

INTERVIEW WITH THE NOMINEES IN CANDO'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPER AWARDS

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Sherry Baxter

Walking a mile or two in another's boots is not an easy task. Some sense of the walk that CANDO's four nominees in the Economic Developer Awards have followed is presented in the following interviews. Their words offer a glimpse into their experiences and are aimed at those who are coming behind with new ideas and approaches to economic development in Aboriginal communities.

Please enjoy the words of Maynard Angus from British Columbia; Gary Swite, also from British Columbia; Chief Darcy Bear from Saskatchewan; and Chief Mike Carpenter from Ontario.

INTERVIEW WITH MAYNARD ANGUS, KINCOLITH FIRST NATIONS, BC

Sherry: I am here with Maynard Angus and he was nominated for the individual category for the Economic Developer of the Year Award. Congratulations on your nomination.

Maynard: Thank you.

Sherry: I just have a few questions for you that I'd like to ask. Now first of all, I'd like to ask

you to describe where you are from and your community.

Maynard: Well, I reside in Prince Rupert, which is the community North, on the North Coast of British Columbia. My hometown is Kincolith, which is a First Nations community approximately 60 miles North on the Coast. That's pretty well where I grew up.

Sherry: I would like for you to outline the projects that you've started or have been a part of.

Maynard: Well, there have been many projects. One of the projects that really is highlighted is the RAIN project which is, which stands for Resource Access and Information Network. That, I was the initiator of that, and the purpose of that project was to build capacity with individuals and with the communities around Internet access, which of course would allow the community to develop websites individually without having small businesses or artisans that can develop their own websites, and those that are looking for jobs for job-searchers. And, of course, everything that comes along with having high speed Internet. That was the main purpose of that. And, of course, having, bringing on partners such as the First Nations communities, the

The interviews were conducted by Sherry Baxter, Research Assistant with CANDO.

organizations, the library, the school district, the Chamber of Commerce, and so forth, allowed us to leverage funding from the government of Canada and the government of British Columbia, where approximately in total I think we were able to bring in just under a million dollars on a project. That is probably the highlight. It still operates today. It's taken us two years to get the project going only because we had other activity happening, but that particular project continues to run today. The college has stepped up and has hired a full-time individual in one of the communities and part-time in a couple of the other communities where they now continue that particular project. So, that's one of them.

Other projects that we've initiated include a skills inventory and gap analysis with the communities. We're looking at what the skill inventory is there; we're basically looking at individuals that have reached, say, grade 10, 11, and 12, how many graduates, how many have degrees, how many have trade, how many are certified in different trades and so forth. We're doing a gap analysis on industry—health, education, industrial, and companies in the service industry—where the gaps are today, and where they will be in three years and in five years. What we really want to do because of the aging population and because of the growth in the Aboriginal communities, especially in our communities, and the high unemployment that's there, we want to be able to say, specifically, here is an area of trades that, you know, if you go to school today, there's three companies right now looking for millwrights for example. So we're in the process of doing that. And that's really at the end of the day I think is to get not only First Nations, but everybody that do not have the proper training education to begin to look and say there are job opportunities. So that's the goal on that one.

In a nut shell, the other projects are infrastructure projects where we've accessed just over 12 million dollars in project funding. They are for communities that need to update their docks and the wharf. This doesn't sound like a big deal, but it's like taking a main highway away from your community. You can't get in and out of your community because now that infrastructure's not there. Other projects are around cultural tourism, a growing industry of long houses, totem poles and tourists attractions on islands where communities are now preserved.

The museums that had expansion funded. We've created a foundation and now we're creating human capacity.

Sherry: What do you feel are the major impacts that you've had on your community through these projects.

Maynard: The major impact has come around the RAIN project. With the RAIN project, you can identify the people that actually got training and here are the people who actually moved on. So those people that took train the trainer courses then took courses on networking and on digital equipment and so forth, and were able to move on and get hired by companies, and others were hired by the bands. That's probably the most immediate impact I've seen.

Sherry: Outline some of the successes and challenges that you've had.

