make a big change. A global downturn in the market prompted them to sell off most of their logging equipment and start over, focusing on oilfield work. "When we quit logging," says Kelly, "I thought it was the end of the world. But it turned out to be a new beginning." Again, they built up their business – only in a different sector with different clients and a whole new set of equipment.

Over one decade later, RKM does earth work ranging from site-clearing and construction to reclamation and remediation. Most of their clients are major energy companies, whom they always treat fairly rather than try to gouge when the price of oil rises.

The company supports 80 to 100 employees in the winter months, their busiest time. With 90 percent of employees from neighboring First Nations, some have worked for the company for over 25 years. His parents, Reg recalls, always "treated all our employees like family. Whenever someone was in trouble, they would always find a way to make it work out."

RKM found a valuable partner and ally in the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, which kept faith in its hard-working client even in the hard times, "when nobody else would look at us." This northern Alberta-based AFI understands what it takes to succeed as an Indigenous company working in boom and bust industries.

rkmcontractingltd.com

Image courtesy of Kelly McLean, RKM Contracting Ltd.

ALBERTA

Buffalo Rock Mining: Mining Company Extracts Million-Year-Old Fossils

Buffalo Rock Mining is an Indigenous-owned and operated mining business located on the Kainai First Nation near Cardston, Alberta.

Buffalo Rock mines world-class ammonite and ammolite fossils from the territory. The fossils themselves are formed through millions of years of pressurization. The rare ammonite fossils are a valuable gemstone and have been identified in only a few locations around the globe. They can be found in Germany, Madagascar, Morocco, the Himalayas, East Timor, United Kingdom and Alberta, Canada, where the Kainai First Nation is one of the prime locations.

The process of extracting these fossils includes the use of heavy machinery, which digs up to 100 meters below ground level. The mining process is environmentally friendly and the earth is restored to its original state. The environmental standards for the mining practice were set by the community, and are followed during each fossil extraction that occurs.

Image courtesy of Buffalo Rock Mining.

The business forms a substantial component of the Kainai Nation's overall economic development and annual income. The mining business is run by local entrepreneur Tracy Day Chief, a former excavating and trucking business owner. He began the company after finally receiving a permit to extract the rare gemstones. Tracy and his spouse Beth negotiated and proposed the idea to the Kainai Resources Inc. before finally getting the approval to proceed with the project.

The ammonite fossils are valued based on their size. For example, a 20.5-inch fossil is valued around $18,500, while smaller two-inch fossils range around $1245. Fossils have been known to sell for between $25,000 and $75,000. The annual sales make this a successful venture for the First Nation.

buffalorockmining.com

Luxx Ready to Wear: Cree Designer Reclaims Culture Through High End Fashion

Derek Jagodzinsky's unique designs have found their way into major exhibitions, world renowned museums, and high-end fashion shows throughout North America. Based in Edmonton, Alberta, he is an up-and-coming fashion designer that works with Indigenous symbols, iconography, and syllabics in his design work.

Derek started his fashion design business with a loan from the Indian Business Corporation in 2011. Since then, his business has expanded over the years with IBC's ongoing support.

"For me, being in fashion is such an interesting place to be and a lot of people don't know too much about it," says Derek. "The IBC has helped me with business, but the industry knowledge I've had to figure out by myself."

With work in the Smithsonian and the Royal Alberta Museum, Derek is proud to be able to show culture, language and tradition through his modern design work. "I want to take Cree culture and introduce it in a modern way," he says. "I use spirit animals, Cree syllabics, the beauty of it all. It's important to me."

While running the business, Derek is also completing his masters in industrial design and has obtained his bachelors of design degree at the University of Alberta. With future plans to expand the business with an online and retail store, Derek now employs three seamstresses and uses interns who assist in the branding and pattern-making with Derek's original custom fabrics.

"It's not just for me," he says, "but for my people. I want to work with craftspeople in building my collections, and I am passionate about getting my work made in Canada."

luxxreadytowear.com

Image courtesy of Luxx Ready to Wear.

SASKATCHEWAN

AFIs

Beaver River Community Futures Development Corporation (BRCFDC)

Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF)

Northern Enterprise Fund Inc. (NEFI)

Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc. (SIEF)

SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO)

Visions North CFDC

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF) was established by the Métis Society of Saskatchewan subject to a 1997 agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan. In September of 2001, an amendment to the Gaming Act recognized CCDF in legislation and a new agreement between the province and the Métis Nation Saskatchewan Secretariat was executed in December 2002. The fund seeks to stimulate Métis economic development by providing equity for Métis businesses, support to community economic development initiatives and assistance for the development of the management skills of new and existing Métis business owners and entrepreneurs.

www.clarencecampeau.com

Peak Fitness

The Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc. (SIEF) was one of the first Aboriginal financial institutions in Canada. Owned by the 74 First Nations of Saskatchewan, it offers developmental loans to First Nation businesses in Saskatchewan. SIEF has also partnered with the TD Bank to create the First Nations Bank of Canada (FNBC) and has expanded its existing investment portfolio to generate profit and employment for First Nations people.

sief.sk.ca

Cote Market

Raygen's Trucking

Peak Fitness: Personal Trainer Reaches Peak with High Quality Gym That Continues to Build Strength

Nic Palidwar is a 30-year-old entrepreneur from Nipawin Saskatchewan. At age 21, he started his professional career as a personal trainer. What began as a passion and "side hustle" soon became more. Nic started out by training his Mom – then realized that this was something he wanted to do forever.

Three years later, Nic knew he had the skills but lacked the support systems and knowledge to develop his small training business into something bigger. Enter Clarence Campeau Development Fund. With business start-up funds from the Fund, Nic began planning. Within four months, he went from being a small-time personal trainer to owner of a 10,000 square foot building. Nic and Peak Fitness opened their doors to the public on February 14, 2013.

Since then, Peak Fitness has continued to expand. It now incorporates physiotherapy, pharmacy, massage therapy, nutrition coaches, personal trainers, tanning services and a full retail service. "I get to fulfill the dream of offering a high-quality service wellness center every day – and it keeps growing by the month!" Nic says.

