

# PROFILE OF CANDO'S 2007 ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal economic development remains the key vehicle to self-sufficiency and self-governance for Canada's Aboriginal Peoples. Every year, the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO), along with those in the economic development field, celebrate and highlight four individuals and/or businesses/communities who have exemplified successful and inspiring economic development initiatives. This honour and recognition takes place through the Economic Developer of the Year Awards at CANDO's Conference and Annual General Meeting. CANDO's 2007 awards included four exceptional and uniquely successful community economic development and business role models. These role models included the Award winners Ruth Williams (individual category) and the Little Shuswap Indian Band (business/community category); and the Recognition Award winners Verna Billy-Minnabarriet (individual category) and the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group (business/community category).

In order to highlight these well-deserving award recipients, a brief profile of each winner is presented below. These profiles are based on information obtained from web sites and the award nomination packages submitted, which best highlight the achievements and accomplish-

ments of these exceptional individuals and businesses/communities. The nomination packages focused on a comprehensive variety of details, including the following: a profile of the individual, business or community; a background summary of their work experience or business/community history; examples of the various Aboriginal economic development initiatives undertaken; a description of the innovative and ground-breaking elements of their initiatives; challenges faced by their initiatives and how they were overcome; the effects of the initiatives on their surrounding communities (either geographically or of interest); the nature of the partnerships and relationships formed through their initiatives; and their contributions to the field of Aboriginal economic development and impact on the Economic Development Officer (EDO) profession.

The profiles below will outline these key areas of their achievements. In addition, to supplement her profile, Verna Billy-Minnabarriet was able to provide a brief response to the following interview questions: a description of her community; an outline of the major projects she has started or has been a part of, steps she took to complete those projects; what she feels were the most significant impacts she has had on her community through those projects; an outline of the most significant successes and challenges she

faced while accomplishing those projects; what her future plans are; and what advice she would give EDOS.

**RUTH WILLIAMS,**  
INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY AWARD WINNER

**Profile**

Ruth Williams is the Chief Executive Officer of All Nations Trust Company. She was nominated by the All Nations Trust Company and received a number of exceptional reference letters from various professionals in the field of Aboriginal economic development. Ruth Williams was honoured for her initiatives in promoting entrepreneurship (i.e., support of Aboriginal self-reliance); establishing new partnerships; and preserving a strong sustainable community. As highlighted in her nomination form,

Ruth Williams has been a leader in social and economic development for Aboriginal people in British Columbia for 25 years. She has been a member of dozens of organizations over the years, almost invariably assuming a leadership role. [Williams] currently sits on not less than seven different boards, including the Aboriginal Housing Committee of BC; the Kamloops Native Housing Society ([serving as] President); and the United Way and Indian and Northern Affairs Project Review Committee ([serving as] Chair). [Williams] has also been a founding member of eight non-profit organizations which are working to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal [people] in the BC interior. These organizations include: the Round Lake Treatment Center, the Aboriginal Health Advisory Council, and the Central Interior Ministry of Child & Family Services Advisory Board.

In reference to her impact on establishing new partnerships,

[Williams] was a founder of All Nations Trust Company (ANTCO), a company with 200 Aboriginal shareholders including several First Nation

communities, Métis and urban Aboriginal organizations, and Aboriginal individuals.

As CEO for ANTCO, [Williams] seeks out new agreements and partnerships [and] some examples for this include:

- CMHC [Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation] direct lending: [Williams] negotiated the first Agents Agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for delivery of their Direct Lending Program; and
- Negotiation of a \$75 million trust agreement.

As a Canadian Employment and Insurance Commission Advisory Board member, [Williams] was successful in putting forth a recommendation that the Regional Advisory Board be designated a Community Futures Development Office to ensure that rural First Nations had access to business financing. That recommendation led to the decision to create the Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Interior First Nations.

[Williams] has established long-term partnerships with every level of government: federal, provincial, First Nation, and municipal. These partnerships have proven invaluable for the organizations and committees with which [she] has been involved with.