Maynard: OK. I would say that keeping in line with community economic development is the main challenge. I'd say the challenge that I've seen has been around politics. I never really understood what politics was all about until I joined Community Futures. I didn't even know what it meant, and the fact that you always hear people comment on "Indian politics." It was the biggest challenge to get over because when Community Futures opened up, I was the manager and First Nations and at the time I was dealing with the First Nations communities and the non-First Nations communities. The First Nations communities are saying, you need to come over here and help us, right. The non-First Nations communities are saying, well, this is not just about First Nations, you have to help everybody. Trying to find a balance and a happy medium between communities is a huge challenge, remembering that 71 per cent of our service area is First Nations.

The government said we need to keep those numbers relative, so if you're spending 10 per cent of your time with the First Nation communities because you're so busy with what's going on in the city, then you need to change that. It's trying to explain that to your communities that the government is the one giving us funding for the program so we need to follow the direction that they want us to go.

What you're not up on, you're down on and it is about trying to help both sides understand the needs of the other side. You know you're not out there to save the world but you're trying to minimize, you know, politics. So I brought the groups and organizations together, and basically explained the situation, This is what goes on in this community and this is why when you go into a community and someone dies, nothing happens, and here are the reasons, right, respect and so forth. I try to take the First Nations into the city and meet with the different groups and organizations and say, OK, if we're not responding fast enough to you, don't feel like there's prejudice going on here because that's not the case. These are the reasons why. Just bringing them together sometimes just for the sake of having lunch and meeting each other and getting to know each other, and communicating a little bit brings down the barriers in their thinking. So that was a challenge. That went on for the first couple of years, believe me, it was a real challenge.

What are the successes? I guess overcoming those challenges. They're really the successes because they allowed me to move things forward with everybody. You know, I mean challenges, of course, are still there and always will be. Anytime you're dealing with human beings, right, you're facing challenges because everybody's so different, everybody has their own beliefs, and everyone wants to go in their own direction, and, so every day's a challenge in that respect.

Sherry: What are your future plans?

Maynard: My background came from nutrition, therapeutic recreation. I grew up working at my parent's general store—we always had to spend time either in the evening or after school to look after the store. I opened up a business when I was 24 years old, which still operates today.

I got into this type of career only because I wanted to contribute to the First Nations communities. It was always word on the street that they never get a chance to participate in groups and organizations and even funding that comes available. I thought I can help out there, so I did.

I've always felt that I needed you know, just a boost. I need to go back to school to under-

stand a little bit more so I could do something as a General Manager. I mean that's certainly challenging in itself because you have to understand every aspect of your corporation. You know, it's like jack of all trades. I've been wanting for the last five years to go back to school but its difficult. I have a family, and it's hard to just do that. So I'm looking at actually a couple, I took, I've taken some online courses with Royal Roads University on Leadership Management into their certification called International Trade.

Sherry: What advice that you would give to other economic developers.

Maynard: I would say that something as simple as listening is the greatest advice I can give anyone. I say that because you're dealing with communities and then you're dealing with individuals. I remember I was in a meeting a long time ago of a regional team of sales people. They talked about what they said to the client to get the sale. The majority of them don't succeed because the problem is they're thinking, "What am I going to say, what am I going to say, what am I going to say?" As opposed to what am I going to listen for? When you're talking, you're not listening. Those who listen and hear what the needs are can come back and sell according to what client needs.

My advice would be to really listen and understand first what the community is all about, what the people are all about, and then don't change anything, especially if you join an organization. Observe and understand as much as you can about the community or about the individuals. From there, you can begin to make suggestions and decisions and say, "this is how you can probably do things better."

I read a book called *His Needs, Her Needs* and the book was written by a psychologist who became a marriage counsellor. It talks about when you go to the bank, you either make a deposit or a withdrawal. When two people meet they make deposits. He says, "Oh, I like your glasses." So he's just made a deposit. And she gives him a compliment about his shoes or something. Pretty soon these compliments go back and forth and the wedding bells start to ring, and they've filled up the bank account. Usually when you meet people you ask questions

and they do all the talking about their family. They feel good about themselves. I notice that when I do listen at community meetings, I've made deposits. It becomes easier to work with people. At the end of the day, that's what you're doing, right, you're working with people.

It's human nature I guess because we're so quick to want to tell people how should be done. You know, when you go into a First Nations community, they say, "how can you come in and tell us what to do when you don't even live, when you don't know...". But sometimes First Nations people are quick to do it themselves, you know, right? So it's trying to help them understand that, even our Elders tell, listen to what we have to say. Same story.

Sherry: Thank you very much. Congratulations on your nomination.

INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF DARCY BEAR, WHITECAP DAKOTA FIRST NATION, SASKATCHEWAN

Sherry: Welcome Chief Darcy Bear. Please describe your community.

Darcy: Well, we're Dakota and we're located about 20 minutes from downtown Saskatoon. We have about 490 band members, and approximately half or 240 live in our community. We pride ourselves on accountability, governance, and transparency. I've been the Chief for 12 years and we've had 11 surplus budgets. We had one deficit budget in '97 on the hope of the summer games. It's the only blemish we have. Currently we have a cumulative surplus, and that's part of having a strong, accountable foundation. It also when you're looking forward and trying to attract business to your community in order to build governance structures.

Sherry: Describe some recent community successes.

Darcy: One of our proudest successes is Dakota Dunes Golf Links. As a small community, our resources are limited. Looking at what our opportunities were and our location, we're right beside the largest market in Saskatchewan, which is Saskatoon, and we also enjoy a really strong relationship with the City of Saskatoon and have

a good relationship with the city, the Mayor, his council and surrounding municipalities.

It is hard to market your land as the Indian Act is just so archaic. It goes back to 1867. It does not allow you to market your lands and you have to go through the lease system so the Ministry has to approve every lease. So when this First Nations Land Management Act came along, Bill C-49, a piece of new legislation that allowed us to self-govern our lands and zone our own lands through community involvement we took advantage. We have zoned certain areas, resort, commercial, we can issue commercial leasehold interests. Now we can actually attract business into our community. So, that was one of the challenges we faced and that was the way we overcame it, was through that piece of legislation.

Dakota Dunes has a business plan and a feasibility study that we used to raise capital. The challenge of being a small community was lack of capital. We had to seek a partner and that included Muskeg Lake First Nation. We have a joint venture non-profit fundraising body called Dakota Cree Sports that fundraises for youth activities between our two communities. So we had that longstanding relationship with them and so we brought forward that business plan and they did their own due diligence.

We also approached the Lac LaRonge Indian band since we already jointly owned a mechanical company at the time. And so, we shared our project with them as well and from there it was up to the communities. Politics is an issue ... why would you want to invest in another community. They got some of that. At the end of the day we all looked at the business plan and it made a lot of sense.

We're very fortunate that at the time that Minister Nault had an economic development program, which provided some Seed money to First Nation projects, providing they were viable and met all the tests, etc. We met every test that they threw at us and all kinds of hoops. Had about three trips to Ottawa to meet with Minister Nault, and finally we did land a project and got secured INAC funding of about \$1.39 million. We all had to kick in our share.

In our original business plan we indicated that we would lose money a small amount of money in our first two years. Actually, we've been profitable in our first two years of opera-

tion, and this is our third year of operation and again we will be profitable this year. So, all our partners around the table are happy. It's provided employment opportunities, of 60 jobs and 70% are First Nations. For some it has been a stepping stone for them to go on to other trades or to school so it has been good in that regard. We've also had some that have been there since day one.

The course is in excellent condition thanks to our Superintendent, but also his maintenance staff. I think everyone's proud of it. To have a magazine such as *Golf Digest*, which is read worldwide by golfers name it the Best New Course in Canada for 2005 is an honour. No other course in Saskatchewan has ever received, and we're the first to receive that honour.

Our next success is the casino project. The project was originally brought to downtown Saskatoon and the citizens voted it out, so we became plan A. So as we always do, we certainly took it to our membership to just let them know there's an opportunity to bring this casino to our community and is that something they want? Because it is gaming there are pros and cons. This is a free country we live in and people can make their own choices, provided they are making the right, educated choices, it's fine.

It's no different than going to a bar or a liquor store since people choose to drink responsibly or they can abuse it, or they don't have to drink at all. Similarly with gambling, you can gamble responsibly or some people abuse it, and hopefully there's some that don't gamble. There are other things to inside a casino, you know, besides gambling.

So it's another good project moving forward. It's under construction. It's about 40 per cent complete. It's about a \$67-million project, created under 550 jobs, and of course now the next thing is going to be the hotel project moving forward. We put the recommendations in from the studies we've done that start with 100 rooms and build so that we can expand another hundred, and again that's going to create another 90 jobs, just from the hotel project. In a perfect world we'll have it built and running and operational by the fall of 2008. The casino is fall of 2007. But as I say, in a perfect world, provided there's no snags such as grant-seeking, roadblocks with partners involved or legalities. One partner might want to see something different inside the agreement.