And the credit for his success? Help from the Clarence Campeau Development Fund allowed his business to grow and be what it is today. The Fund has been "absolutely amazing" in the services it offers, Nic says, helping him develop the business plan and work with the hiring agencies. "People need a support system; they need to have people behind them to back them and be their resource people. I didn't know this at the start, but I'll give credit where it is due! Clarence Campeau made this all possible. Without a support system in place, people fail. Without Clarence Campeau Development Fund, I would have been one of those people!"

peakfitnessnipawin.ca

Image courtesy of Nic Palidwar.

SASKATCHEWAN

Cote Market: A Thriving Food Mart Working to Make Its First Nation a Better Place

Nestled in the heart of Cote First Nation lies something unexpected – a thriving food mart that includes a fully functioning grocery store and gas station. When Cote Market opened its doors in 2010, it made history by becoming the only fully functioning on-reserve grocery store south of La Ronge, complete with its own bakery.

Cote First Nation is located about 90 kilometers northeast of Yorkton, near the Keeseekoose and Key First Nations. Gerald Marcoux, the First Nation's interim director of operations, recalls helping create the market as Cote's Economic Development Officer. Though he was initially skeptical of the project, he began researching what needed to be done to convert an abandoned bingo hall into an on-reserve food market.

Marcoux knew through his research that a food market wasn't the most lucrative business to get into, but it was the kind of business that could help the community. The only option to get groceries besides the neighboring small community of Kamsack was in Yorkton, nearly 100 kilometers away.

In operation since 2010, Cote Market has grown from 5 to 22 employees. Suppliers now compete for its business, and the market attracts patrons from neighboring First Nations and the Town of Kamsack. Most important, the small business has become a beacon of hope for Cote First Nation, a community with many social ills. Standing as a testament to what can happen when everyone works together, the market has been broken into only twice in the eight years it has been open – both times by someone from outside the community.

Marcoux credits much of the business's success to the dedication of its employees. A further key is its focus on providing excellent customer service and keeping a neutral environment when it comes to politics. In 2018, Cote Market received the SIEF Entrepreneurial Spirit Award for exemplifying involvement to create sustainable economic development for First Nations in Saskatchewan.

Store manager Shelley Cote, one of the Market's first employees, hopes the recognition can inspire other First Nations to develop their own businesses on reserve. "The way I see it (businesses) create jobs," said Cote. "On reserve jobs are hard to come by."

Facebook

Cote Market. Image courtesy of the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Fund.

Raygen's Trucking: Building His Empire, One Truck at a Time

Raygen Heathen may be only 26 years old, but don't let his age fool you. The young entrepreneur from the Onion Lake Cree Nation is well on his way to building his empire – one truck at a time. Raygen owns and operates Raygen's Trucking and hauls oil for Askiy Apoy Hauling, a company 100-percent owned by Onion Lake Cree Nation.

Onion Lake Cree Nation straddles the Saskatchewan-Alberta border and is located approximately 50 kilometers north of Lloydminister, an ideal location for those in the trucking business.

Raygen's dad, Trevor Heathen, had always been a great role model and someone he looked up to. "Ever since I was small, I could remember (Dad) working," Raygen said. "I remember him getting up at two in the morning to go to work, so that's where I learned how to work."

His dad suggested that Raygen obtain a Class 1 driver's licence. After receiving his licence, Raygen went off to work. It was then he realized how much he loved the freedom of being on the open road. "I knew when I started driving, I wanted my own truck," he said. Once again, he turned to his father for advice. That's when he learned about the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF) and their business loans.

Still in his teens, Raygen carefully devised a plan of how to accomplish his goal of starting his own trucking business. SIEF could provide the loan, but he would have to come up with the 10 percent cash equity for the new truck he had his eye on. It took him about a year to gather the funds he needed and his sacrifice eventually paid off. With his business plan in one hand and his down payment in the other, he went to SIEF and applied for the loan. At 21, he became the sole proprietor of Raygen's Trucking.

Now 26, Raygen is working to pay off his second SIEF loan so that he can purchase a third truck. Raygen's Trucking now boasts 4.5 employees. and will likely be hiring an additional driver.

What was the secret to his success? Raygen says everyone has the potential to succeed as long as they find something they love doing. "Just set goals and keep that vision. Work hard, because everything comes with hard work, no matter what you choose to do in life."

Raygen Heathen. Image courtesy of the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Fund.

MANITOBA

AFIs

Arctic Co-operative Development Fund (ACDF)

Cedar Lake Community Futures Development Corporation

Community Futures North Central Development (CFNCD)

Dakota Ojibway Community Futures Development Corporation (DOCFDC)

First Peoples Economic Growth Fund Inc. (FPEGF)

Kitayan Community Futures Development Corporation

Métis Economic Development Fund (MEDF)

Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC)

Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation

Southeast Community Futures Development Corporation

Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation (TWCC)

First Peoples Economic Growth Fund (FPEGF) is an economic development initiative of the Province of Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. A not-for-profit organization, the FPEGF has a mandate to provide financing to support economically viable business proposals with financing for start-ups. FPEGF can provide various kinds of support to First Nations-owned businesses through a diverse portfolio of programs.

firstpeoplesfund.ca

Feast Café Bistro

7 Acre Wood Animal Boarding Kennel

Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC) is a lending institution owned by Manitoba Métis. It was created to finance the start-up, acquisition and/or expansion of viable Métis-controlled small businesses based in Manitoba.

lrcc.mb.ca

Manitobah Mukluks

Manitobah Mukluks: The Fastest-Growing Footwear Line in the Country

Sean McCormick started by trading in tanned leather. Today, he owns one of the fastest-growing companies in Canada and the fastest-growing footwear brand in the country, with online sales that stretch to nearly fifty countries, from Russia to Japan.

McCormick is Métis, an Indigenous entrepreneur who found success through the company Manitobah Mukluks. The company produces traditional-style beaded shoes and boots for all seasons. Distributed worldwide, his mukluks and moccasins are found in top-end retailers such as Holt Renfrew, Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus.

