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SPECIAL EDITION

THE STATE OF THE ABORIGINAL ECONOMY:
10 YEARS AFTER RCAP



Captus Press

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Rene Ojebah

Rene Ojebah is of Ojibway ancestry and is a member of the Ojibways of the Brunswick House First Nation located in Chapleau Ontario. Rene is a first year student studying in the Fine Arts Program at Algoma University College in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

Rene has done numerous art works throughout Northern Ontario for various native organizations including Universities. He is also a Traditional Birch Bark Canoe Builder and has done courses for many First Nations in Ontario. Rene has been elected a President of the Shingwauk Aboriginal Student Association (SASA) at Algoma University College. He enjoys working with the younger generation, and is a strong believer in his cultural and heritage values.

Editors' Comments

This Special Edition focuses on *The State of the Aboriginal Economy* that has been in the works for a number of years. Following the release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) final report in 1996 which spoke about burgeoning Aboriginal economies that were at the same time both self-contained and working effectively within the larger Canadian and provincial economies, the journal editorial board determined that it is time to try and offer some useful insights into the heart of economic activity that is flourishing at every level within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

We wanted to offer a glimpse into Aboriginal economic activity that is, for all intents and purposes, ill-understood if at all recognized by the vast majority of Canadians. In this journal, our work, and in our classes, we (including our colleagues and students) are documenting history in the making in an age where many Indigenous communities are moving forward to fiscal freedom in their own terms. While this often involves reconciling the rhythms of the Canadian economic system with community-based initiatives, many Aboriginal business leaders perceive this action to be valid and the only way that people with the freedom to choose can do. The reconciliation includes establishing home-based businesses, entrepreneurial endeavors, developing products and selling services to communities that rely on band-owned businesses and co-operatives. Many of the same philosophies have also been successfully utilized by communities seeking to tap into global technology markets and developing culturally appropriate, sustainable businesses. In a word, Aboriginal communities are doing what makes sense and taking on projects that are manageable.

All of our journal issues to date have expanded upon these trends and this sense of movement, and this one is no different. We recognize the importance of history, offer some of the personal insights of our Economic Development winners and then give the

academic insight into a variety of topics to peak interest and stimulate debate.

In our opinion, there is no one way to engage this dynamic and constantly changing topic. Rather, we must approach The State of the Aboriginal Economy from different vantage points in order to begin to make sense of the new and evolving ideas and processes currently emerging; and each one is more exciting than the next. It takes courage to make a difference when all around are saying “it can’t be done” and “you aren’t doing it right”. The voices here can now be stilled.