Those kind of things happen, but that's all part of business. We just continue to move forward.

There are other spin off opportunities such as retail projects, an industrial park, town-house condo developments etc. Eventually we will have probably be one of the largest employers in the area, just outside of Saskatoon. So that's awesome. And it's not just our people that benefit. It's other First Nations, people in the whole area and we all work together, we all partner together. The casino is a partnership of all 74 First Nations, you know, together that share the revenue in that casino. The building is owned by ourselves and six others in our tribal council, you know. So a lot of partnerships, a lot of working together and I think that's what it's going to take to move things forward. We all have capital but when we pool our resources together we can do great things.

Sherry: What challenges have you faced?

Darcy: All our businesses are First Nations-owned businesses. I think one of the challenges out there is to educate the non-First Nations business community that there is opportunities out there on First Nations land and that they can look at long-term leases. The University of Saskatchewan owns some property here in Saskatoon and have all the big box stores like Canadian Tire and Mark's Work Warehouse, all the big businesses are on their land with 49 year commercial leasehold interest. The University still maintains ownership of the land.

I think once the business community makes comparisons, looks at the similar tax systems we have in place we will interest them in our retail area and our industrial park. So those are some of the challenges we're facing, it's just marketing and educating the business community.

One other thing is that we found banks as well have to be educated. Some banks already know the system. Peace Hills Trust is a trust company but they know the system. There are other banks out there that are certainly aware such as CIBC who was one of our first lenders for Dakota Dunes. It was real long exercise to get them to understand how leasehold interests work. So it's just unfortunate that there isn't already a National body that does that for First Nations; educates these banks and meets with all the major banks, instead of us having to do it individually.

Sherry: What about social challenges in the community?

Darcy: I think all the things we're doing inside our community is to create opportunity for our members. They always say the best social program is a job. So the more jobs we have available, and I think the better off our community members are going to be. To get up in the morning and have something to do, you know, you care for your family, you can look after your family. The other thing is that kids learn from that too. When they see mom and dad going to work, mom and dad become really good role models and the kids, when they grow up they make that same decision; "I want to work too. Mom and dad did."

You know, that whole dependency on social assistance, I think it's unfortunate that it happens, but we also had no economy inside our boundaries. So there were no choices you know, if you wanted to stay home on a reserve. Now when we're attracting business and bringing business to our community, people do have opportunities. And when you have opportunity there's hope and we make better choices. It's no different than anybody, any society, any city or town. If there's no opportunity you start to make the wrong choices. But when you see some opportunities, you see some hope, you want to make that choice, you know, "This is what I want to do, I want to help my family, I want to take care of them."

Sherry: What are some of the core issues though that you are focusing on. Right now you want to create more opportunities and more jobs. Do you just want to keep going in that direction or do you think there's maybe somewhere you want to get and then you might move on to something else.

Darcy: Well, I think certainly you want to have a plan, planned growth and that's one of the things we've done is we have gone through an exercise of a five year plan, 10 year plan, and then where we want to go. The growth certainly has to be planned and also it has to be planned within the community. As far as where we want to go, one of the things we'd like to see is what you would call a sustainable community, you know, where we're not just reliant on say government transfer payments.

We have basically surpassed whatever government resources Indian Affairs is giving us. You know, that's one of our goals is to create a sustainable community through our tax system, through our land revenue, through our profits from the businesses that we create. We certainly want to become self-sustaining as one of our visions, one of our goals. And we're hopeful that we'll be there, well, you know, within the next five to 10 years. And it's already happening, you know slowly. We can turn around our revenue we generate and reinvest it back into our community. You know, all of our communities across the country, we don't need resources from Indian Affairs for recreational facilities, etc., to further the, invest in our culture, our language programs, so a lot of the money would go back towards those types of things and we could be proud of who we are, we have to be proud where we come from.

You know, that's one of the things all of our Elders teach us. You've always got to remember where you are, where you come from, remember your people, your language, your culture; can't forget those things. So there's got to be a balance all the time and I truly believe that yes, it's good to be involved with business and, but still, we have to remember where we come from. You know, in the past, our whole economy before European contact was based on trade and hunting and especially Dakota it was the buffalo, which was a big part of our life, and the thing is those, these are gone. So how do we survive now, and how do we create opportunities now? Well, we have to be involved with economic development and we have to create opportunities ourselves and sustainable opportunities. That's why when we create a business we've got to make sure that we put it through all the tests, make sure that those businesses are going to be viable businesses, to do our proper due diligence and we'll be successful. Because if the businesses is successful and is profitable, and that employment that is created will be sustainable into the future. So the people who are employed won't be laid off in the future, they'll have their jobs. So that's what we want to see.