He developed his business plan with assistance from Aboriginal Business Canada, starting operations in 1997. In the early years, Sean received start-up capital from the Louis Riel Capital Corporation. With its support, Sean was able to build his inventory, develop marketing, and expand the company's technology.

"Manitobah Mukluks wouldn't exist without Aboriginal Business Canada," Sean says. "In the beginning, I had zero equity and no generational wealth to pull from. I started the business when I was 22 or 23. They essentially helped me with the whole start-up in 1997. I couldn't have gotten started without them. ABC supported me over five projects over the first ten to twelve years," Sean says.

In 2013, he moved the company to a 40,000 square foot building on Métis-owned land in Winnipeg's Point Douglas area. Since then, demand for the project has exploded. Manitobah Mukluks now maintains a global supply chain, making it the fastest growing footwear line in Canada. To keep up with production, the company owns and operates a production facility in Vietnam.

For capital and business support services, Sean still gives full credit to the Aboriginal Business Canada program. "Aboriginal Business Canada really became a partner in the business early, when they saw what I was going to do. We developed a trust, a partnership that helped me deal with other partners in the business like the banks," says Sean. "Starting up is difficult in all business – but specifically in Indigenous business. We are young and there is risk for the finance industry with young entrepreneurs and start-ups. I developed a relationship with Aboriginal Financial Institutions that I still have today. They really mentored me."

www.manitobah.ca

Sean McCormick. Image courtesy of Manitobah Mukluks.

MANITOBA

Manitobah Mukluks: The Fastest-Growing Footwear Line in the Country

1 - The sky represents life-giving water falling as rain and snow

2 - Trees to the left of the tipi represent the woodland people

3 - To the right are the western mountains

4 - This is the doorway we walk through together as modern hunter-gatherers

5 - Fire tells us our People will always survive. Prairie plains behind are home to the Great Horse and Buffalo People

6 - The swirling Four Winds cleanse as the Sun circles our Mother Earth

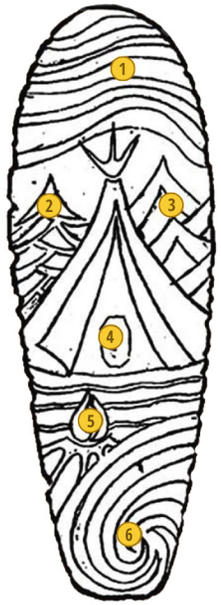


Image courtesy of Manitobah Mukluks website.

Timeline:

- 1630 – The North American fur trade leads to the birth of a new people, the Métis.
- 1870 – Manitoba becomes a province of Canada. Métis artisans supply handmade goods for emerging markets.
- 1990 – Métis entrepreneur Sean McCormick establishes a trading post in Winnipeg, trading tanned leather for mukluks and moccasins.
- 2006 – Hollywood celebrities are photographed in the company's footwear, creating demand worldwide.
- Today – Manitobah becomes Canada's fastest-growing footwear brand and continues to partner with Indigenous artisans and organizations.

Feast Café Bistro: West End Winnipeg Bistro Gives Back to the Community

Christa Bruneau-Guenther is the founder and project manager at Feast Café Bistro in the west end of Winnipeg. Conscientious and motivated, this proud member of Peguis First Nation was born and raised in Winnipeg. At age 22, Christa opened a daycare for inner-city children, which she owned for 9 years. Through this experience, she became concerned about child nutrition and their daily nutritional intake. She decided to initiate healthy meal plans, which would be both more sustainable economically and more nutritious for low income families.

Christa wanted to give families in the urban community healthy Indigenous meal options that are both affordable and accessible. She researched and compiled hundreds of recipes that use traditional foods such as corn and squash. Though she had never planned to open a restaurant, the opportunity came in 2015. Christa established Feast in the former Ellice Café Theatre Building in Winnipeg's west end.

Equipped with her strong management background and experience with traditional cuisine, the entrepreneur found the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund on the internet. She spoke to FPEGF staff about her business idea and received the support she needed to develop a business plan to set her up to succeed.

Since 2015, Feast Café Bistro has expanded its menu and increased its staff. It is a priority for Christa to hire Indigenous staff members, who comprise about 80 percent of her staff. She also places a priority on hiring staff members who might have short resumes, but a lot of drive: moms who want to provide for their kids, sons who want to support their families, those who wish to get off of employment insurance. It remains a priority for her to give back to her communities and family. Christa regularly works with local organizations for work placements and practicums. She also welcomes school groups to the restaurant to inform and educate them about Indigenous food and culture.

The bistro café has received extensive local, provincial and national press coverage. Christa looks forward to continuing her relationship with FPEGF as Feast Café Bistro continues to grow and evolve. The restaurant's catering business is booming – and she may soon be seeking a new, dedicated space for it.

feastcafebistro.com

Image courtesy of Christa Bruneau-Guenther.

MANITOBA

7 Acre Wood Animal Boarding Kennel: For the Love and Welfare of Animals

7 Acre Wood Animal Boarding Kennel is a fully-functioning boarding kennel located on a 7-acre property about 45 minutes south of Winnipeg in Morris, Manitoba. The business provides day-care services and dog, cat and small animal boarding. Owned and operated by Robert Zacharias of Cree background, the facility features a safe, clean environment with 14 spacious kennels with indoor and outdoor access as well as a separate room for cats and small caged animals. It also provides boarder pick-up and drop-off services.

For over 25 years, Robert was a welder who also had many years of personal experience working with both companion animals and farm animals. He became curious about entrepreneurship when he met an AFI representative from Winnipeg in 2012. After learning about the process of starting up a business, he considered several ideas before deciding to open a kennel. At the time, he had little knowledge and few expectations about the market potential of such a business.

The kennel first opened its doors in September 2013. Equipped with a business plan that he developed with help from the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, his business at first focused on boarding only. Within a month, Robert was approached by several local municipalities seeking animal control services. Robert became an Animal Protection Officer for the Province of Manitoba, and the kennel expanded its scope to include pound and fostering services for the region. Animal protection and control now take up a large part of his business.