Williams has partaken in the following initiatives to promote Aboriginal entrepreneurship:

- She is a member and Vice-Chair of the western board for the first Native Economic Development Program (NEDP) Board;
- She is a founding member of All Nations Trust Company;
- She is a past board member of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA);
- She is a past board member with the Kamloops District Community Futures Development Corporation;

- She has negotiated a \$350,000 loan fund with the BC provincial government;
- She has negotiated a \$250,000 Aboriginal youth loan fund with Aboriginal Business Canada;
- She has negotiated funding from the federal government to provide business advisory positions for various BC regions, which to date have provided business start-up and financing assistance to more than 500 entrepreneurs within BC; and
- She has established a relationship with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), resulting in ANTCO sponsoring NVIT's annual business case competition for 20 Aboriginal youth interested in the field of business.

In order to preserve a strong sustainable community, Williams has been a founding member of various organizations and has been part of a number of programs. Through these she has been able to positively influence and improve the socio-economic well-being of urban and rural Aboriginal communities in BC. Below is a list of those organizations and programs she has been involved with:

- She is a founding member and 16 year President of Kamloops Native Housing Society, which has creating affordable housing for urban Aboriginal families and has created spin-off opportunities for jobs, education, and improved health conditions;
- She is a founding member of the Little Hands of Friendship Daycare Society, which helped create daycare facilities for over 80 children;
- She is a founding member and previous Vice President of the Round Lake Treatment Center, which provides shelter and holistic healing for alcohol and drug addictions;
- She has overseen ANTCO's growth with direct advantages to the Aboriginal shareholders, staff, and their families;
- She is a founder of the BC Agri-Food Futures Fund, which provides access to funding for Aboriginal people to grow and benefit from agricultural crops; and
- She was the General Manager of the Interior Indian Friendship Society for 14 years, and moved that organization to financial stability,

allowing it to focus on community-drive initiatives.

### **Background Summary of Work Experience or Business/Community History**

Although much of Williams' work experience has been outlined above, the following section provides a summary of her experience. Williams has been the CEO of ANTCO since 1997. She was the General Manager of the Interior Indian Friendship Society from 1983 to 1997. These organizations have greatly benefited from her experience, hard work and dedication to Aboriginal people, focusing and inspiring Aboriginal people to seek growth from opportunities they can create for themselves. Williams is also a member of the Aboriginal Housing Committee for BC, is a founding member and 16 year President of Kamloops Native Housing Society, and is a previous board member of NVIT.

### **Examples of Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives**

Williams has been part of three major initiatives throughout her work experience with ANTCO, the Interior Indian Friendship Society, and as a member of the Provincial First Citizens' Fund (FCF) advisory board. Below is a description of these initiatives as outlined in her nomination package.

[Williams] was a founding member of ANTCO. The company started out as an idea for Aboriginal people to help themselves by creating a financial institution to assist with business start-ups within the [five] tribal regions of south-central BC. The company has grown substantially under [her] guidance and has since loaned more than \$56 million to Aboriginal businesses throughout Canada.

As the General Manager of the Interior Indian Friendship Society, [Williams] made several business moves that strengthened the financial bottom line for this organization which had previously struggled to provide a handful of social programs.

Under her guidance, the Society increased its staffing from [five people] to 52 and increased assets from \$50,000 to \$3 million. This had decreased the dependence on government funding and allowed it flexibility to focus on community-driven initiatives such as the Little Hands of Friendship Daycare.

As a member of the provincial FCF Advisory Board, [Williams] helped transition an ineffective grant program to a business loan program and was instrumental in bringing that program into the control of Aboriginal Capital Corporations. This move brought more control of Aboriginal business loan dollars back to Aboriginal organizations.

### **Innovative and Ground-breaking Elements of Those Initiatives**

Williams was both a visionary in fostering and completing the initiatives described above and succeeding despite having to work outside the limitations of government funding programs. As highlighted in her nomination package, the following points describe how Williams was innovative in producing those ground-breaking initiatives.

[Williams] was a visionary and founding member of ANTCO, a for-profit, wholly-Aboriginally-owned and provincially regulated institution. The company was established to provide a service to all Aboriginal entrepreneurs, both on- and off-reserve. The company has been in existence for more than 20 years and has provided valuable service in that time.