Sherry: So, it seems to me like this has been rapid growth from your community. Would you see it in terms of that, or have you been planning these things long-term?

Darcy: I wouldn't say it was rapid growth because actually the golf course itself was something we started in, the idea came in 1999, and so it took us about three years to secure all funding, the partners, and so on. From there of course the construction and all that and now we've been operational for our third year. But it was actually under construction for a couple years to because we started late in the year so part of our year went into the next year because you've got to work with the ground when you're building a golf course, so. It's not where as you're building a mall you can build right through the winter. With a golf course, you've got to build during summer. Those are some of the challenges, but once we got it to market, it's been awesome. Great reception of the course. Everyone that we bump into, even people you overhear in a restaurant you know, talking about the course, there's nothing but good things to say about it. That's positive.

Sherry: You did mention that things are starting to snowball now, so you think growth is picking up now?

Darcy: Anytime there's success other people start to have questions. We don't turn anybody away and we'll certainly listen to the ideas that come out. You know, some of them maybe don't fit with us. Certainly if somebody wants to set up, an auto wrecking plant, well, we don't want to see something like that because it's harmful to the environment. Again, you've got to be picky about what businesses you want to bring in to the community. You have to have criteria, so that's one of the things that also has to be established; some criteria as far as the businesses you want to bring to the community that kind of thing. So, we'll continue to listen to people that want to look at other businesses, and the ones that are good and have the ethics and things we believe in, then yeah, we'll see those things come into the community.

Sherry: What would be your advice to other community economic developers? What do you think are important things for them to know?

Darcy: I can't speak for any other community, and I hope I don't offend anybody. But I always base it back to your own accountability. If you don't get your own financial house in order, it's

very difficult for you to go out to mainstream and then try to attract business to your community because your own financial house should be in order. And we were in the position in the past; I inherited that type of mismanagement and everything else. We put in a lot of policies and that in place, like even myself, I can't go and make a purchase on my own. You know, most times I don't have that type of power, and I don't want that type of power either. You know, they have finance committees, we have levels of, as far as who signs off, there's certainly got to be two signers. I can't just go out and obligate my community to any deal; it's got to go through a certain process.

And those are good things. Even our Election Act, if you owe money to the band; like in the past the things that were happening was that there was large advances from Chief and Council. In the past and you know they'd give an advance, not pay it back and they'd run at the next election and they'd do it again. So we've changed all that. Even our Election Act, we're one of the First Nations to have an Election Act and we implemented rules that say that if you owe the band money and you want to run in the election, well then you've got to pay back the money. It's got to be a certified cheque, cash, etc. So our community has imposed rules. It shows integrity on behalf of the leadership and that we have to run a clean ship.

Like I said, we pride ourselves on our audits, unqualified audits. You know, when you have a qualified audit then there's something wrong. When you have a qualified audit, they couldn't find receipts for this or receipts for that, and that's when they qualify them. So unqualified, that's a positive thing, we pride ourselves on that. Our surpluses, we'd like to have surpluses. Even again, last year, we don't need a surplus, but ran one anyway. And just, to us it's a good thing, it's good, when you have that base, there's a lot of respect out there. The community respects you, people respect you, that you are running the system that way. So, like I said, one of the key foundations is to, for getting involved from our perspective is making sure your own house is in order, your own financial house is in order. Then you can go out there and you can start looking at putting the tools in place that you need. And again, each community is going to be different. We're fortunate that

we're beside a major centre. You know, and not everybody's going to have that luxury.

But certainly doing their own SWOT analysis — internally what are your strengths, what are your weaknesses, and externally, what are the opportunities and what are the threats, right? And, looking at it from that perspective, maybe you're situated along a major highway. Maybe you have huge unemployment. Maybe there's a partnership for major manufacturing to happen right inside your community. Those kinds of things. If you're right along a major route that can get infrastructure in and develop a manufacturing plant, maybe that's what your good at. Maybe it's mining like we saw this morning. Maybe that's what your strength is. Each community is going to be different, we have to look at where we're situated, what we can do, and then how do we get there? Once we identify the opportunities and that, and how do we get there? Again, it's going to be different for each community. Maybe it's legislative change, maybe it's just infrastructure, maybe it's just a road coming into the community that has to be paved and strengthened so that trucks can come up and down there. So, each community is going to be different.