7 Acre Wood started working with young people. A local school division proposed a work placement program for 16- to 19-year-old students with learning needs. With the school, Robert designed a program for students to travel to 7 Acre Wood two days a week to interact with the animals, provide customer service, clean and maintain the facilities, and receive instruction on how to provide care. Robert says that working with Indigenous students at 7 Acre Wood has been the most rewarding for him. He is excited about future learning opportunities with the kennel for Indigenous youth.

Throughout his journey, he has been grateful for support from the First Peoples Economic Growth Fund. The AFI provided Robert with a start-up loan, as well as business advisory services. He remains in contact with the AFI for mentorship and advice.

7acrewoodkennel.com

Image courtesy of Robert Zacharias.

ONTARIO

AFIs

Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO)

Métis Voyageur Development Fund Inc. (MVDF)

Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF)

Rainy Lake Tribal Area Business & Financial Services Corporation

Tecumseh Community Development Corporation (TCDC)

Two Rivers Community Development Centre

Wakenagun Community Futures Development Corporation

Waubetek Business Development Corporation

Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF) is a not-for-profit Aboriginal Financial Institution serving entrepreneurs, businesses and communities in Northern Ontario. The organization offers a variety of services to support Aboriginal businesses and communities in Northern Ontario – including financing, business support, community planning, and workshops and bookkeeping training.

nadf.org

Innlink Concrete Ltd.

Waubetek Business Development Corporation delivers business financing and economic support services to Aboriginal entrepreneurs and First Nation communities. This Aboriginal Community Futures Development Corporation offers financial assistance for business start-ups, expansions and acquisitions. It hosts workshops on various topics. Waubetek has also developed regional strategies for Aboriginal participation in mining, fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

waubetek.com

Redcloud Studios

Redcloud Studios: Award-Winning Actor, Producer, Tells Indigenous Stories

Jennifer Podemski is a storyteller. She is also an award-winning producer, actor, mentor, advocate and role model. She has been in the business of storytelling for over 25 years, in an industry that historically has been neither diverse nor inclusive.

Jennifer owns and operates Redcloud Studios Inc., a production company designed to increase Indigenous visibility in the film and television industry. An award-winning actor and producer, Jennifer has a long history of working in front of and behind the camera.

At age 25, Jennifer opened her first production company, Big Soul Productions. The company became the first Indigenous-owned-and-operated full-service production company in Canada, producing numerous television series for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Big Soul Productions gained the support of the Waubetek Business Development Corporation in the early 2000s. "I have been supported by Aboriginal Financial Institutions throughout my professional career. There are times that are so incredibly difficult and it all feels overwhelming. Through various agencies over the years, I have been able to grow my business in a meaningful way and stay focused on my goal to work within the Indigenous community and build capacity," she says.

Jennifer later went on to form Redcloud Studios and began to operate as an independent producer from a home office. Since starting Redcloud, Jennifer has conceived, developed and produced projects including the film *Empire of Dirt*, for which she was nominated for two Canadian Screen Awards for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and Best Feature Film for her work as a producer. Jennifer is also the creator and producer of APTN's famed paranormal series, *The Other Side*, and is co-producer and creative director for the Indspire Awards 2017–2018 (airing on Global and APTN) for which she was nominated for Best Lifestyle Television Show at the 2014 Canadian Screen Awards.

Jennifer is still producing Season 3 of Future History which celebrates Indigenous knowledge. Committed to mentorship and youth empowerment, she continues to work with Indigenous communities through media creation, training opportunities and supporting the arts.

jenniferpodemski.com/redcloud-studios

Image courtesy of Jennifer Podemski.

ONTARIO

Innlink Concrete Ltd.: Staying in Tune with the Work in Northern Ontario

It all started two decades ago, with a batchplant, a loader and a few concrete mixer trucks. Wayne Innes had just been laid off from his construction job. His wife Caroline worked as the business manager of a local child welfare agency. Wayne's brother Gary did too, but also had construction experience. When the only concrete supplier in the Moosonee area wanted to sell his business, the three saw their opportunity – and moved on it.

But first, they needed capital. They applied for a loan from Wakenagun Community Futures, got the loan and bought the company. InnLink Concrete (combining their last names Innes and Linklater) was born in 1998.

The three members of Moose Cree First Nation soon realized that concrete wasn't enough to sustain their business, so they branched out. They went into heavy equipment rental and hauling fuel for an area mine and concrete powder to a dam project. Moose Factory had an island, so Innlink applied for another loan– this time from the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund – and bought a boat. Now they moved people across the river too.

Twenty years and several dozen major projects later, it's still a family business. Two of Wayne and Caroline's sons count among Innlink's 30 employees. The secret of their success? Wayne and Gary have a sixth sense, Caroline confides, an ability "to stay in tune with work coming down the pipe and latch on to it." Beyond diversifying, the company went local — another key to its sustainability. Innlink hires local people, uses local aggregates for roads, and makes its own gravel at a much lower cost. The owners maintain good working relationships with their municipality and First Nation clients. In 2016, they acquired bonding to make sure that the company could bid on mainstream jobs.

And what does the future bring? "We keep doing our thing and plugging along," says Caroline. Wayne and Gary still have their ears to the ground for upcoming projects and now Wayne and Caroline's sons have acquired on-the-job experience in business management. As next steps, the owners are looking at buying some land and building a garage on it, and expanding to reach to other area communities.

And that original equipment they bought in 1998? Some of it will need replacing soon. Innlink's owners will have a reliable partner. "NADF was always there for us, asking us if we needed anything." Chances are in the future, NADF will be there too.

innlink.ca

Wayne and Caroline Innes and Gary Linklater. Image courtesy of Innlink Concrete Ltd.