As General Manager of the Interior Indian Friendship Society, Ruth worked outside the limitations of government funding programs to secure a solid economic base for the Society. The benefits of these business transactions are still felt by the Society today in the form of increased/expanded programs with more emphasis on community needs.

### **Individual or Business/Community Challenges and How They Were Resolved**

There were a number of key challenges faced by Williams while creating ANTCO and developing other programs. The following describes each challenge (in no particular order) and how it was subsequently resolved.

The first obstacle included the struggle to have various Aboriginal groups and individuals pool their resources to achieve a common goal. This challenge was overcome by ANTCO. The company's success proves that combining resources is possible and the outcome has been the improved position of 200 shareholders, including First Nation communities; Métis organizations; Friendship Centres; and status, non-status, and Métis individuals. The company now has more than \$12 million in loan capital. Further, the inclusion of all Aboriginal people in creating ANTCO was a key goal. This barrier was overcome by keeping the prospective shareholders focused on the common goal: a financial institution with full Aboriginal ownership.

The second struggle was finding additional loan capital for ANTCO once it was formed. Williams was instrumental in resolving this, as she accessed funding from the federal government despite no formal program for this purpose. This opened the door for other Aboriginal Capital Corporations nationwide. Subsequently, this led to a challenge to gain federal acceptance of providing funding for a regulated, for-profit financial institution, the ultimate goal for ANTCO.

The third obstacle was gaining the confidence of the Superintendent of Trust Companies (the regulatory body for trust companies in BC). The regulatory body was not interested due to the previous demise of an Aboriginal financial institution in Vancouver. This challenge was overcome by Williams and her team by being persistent and sticking to the Superintendent's strict policies.

A fourth barrier consisted of developing social and economic programs under the guidance of the provincial government at a time when government would not yet recognize the unique requirements of Aboriginal people. Persistence and adherence to policies once again

helped Williams and her team overcome this challenge.

### **Effects of the Initiatives on Surrounding Communities (Geographic or of Interest)**

The initiatives Williams has been involved in have created beneficial, quantitative effects on Aboriginal communities spanning the country. ANTCO has loaned over \$56.6 million (in over 1,100 loans) since 1987. Further, she has helped provide over 84 housing units to Aboriginal families in Kamloops. This affordable housing has had a significant impact on the ability of these families to achieve education and career goals.

### **Nature of the Partnerships and Relationships Formed**

Williams has helped create positive partnerships and relationship with various levels of governments, Aboriginal organizations, communities, businesses, and entrepreneurs. Specifically, she has helped with the transition of a provincial grant program into a business loan fund, extending the reach of those funds for more people to take advantage of them. Further, she negotiated ANTCO to manage the delivery of that loan fund as a primary contractor for the province of British Columbia.

### **Contribution to the Field of Aboriginal Economic Development and Impact on the EDO Profession**

As stated in her nomination package, Williams contributed to Aboriginal economic development and impacted the EDO profession in the following ways:

- [Williams] helped to bring business support services to All Nations Development Corporation. The Business Development Officers on staff have provided literally hundreds of entrepreneurs with advisory services and funding (leverage);

- [She] has influenced federal and provincial governments to appreciate the need for advisory services and access to capital to empower [Aboriginal] people to grow (individual and community business projects);
- [Her] proposals have led to the creation of other business advisory offices in the Kootenay and North-East regions of BC. These independent organizations have assisted dozens of Aboriginal entrepreneurs over the past [five] years; and
- [Williams] has shown a willingness to share lessons she has learned and technical information with other Aboriginal Capital Corporations.

### **LITTLE SHUSWAP INDIAN BAND BUSINESS/COMMUNITY AWARD WINNER**

#### **Profile**

The Little Shuswap Indian Band is located in Central British Columbia, halfway between Vancouver and Calgary. The Band has five reserves totalling 7,747 acres, which are under band and member ownership and are scenic forested areas. These reserves include the Quaaout Indian Reserve, Chum Creek Indian Reserve, Meadow Creek Indian Reserve, Scotch Creek Indian Reserve, and North Bay Indian Reserve.