Maybe you are located right in the mountains somewhere, where it's beautiful and maybe you have a ski resort or something, you know. So, somebody posed a question to me one time, "Do you recommend a golf course for every community?" I said, "No, I don't." For us it works because of the fact that we're right beside a major market. And those are the things you have to look at. You know, it's again market analysis; whether or not these projects are going to be feasible or not. You know, and then eventually if it looks like it will, then you need to do focus groups and things, and the eventually a business plan and roll things forward. But you have to do your proper due diligence. But again, attracting business to each community, sometimes it can be difficult. Maybe some times you find, bands buying urban property.

I know English river has purchased some land just outside Saskatoon here and I know they're doing very well. Yeah, so again, that's their strategy. Everybody has to look at what kind of strategy they can come up with. Every one is going to be unique. But again, we can still share our ideas, because some of us might

be doing similar things. Maybe it's our leases that are similar. But maybe it's just different projects that type of thing.

We were fortunate that we went across the country and met with a lot of First Nations, like the Kamloops Indian band, Westbank, Osoyoos, and others in the States where just sharing and listening is key. What their success was, what were the keys to their success? What were the best practices? What were the challenges they faced? When you hear those kinds of stories, you can bring that home and use them, and turn around and use their best practices and put them in place for your community.

Each community is different. Some might be more political, some might be less political. Some could have stable environments, some could have volatile. Some communities might not want to have, like in our land code we put residential leases, but some may say, "we don't want that as a community." So that's fine. They don't have to have to put that in. They can say, "no we don't want that but we want commercial leases." Or maybe, "we don't want that either, or maybe we don't want the land code at all. We want to go through the Indian Act, through the head lease system," where the Minister signs off and you can still do commercial business on your reserve but the Minister will sign off on it.

So every community is going to be different. It depends on the politics and things, leadership, and it's just the way we did things in Whitecap. It just made sense to us as far as leaseholds, and it gave us control of our land.

Sherry: Right. Excellent. OK, thank you. And, congratulations on your nomination. I just want to ask you what you think this nomination has done for you or is going to do for your community.

Darcy: Well, anytime you get any type of award it certainly is a positive thing for the community. You know, like I said with the *Golf Digest* thing that was certainly not the last one. We've got Saskatoon here, we've got Business of Excellence Awards in the past. Tourism Saskatchewan we ended up being runner-up for Tourism Saskatchewan Award for Business of the Year. What else, we just recently won the FSA Circle of Honour Award for Business of the Year with Dakota Dunes. So it is good. It's positive, you

know, the work is being rewarded, especially with the partnerships that have been created.

But at the end of the day, we continue to move forward; it good to have those honours, but there's still lots of work to be done yet. Lots of work. It is a good honour, but also there's so many First Nations that are doing a lot of great work in their community, like we saw this morning. You know, like the Diamond mine that's happening in their community that's remote from my understanding, that's what I heard. So there's positives everywhere. I think right across the country.

Sherry: Well, thank you very much for taking the time to answer my questions and once again congratulations.

Darcy: Thank you.

INTERVIEW WITH GARY SWITE, GEOSWITE CONTRACTING, BC

Sherry: Would you describe your community?

Gary: I come from Kelowna in the central part of British Columbia in the Okanogan Valley. We have a small reserve there of about 5,300 acres. Two major ones are being developed and I have some land in West Bank First Nations. It's a new reserve and the second one in British Columbia that has self-government.

Sherry: Tell me about some of the projects you've either started or have been a part of.

Gary: Geoswite Contracting was started seven years ago. I was working for the reserve community but I came to the realization that each project would get to a certain stage and end. When the dollars ran out, the budgets ran out and there was no more work. I started working independently in the city with positive success. I worked with a friend on our first project, a big multi-purpose building that we bid on successfully. The next project was the highest building in Kelowna called the Point of View. We put in a low bid since we both had small companies and were new. The spin-off projects have meant that my business grew from two to five native people plus myself.