QUEBEC

AFIs

Corporation de développement économique montagnaise (CDEM)

Eeyou Economic Group / CFDC Inc. (EEG)

Nunavik Investment Corporation

Société de crédit commercial autochtone (SOCCA)

Tewatohnhi'saktha Business Loan Fund

Corporation de Développement économique Montagnaise (CDEM). Created in 1988, the CDEM offers financing products in the form of loans and non-repayable contributions for the start-up, acquisition or expansion of Innu businesses in Quebec. Its mission is to promote the economic development of the Innu Nation, for both individual and collective entrepreneurs.

cdem.ca/la-cdem

Ebénisterie Shakashtueu

Société de credit commercial autochtone (SOCCA) is a non-profit corporation that has served First Nations in Quebec since 1992. This Aboriginal Capital Corporation offers financing products and services in the form of non-refundable contributions, term loans and coaching to start, acquire or expand Aboriginal businesses. SOCCA's mission is to offer advice and financial services tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the First Nations of Quebec, the Native Alliance of Quebec, and their members.

socca.qc.ca

Martin O'Bomsawin

Tewatohnhi'saktha – Kahnawake Economic Development Commission (KEDC) was established in 1999 through legislation of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke. Investing in people, businesses and other economic opportunities, the Commission was established to create jobs, wealth and self-sufficiency for the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke. KEDC operates as an autonomous entity that remains accountable to both the council and the community for its actions and results.

kedc.ca

ATD Manufacturing Technologies

Martin O'Bomsawin, SOCCA and ABSCAN: An Inspiring Story of Mutual Trust

Martin O'Bomsawin is an Abenaki from the community of Odanak. The first client of the Société de credit commercial autochtone (SOCCA, or the Native Commercial Credit Corporation), he turned to the fledgling AFI in 1992, when he was involved in forestry operations and required a performance bond to start up his company. At the time, no financial institution offered this service – not even SOCCA, which had just started its own operations. Within 24 hours, SOCCA granted him the loan that would allow his company to move forward.

As SOCCA's first client in 1992, Mr. O'Bomsawin was also the first client to do business with the Aboriginal Savings Corporation of Canada (ABSCAN), an entity established by SOCCA that has the mission to put First Nations' savings to work for First Nations' housing needs. Today, rather than using SOCCA's loan services, he is making his money available to invest in ABSCAN. Funds collected in the form of bonds are then used primarily to finance housing projects for First Nations in Quebec.

Currently, Martin heads Transport DSD, a successful private transport company in operation for over 20 years. An experienced entrepreneur who has grown his businesses over time, he seized the opportunity to join SOCCA's Board of Directors in 1996. The Corporation that first helped his business would now benefit from his entrepreneurial expertise – first as a director and later as board chair. Since 2005, Mr. O'Bomsawin has also been a member of ABSCAN's Board of Directors.

Why did the first client of these financial institutions decide to become involved in governing them? "I wanted to put my expertise to good use for the benefit of First Nations entrepreneurs," he says. "The intricacies of the Aboriginal business world are far different from those of the traditional business world. At SOCCA and ABSCAN, we try to respond to these specific needs."

lasedac.ca/savings.html

Martin O'Bomsawin. Image courtesy of SOCCA.

QUEBEC

ATD Manufacturing Technologies: Connecting to Culture and the Global Manufacturing Market

In 2008, Leo Hurtubise closed down his successful Montreal-based plastic injection mold design company to focus on a new business based in the Kahnawake First Nation. By 2014, he had joined forces with Jesse Thomas, a Mohawk from Kahnawake. For the past five years, the two men's limited partnership, ATD (American Tool and Die) Manufacturing Technologies has provided specialized tool and die, mold making, and custom machine-building services to manufacturers of original equipment throughout the world.

Leo has worked in the field for 35 years. With a background in mechanical engineering, he started making machine molds and tools as an apprentice in college. He immediately loved the work, which was more applied than engineering. The business was also capital-heavy, which made it imperative to get the significant start-up financing that he was able to while based in Montreal.

Since 2008, the ATD Group has thrived, providing jobs and training to six First Nations employees in a highly competitive sector. It is also helping to train future employees. Working with the Kahnawake Economic Development Commission (KEDC), the ATD Group provides annual bursaries to First Nations students, encouraging them to work for the company once their education is complete.

What lessons have the past ten years brought? For an Ojibway person caught up in the 60s scoop, one clear benefit of being based on-reserve has been the opportunity to reconnect with First Nations culture. But there have been some challenges too. The biggest has been finding capital. Had he started up his business in Kahnawake, Leo believes, he could not have borrowed the funds he needed. Provincial programs still largely ignore the financing needs of reserve-based businesses.

The Kahnawake Economic Development Commission has definitely helped, Leo attests. Though the capital it can lend is limited, its services go far beyond that. Most recently, the financial institution assisted the business with an expansion project that will include a move to a new building and a shift to producing plastics. And when the company does begin making plastics, it will need to engage other businesses to supply it. Both ATD and the Kahnawake First Nation would like to see the businesses First Nations-owned and based in Kahnawake. "If people in communities have good jobs," Leo says, "the whole relationship will be a lot better."

gotooling.com

Jesse Thomas and Leo Hurtubise. Image courtesy of ATD Manufacturing Technologies.

Ébénisterie Shakashtueu: Trial by Fire

Success in business demands perseverance – a lesson Michel Rock knows all too well.

In 2008, this member of the Innu community of Uashat mak Maniutenam developed a plan to start his own cabinetry business. He had worked for another cabinet-maker in the area and had already gained the experience in the trade he needed. But his credit scores were poor.

At first, Michel had to rely on his mother for a loan of $8,500 to set up a one-man shop in a building he himself built. Two years later, he received funds from the Corporation de Développement Économique Montagnaise (CDEM) to purchase tools enabling him to be competitive in his field. Though Michel's credit had improved greatly, he recalls, he still "could not even get a small credit card for $300" and larger banks would lend him no money.

Over the next six years, Michel equipped his business with cutting edge technology. He gained several employees, taking on larger commercial as well as residential contracts. Ébénisterie Shakashtueu built custom furnishing for all twelve Innu communities, as well as for a growing group of non-Indigenous clients on the northern coast of Quebec.

Ebenisterie Skakashtueu. Image courtesy of Michel Rock.