The area is surrounded by three mountain ranges. They include Adams Hill to the North, Boyssse Mountain to the South-West, and Squilax Mountain to the South-East. The Little Shuswap Band is located between the big Shuswap Lake, which has 1,200 miles of shoreline and Little River, the shortest river in the world; and the Little Shuswap Lake. The area borders on the "world's richest three hundred acres of land" because of the salmon run that occurs every four years.<sup>1</sup>

Felix Arnouse is the Band's Chief and his two Councillors are Tess Tomma and Wes Francois. The Little Shuswap Indian Band was recognized for establishing new partnerships, preserving a strong sustainable community, creating new business ventures, maintaining Aboriginal

<sup>1</sup> Source: Little Shuswap Indian Band's website: <<http://www.littleshuswaplake.com/history.html>>.

culture and values, facilitating Aboriginal economic opportunities, market development and innovation, and the creation of employment. To learn more about the Band, you can order a copy of their promotional DVD by e-mailing <lsibreceptionist@littleshuswaplake.com>.

### **Background Summary of Work Experience or Business Community History**

In addition to the profile of the Band above, The Little Shuswap Indian Band is organized into the following eight main departments: Housing, Education, Fisheries, Forestry, Wellness, Quaaout Resort & Conference Centre, Youth and Family, and Public Works. To expand on a few of these departments, the Wellness department provides community services in health, education, social development and day care. The Department has funding from both Health Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs to operate the following programs:

- Mandatory health programs—public health nursing including immunization and communicable disease control, environmental health services;
- Community health programs—A&D counselling and referral, community education programs, workshops, nutrition for expectant and new mothers, patient travel, health information and referral;
- Education services—early childhood education, liaison and support for school children, funding and support for post-secondary education (e.g., college, university), program development;
- Social development services—social assistance, GFA, employment enhancement programs;
- Counselling and referral; and
- Community projects such as post-secondary education on reserve, workshops, summer day camp programs, annual community events (e.g., Christmas activities), conferences, cultural events.<sup>2</sup>

The Quaaout Lodge's mission is "to meet our guests' expectations by providing comfortable accommodation, quality food, excellent services, and unique cultural experience".<sup>3</sup>

### **Examples of Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives**

As outlined in the nomination package for the Little Shuswap Indian Band, the following is a list of the Band's businesses:

- Quaaout Resort & Conference Centre
- Talking Rock golf course
- Little Shuswap Gas Station and Strip Mall
- Squilax Daycare
- Little Shuswap Electric Company
- Lake Shore Residential and Industrial Park Leases and Taxation

### **Innovative and Ground-breaking Elements of Those Initiatives**

Two innovative measures were required to ensure the success of the Talking Rock golf course. The following excerpt taken from the nomination package describes these creative and successful innovations.

Little Shuswap Indian Band set out on a campaign to raise capital through [the] consolidation of 25 pre-paid lease lot revenues. The task of consolidating 25 leaseholders to each commit a fairly large sum of money into Little Shuswap Indian Band's economic initiative in the political environment of the day was arduous. Also the leaseholders' dynamic within their association made the initiative of acquiring the capital through pre-paid leases for Talking Rock quite innovative for a First Nation community.

The second innovative initiative to raise construction capital came in the form of pre-paid memberships. Year-to-date, 25 out of a total 50 founders'

<sup>2</sup> Source: The Little Shuswap Indian Band's website: <[http://www.littleshuswaplake.com/wellness\\_department.html](http://www.littleshuswaplake.com/wellness_department.html)>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: The quote was taken from the Little Shuswap Indian Band's nomination package.

memberships have been sold at \$25,000 for 20 years. This is another innovative approach which reflects the confidence, integrity and credibility of Little Shuswap Indian Band's Elders, community, management, and Chief and Council.

### **Individual or Business/Community Challenges and How They Were Resolved**

The innovative solutions discussed in the above section were also Little Shuswap Indian Band's main challenges in the Talking Rock golf course initiative. No other challenges were outlined in the nomination package.