Another friend hires First Nations people based on ability, skills, attitudes and work-related

issues. I have helped and we've had tremendous success with working with people who are willing really get out there and go to work. We have moved up into the high-end projects and continue to work together but as separate companies. We are a team and we each pull our weight. It's been a very positive thing.

Another business I have started focuses on recycling. I own some land and I started stockpiling different products to re-crush and recycle. I haul it, sell it or process it and haul it back so I get paid from both sides of the project in a very lucrative venture.

I don't consider band projects because we're too busy. I would suggest that if you get to that stage in development, everybody in the community could step away from work in just band budgets and get into industry for more success.

Sherry: What positive impacts you made on your community?

Gary: We provide employment. We take our boys away from working for those home-based jobs to working in the city where they gain a broader experience in the "real world." They get this experience without paying income tax, so that's number two benefit. The third one is we provide training. We are both very fussy about safety because accidents could put us out of business very easily. So, we go through a really challenging process when we train them and they have an accident then they're gone. No second chance in the business. So that's three, and the other one is we get recognition as a First Nation business, that can work anywhere in town.

We get a lot of praise because we get the work done, professionally, and our customers are quite pleased.

Sherry: List some of the major successes and challenges that you've faced in your projects so far.

Gary: Major successes, I think the number one is gaining recognition of my experience by community members. I started in the trucking industry but now I'm with the engineers, all the big city planners, and it's taught me how to do a better job. When I go back to the community, I see certain decisions that they plan and I suggest to the fellows there, "Oh, you guys better double-check before you start back hoeing that

because I just think your grades are wrong." It's been a plus.

Sherry: What are short and long-term plans?

Gary: My future plan is to complete a 140 unit development as part of a family-owned business. I'd like to use my experience and my skills that I've developed over the years, and my challenges that I've been through, and market it as a product that I could help other communities within my area. I would even work with individuals who have an interest in a mentorship project.

Sherry: What would be your advice for other community economic developers?

Gary: My strong advice is to encourage people who are employable on the reserve who are too dependent on that source of dollars. When the project budget runs to end, they quit and they won't move on. We've tried to employ a few of them in the city and they feel that they're in the wrong environment. What I think Chiefs in Council and Economic Development Officers could do is a little different training that can stop these people from taking advantage of the system. I don't like to see them with a good skill that as soon as a job finishes two weeks they're back on social assistance.

Sherry: Thank you. Are there any other comments that you'd like to make, maybe on being nominated; what has it meant to you and your business?

Gary: Well, for my nomination is a real honour. It's a good process for other people in our community and throughout the country, to see that you don't have to depend on your community to make a living, that you can go out in the world and do things on your own.

I feel really proud of that. I think back on the people I have had a chance to help and I remember one fellow in particular. He comes from the Saskatchewan area and [he was] working in a gas station in the Okanogan. I used to stop and get my daily coffee there and would talk to him. He had a real good strong attitude and good personality. I asked him, "Would you like to come and work for me?" And he said, "Well, I've never ever worked in the construction industry before, I don't know nothing." I said,

"Are you willing to learn?" and he said, "yes." He said, "I would be excited to." So I said, "Ok, we'll start you in May." We started him at the bottom, in the ditches learning how to do pipe work. But, he took us totally off guard because his effort, energy and willingness to participate has him at a senior level now!

INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF MIKE CARPENTER, ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION, ONTARIO

Sherry: Hello I'm here with Chief Mike Carpenter from Attawapiskat First Nation. They've been nominated in the business category for the Economic Development Awards. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and let me ask you these questions.

First, I would like for you to describe your community briefly.

Mike: Thank you. Attawapiskat is located on James Bay, West Coast of James Bay. We're about 1,600 population. Social problems, high cost of living and lack of housing create a lot of social problems. So, to try and develop economic development in isolated areas is very, very difficult.

Sherry: What projects are your community involved in now.

Mike: One of our biggest customers is De Beers, the Victor project. It's given Attawapiskat a lot of hope for improving the quality of life. We certainly struggled to decide whether we were going to support the project because of all the negative impacts that development brings to the community, like polluting the water. Victor project is 90 kms upstream from Attawapiskat, so we had to ask all those hard questions. The people decided to vote for the project because of many good things can help Attawapiskat sustain itself. One of the key things that we did was negotiate with De Beers to be part of the monitoring committee. They agreed to that. We have to provide our own supports so that if we sense any negative impact then we can stop the project, review the negative impact, and fix or minimize the problem. If it can't be fixed, then something has to be done to stop the project.