In 2015, Michel's building was destroyed by a fire. It was a hard blow, he recalls, though his company came out of it "two or three times stronger." He considers the recovery his greatest accomplishment. Although the insurance money did not suffice to cover it, Michel rebought all the equipment he had lost – and even managed to improve it. The building he rebuilt was double the size of the previous one. And now, the building itself is a selling point, with a show room and designer that draw in clients on their own.

Today Ébénisterie Shakashtueu employs six to ten people per year. Two-thirds of them are Indigenous, giving him an advantage with the Innu communities. The company has added door and window construction to its capabilities and now furnishes schools, health centres, therapy centres, and other community buildings. Michel reckons that he is one of the better – if not the best – equipped cabinetmakers in the area. He is also the sole Indigenous one.

To what does he attribute his success? "To perseverance and family especially," he says. With work weeks that ran 70 to 80 hours at times, Michel is grateful to his wife, children and parents for allowing him to work extra hours when he needed to. He is also grateful to CDEM, for supporting his vision and providing the credit when he needed it.

ATLANTIC PROVINCES

AFIs

Ulnooweg Development Group Inc.

Serving all Atlantic provinces with multiple offices – Truro, Stephenville, Eel River Bar First Nation

Ulnooweg Development Group Inc. Ulnooweg has been providing loans and business services to Aboriginal entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada since 1986. It has representatives in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, offering convenient, personalized service to its clients to help them succeed.

Ulnooweg is a Mi'kmaq word. Broadly translated, it means, "to make Indigenous or to adapt beliefs, customs, et cetera of the Mi'kmaq." In this context, Ulnooweg Development Group is an "Indigenized" Development Group incorporating the beliefs, customs, and values of the Mi'kmaq nation. Ulnooweg seeks to operate as an extension of the communities, supporting their business leaders and entrepreneurs as one team working together towards a vision of self-sustaining, healthy communities.

ulnooweg.ca

Kluskap Ridge RV & Campground

Andrew Peter-Paul

Labrador Towing

NOVA SCOTIA: Kluskap Ridge RV & Campground: From a Vision at the Campfire

It was May 2016 at a picnic table in Mira, Nova Scotia, when Darrel and Sharon Bernard and Austin and Rosemarie Christmas first came up with their idea. These two camping enthusiast couples from Membertou First Nation were talking about how popular camping had become and how they had always had trouble finding adjoining sites for their trailers. Soon the joke turned to, "well, we can't find a spot so we will just buy a campground." As they spent their next days and nights talking around the campfire, their excitement about the prospect of owning a campground grew.

The couples came across Englishtown Ridge soon after and fell in love with the place. Now they had the perfect location to realize their vision.

Three years later, Kluskap Ridge RV & Campground provides a unique cultural camping experience to travelers on the Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island. The site offers visitors a chance to learn about Aboriginal culture, providing tipis as an accommodation option, weekly traditional drumming and singing, and four-cents cake – a traditional Mi'kmaq fry bread made over the fire. The owners also incorporate the Mi'kmaq language around the site.

To what do the Kluskap owners attribute their success? All contribute their training and strengths to maintain the campground. With a management and accounting background, Rosemarie runs the site's business aspects. Austin has a plumbing company and oversees maintenance. Sharon, a school principal, manages the children's programming and Darrell, a retired public works manager, oversees operations. The four rely on return visitors to help their revenues and promote the campsite.

Last but not least, Kluskap's owners have a good partner. The Ulnooweg Development Group, the Atlantic region's only Indigenous lending institution, has been another key piece in making their shared vision a reality. Ulnooweg provided them with start-up financing, and put the Bernards and Christmases in touch with training and marketing support.

And now, of course, the couples can find adjoining campsites whenever they want to!

kluskapridge.ca

Image courtesy of Ulnooweg Development Group Inc.

NEW BRUNSWICK: Andrew Peter-Paul: For Love of Fishing

Andrew Peter-Paul, a member of the Pabineau First Nation in New Brunswick, loves fishing. That love drove him in 2013, when he served as a deckhand and saw the potential to fish on his own for his band for the first time. It drove him again in 2014, when he built a business case to obtain a band fishing license, got it, and partnered with an established fisherman for further mentorship. And it still drives him now in 2019, when he is expanding his operation to fish with his own custom-built fishing vessel.

It takes a love of fishing to succeed, Andrew says, because it can be discouraging when you are starting out. Catches vary, prices vary and things go wrong even for seasoned fishermen. After he received his band fishing license, it took some persistence to build up his business. In 2014 he began to fish on his own – strictly lobster because he did not yet have his own vessel. He leased a boat from another fisherman and started with second-hand gear and traps. Some of the equipment he had to rent. Year after year ever since, Andrew has acquired better equipment, newer gear and further expertise in his field. In 2017, he took courses at the College communitaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, focusing on chartwork and pilotage, general seamanship and safety, and obtaining his Fishing Master IV Class license. The license qualifies him to operate a vessel of up to 65 tonnes.

Getting the new vessel will mark a major milestone for Andrew's business. The new boat will enable him to fish new and different species besides lobster – and will also improve his catch. To finance its building, he received a shared loan package from the Ulnooweg Development Group and the BDC. Once he begins using the vessel, Andrew plans to keep growing his business further – getting the gear he needs, catching new and different fish, and employing as many people as he can in the process.

Image courtesy of Andrew Peter-Paul.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: Labrador Towing: Rescuing Vehicles and Drivers in Every Weather

Ivan Blake and his family own a towing business on the remote coast of Labrador. The business rescues all types of vehicles – and their drivers – in all types of weather and situations. Their motto, Ivan's daughter Kindra explains, is, "if it's not damaged putting it into the ditch, we won't damage it taking it out."

Founded in 2001, Labrador Towing grew out of a mechanic and auto body shop. In 1999, the family had moved from Baytona, Newfoundland to Charlottetown, a small Labrador fishing town. One day, the mechanic received a call from someone with a broken-down vehicle who needed a tow to the mechanic shop. From that first tow, the idea for Labrador Towing was born.