Diamonds might be worth a lot of money, but water is more precious to us.

Through the Victor project we were able to get a lot of additional contracts from De Beers after the original contract. We had to provide things like offering fair price, meeting timelines and providing quality work. So we were able to do that through joint venturing with other established businesses. Attawapiskat didn't have any businesses in the community and the level of education in that community was grade 9. Being able to do all these different contracts of service work, trucking, helicopter work was amazing. It was hiring the right people to work with us that do due diligence. I think that's what really made it work for us.

Sherry: How long have you guys been negotiating and working on this agreement?

Mike: The agreement was already negotiated before I came in and took about six or nine years. De Beers expected everything to happen in six months and that was the most frustrating for them. In the agreement De Beers said, "we will not proceed with the Diamond mine without consent of First Nations." It was right in the agreement and that gave us a lot of leverage to lobby for a lot of these things. I don't really know what made De Beers agree to that but I think right now that they maintain about 70 per cent of the diamond industry in the world. They were trying to rebuild their reputation in Canada so I think they really had to work with First Nations to be able to bring the diamond prices up. It really helped us when they made that commitment. There are not many companies that will say that. We're still negotiating for a percentage of diamonds as well. That's in process and there are a whole lot more contracts that will be coming up.

Sherry: What time frame will this project span?

Mike: The Victor project will be around 17 years. Right now they're in the construction phase and in a year and a half they'll be going into operations, and 12 years, maybe another 2 years, they'll be in closure. But I'm optimistic; I think there'll be more coming out. I'm pretty sure of that. We only negotiated for one pipe. De Beers has 16 pipes and wanted us to

negotiate for all 16 but we said no, we only wanted to negotiate for one.

The mine itself is only one pipe. If they find another one then we negotiate again like this one, so it gives us a chance to learn and improve our negotiations next time.

Sherry: Very smart. Describe some of the positive impacts, you think this is going to have on the community.

Mike: We are developing our own economic base and improving quality of life for my community like housing. We're really backlogged about 200-300 houses. I'm, trying to negotiate with the province to put some housing and community subdivision infrastructure like stores for the flow of people coming in like they do down south.

We need to be treated the same. They're the ones that are going to be making a lot of money from the revenues and royalties.

We are planning some social programs to deal with problems like alcoholism, suicide, gas sniffing. We need to help youth how to keep their jobs and stay in school. All the people that we hired to help, lawyers and engineers, environmental people, geologists, all came from outside. I'm going to try and encourage young people to go and enter these fields so we can have our own people deal with these issues in the future.

Sherry: What are some of the long-term goals in the community?

Mike: Our long-term goals are to make sure that those businesses work so it can help the community sustain itself after De Beers is gone.

Sherry: Are you planning on having any businesses in your community?

Mike: We negotiated an advanced tax ruling allowing First Nations working off reserve with De Beers are not going to be paying taxes. There are members of Attawapiskat living in Timmins, they can't qualify for that. Due to that ruling, we were forced to have our head office in Attawapiskat and have tax exempt businesses. I think those businesses will benefit all businesses in Attawapiskat as well as off reserve.

Sherry: What advice do you have for other economic developers?

Mike: Exploration companies have been in our territory for many years and they've been exploring without our consent. Northern Development of mines hasn't talked to us either. They just keep issuing permits. The recent court cases requiring that they consult with First Nations will give us more leverage to work for benefits and maximize business opportunities. I think we have a lot of leverage to lobby as before we never had that. Be aggressive about your rights. De Beers is a big company but knowing that if they want to work on our territory they have to learn to work with us and then we just stick to our guns and eventually they'll fall back. They'll try to get away from us and ignore us, but then when we walk away they come back because

they really want the diamonds, and I think that other companies are going to be doing the same thing. I think that you just have to show that you're practising your right for land entitlement. We own this land, we never gave it up and you have to be with us if you want to do business in our territory. That is what we did in Attawapiskat.

Sherry: Thank you very much and congratulations on your nomination.

Mike: Whether I win doesn't matter. I'm still going to be proud of our accomplishments. It's not me that did all the work, it's all those people behind the Economic Development Officers that really made things happen. I have to give them credit for all the hard work. Thank you.