What happened? The Blake family realized that the need for towing in the remote area was great, so it shifted its focus exclusively to that activity. To handle the demands of vehicles traveling the area, the family also added a greater variety of trucks. Ivan had already built up extensive experience in working with vehicles as a mechanic. Using that knowledge, he built his first tow truck from collected parts. Twenty years later, he uses that experience to help him in all aspects of maintaining the tow trucks – and in rescuing other vehicles. Labrador Towing's most recent acquisition has been a 2013 Western Star truck with a 50 tonne rotator wrecker.

Being there for customers when they need it, doing their job with professionalism and care, is a big part of the business's success. The work also requires hard work and commitment of the whole family. And all along, Ulnooweg Development Group has been there. "Over the years of working with the Ulnooweg staff," Kindra says, "we have met some great people – and have made some great progress with our business." The financial institution has contributed many things, from help with financing to advice on advertising.

Twenty years in, this former auto mechanic shop is in towing for the long haul. If drivers and their vehicles are going into the ditch, Labrador Towing will be there to take them out of it.

Facebook

Image courtesy of Labrador Towing.

AFI DIRECTORY

YUKON

däna Näye Ventures
Whitehorse
dananaye.yk.net

NUNAVUT

Atuqtuarvik Corporation
Rankin Inlet
atuqtuarvik.com

Baffin Business Development Corporation (BBDC)
Iqaluit
baffinbdc.ca

Kakivak Association
Iqaluit
kakivak.ca

Kitikmeot Community Futures Inc. (KCFI)
Cambridge Bay
kcfi.ca

Kivalliq Business Development Centre
Rankin Inlet

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Akaitcho Business Development Corporation (ABDC)
Yellowknife
akaitchobdc.com

Deh Cho Business Development Centre (DCBDC)
Fort Simpson
dcbdc.ca

Dogrib Area Community Futures
Wha Ti
1-800-464-2923

NWT Métis-Dene Development Fund (MDDF)
Yellowknife
nwtmddf.com

Sahtu Business Development Centre
Norman Wells
1-800-464-2923

Thebacha Business Development Services (TBDS)
Fort Smith
thebacha.ca

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Aboriginal Business and Community Development Centre
Prince George
abdc.bc.ca

All Nations Trust Company (ANTCO)
Kamloops
antco.bc.ca

Burns Lake Native Development Corporation (BLNDC)
Burns Lake
blndc.ca

CFDC of Central Interior First Nations
Kamloops
cfdcofcifn.com

Haida Gwaii Community Futures
Massett
haidagwaiifutures.ca

Métis Financial Corporation of BC (MFCBC)
Surrey
mfcbc.ca

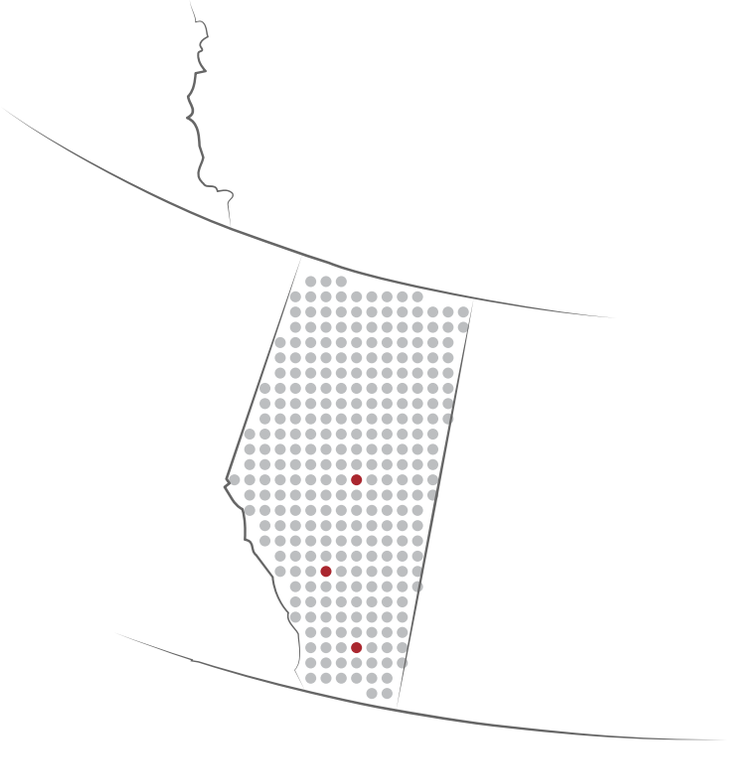
Native Fishing Association (NFA)
West Vancouver
shoal.ca

Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC)
Port Alberni
nedc.info

Stó:lō Community Futures Corporation (SCF)
Chilliwack
stolocf.ca

Tale'Awtxw Aboriginal Capital Corporation (TACC)
West Vancouver
tacc.ca

Tribal Resources Investment Corporation (TRICORP)
Prince Rupert
tricorp.ca



ALBERTA

Alberta Indian Investment Corporation (AIIC)
Enoch
aiicbusiness.org

Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc. (AMDI)
Edmonton
apeetogosan.com

Community Futures Treaty Seven (CFT7)
Calgary
t7edc.com

Indian Business Corporation (IBC)
Calgary
indianbc.ca

Settlement Investment Corporation (SIC)
Edmonton
settlementinvestcorp.com

SASKATCHEWAN

Beaver River Community Futures Development Corporation (BRCFDC)
Meadow Lake
beaverriver.ca

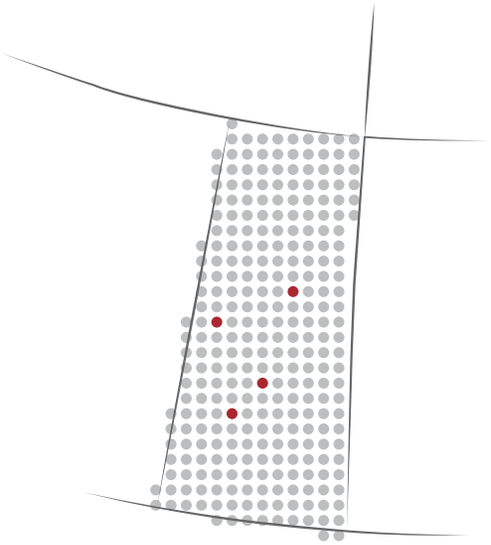
Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF)
Saskatoon
clarencecampeau.com

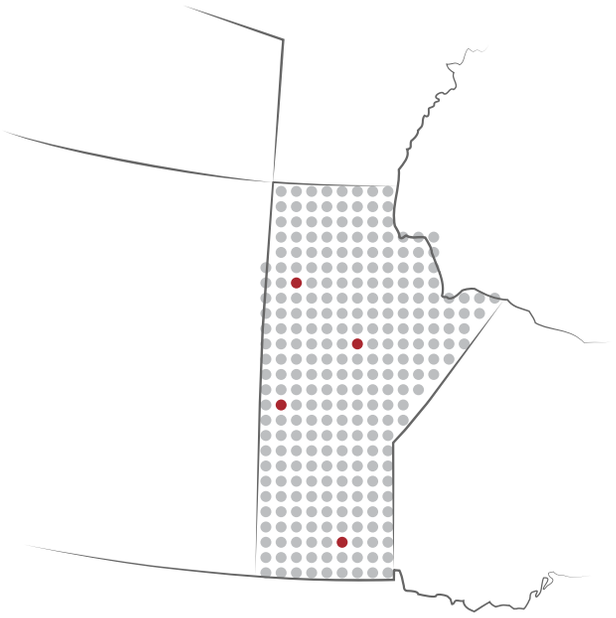
Northern Enterprise Fund Inc. (NEFI)
Saskatchewan
nefi.ca

Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc. (SIEF)
Asimakaniseekan Askiy Reserve
sief.sk.ca

SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO)
Saskatoon
smedco.ca

Visions North CFDC
LaRonge
cfsask.ca/visions-north





MANITOBA

Arctic Co-operative Development Fund (ACDF)
Winnipeg
arcticco-op.com/co-op-acdf-services.htm

Cedar Lake Community Futures Development Corporation
The Pas
cfmanitoba.ca/regions/cedar-lake

Community Futures North Central Development (CFNCD)
Thompson
northcentraldevelopment.ca

Dakota Ojibway Community Futures Development Corporation (DOCFDC)
Headingley
docfdc.mb.ca

First Peoples Economic Growth Fund Inc. (FPEGF)
Winnipeg
firstpeoplesfund.ca

Kitayan Community Futures Development Corporation
Winnipeg
cfmanitoba.ca/regions/kitayan

Métis Economic Development Fund (MEDF)
Winnipeg
medf.ca

Louis Riel Capital Corporation (LRCC)
Winnipeg
lrcc.mb.ca

Northwest Community Futures Development Corporation
Lynn Lake
nwcfdc.com

Southeast Community Futures Development Corporation
Winnipeg
cfmanitoba.ca/southeast

Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation (TWCC)
Winnipeg
twcc.ca

ONTARIO

Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO)
Stirling
indianag.on.ca

Métis Voyageur Development Fund Inc. (MVDF)
Ottawa
mvdf.ca

Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF)
Fort William First Nation
nadf.org

Rainy Lake Tribal Area Business & Financial Services Corporation
Fort Frances
adaawe.ca

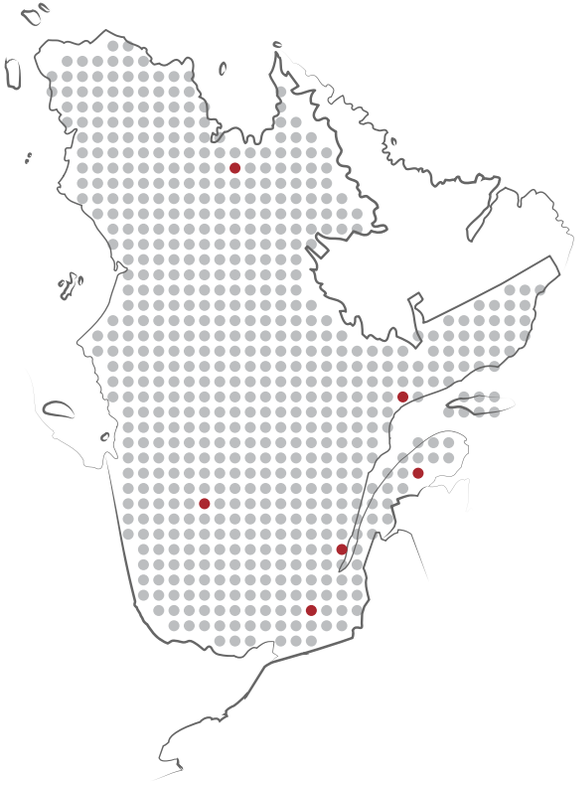
Tecumseh Community Development Corporation (TCDC)
Sarnia
tcdc.on.ca

Two Rivers Community Development Centre
Ohsweken
tworivers.ca

Wakenagun Community Futures Development Corporation
Moose Factory
wakenagun.ca

Waubetek Business Development Corporation
Birch Island
waubetek.com

QUEBEC



Corporation de développement économique montagnaise (CDEM)
Sept-Îles
cdem.ca

Eeyou Economic Group / CFDC Inc. (EEG)
Waswanipi
eeyoueconomicgroup.ca

Nunavik Investment Corporation
Kuujjuaq
1-819-964-0227

Société de crédit commercial autochtone (SOCCA)
Wendake
socca.qc.ca

Tewatohnhi'saktha Business Loan Fund
Kahnawake
tewa.ca

ATLANTIC PROVINCES

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The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) celebrates our countless Indigenous business-owners from coast to coast to coast.

We honour the visionaries, board members, management, and staff of NACCA, AFIs and our funding partners across the country, who have poured their talents into our collective goal of Indigenous autonomy through economic success.

The determination and growth of Indigenous business in Canada continues to inspire our work every day.

Nay:weh! Miigwech! Hai! Wela'lioq! Qujannamiik!

This book tells our story.

National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association