### **Effects of the Initiatives on Surrounding Communities (Geographic or of Interest)**

The Little Shuswap Indian Band has had two major impacts on surrounding communities through their various economic development initiatives. These impacts were outlined in the nomination package and are provided below.

- The Little Shuswap Indian Band has been on the forefront of economic development for over a decade. Quaaout Lodge was the first initiative which brought hope ... for [Aboriginal] people far and wide.
- The second form of positive effect [Little Shuswap Indian Band's] initiatives are having comes in the form of bridging the race gap. [Little Shuswap Indian Band's] initiatives have created employment for all types in industry and that means bringing together people to understand each other's culture, traditions and heritage.

### **Nature of the Partnerships and Relationships Formed**

The Little Shuswap Indian Band formed numerous partnerships and relationships in fulfilling its economic development initiatives; however, two

of them were specifically highlighted in the nomination package. Below is the excerpt describing those unique relationships.

Consultation with the community came in many different forms to forward the economic development initiatives of the Little Shuswap Indian Band. A partnership and formal relationship that was created came from the internal workings of Little Shuswap Indian Band Housing Committee, which was made up of a cross section of the community members who had vested interest from a housing perspective. The housing committee had issued a policy to allow band member housing to be built adjacent to the golf course and its fairways. The result was a relationship being created between the community members and economic development directors to consult each other in golf course living accommodations and economic development business issues and matters.

[A] formal relationship outside the community came from post secondary programs that related to the golf industry; thus, partnerships were formed to carry out formal educations in the golf industry. These partnerships included ... [two-] year in-class programs with Olds College, [a one] year distance education [program] with Guelph University, and a plethora of weekly specialty programs from various post secondary institutes.

### **Contribution to the Field of Aboriginal Economic Development and Impact on the EDO Profession**

The Little Shuswap Indian Band has "taken the necessary steps to strengthen their community and realize benefits and offer opportunities for their members."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Source: The quote was taken from the Little Shuswap Indian Band's nomination package.

Furthermore, as stated in the Band's nomination package,

Quaaout Resort Conference Centre is one of many Band businesses of Little Shuswap Indian Band where they demonstrate and provide quality service and facilitate this in a competitive industry. The Conference Centre is uniquely designed to provide their guests with functional venues in settings that beautifully reflect the Native heritage of the region. It is known [as] a perfect place for conferences, seminars, and workshops; and more recently popular for weddings.

**VERNA BILLY-MINNABARRIET  
INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY RECOGNITION  
AWARD WINNER**

**Profile**

Verna Billy-Minnabarriet, B.A., P.B.D., M.A., is the Vice President of Learning Services & Community Partnerships at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). Billy-Minnabarriet was highlighted for her commitment and dedication to promoting entrepreneurship, establishing new partnerships, preserving a strong sustainable community, and the creation of employment. She was nominated by Hopeton A. Loudon. As stated in her nomination package,

[She has] been a stalwart in making mainstream educational institutions work for Aboriginal peoples. We must acknowledge and start to recognize the immense contribution that Aboriginal educators have made and are making to successful economic development. ... [Billy-Minnabarriet's] contributions have been exemplary!

**Background Summary of Work  
Experience or Business/Community  
History**

Notwithstanding Billy-Minnabarriet's extensive and very impressive resume (which could not be included here), a brief snapshot of her work

experience is provided below from her nomination package.

[Billy-Minnabarriet] has always worked in the education field particularly in the area of Aboriginal youth and adult education. Her work has focused on training, program design and development, fund development and advocacy especially as they relate to learning opportunities and skill development for Aboriginal youth and adults. In these regards she has taught, designed, implemented, and administered programs aimed at the advancement of Aboriginal peoples in the social, economic, and administrative environments. She works actively in promoting community, organizational and institutional partnerships that support the economic and social progress of Aboriginal peoples.

**Examples of Aboriginal Economic  
Development Initiatives**

In addition to Billy-Minnabarriet's work experience outlined above, she has been part of a number of economic development initiatives. Some of these initiatives as outlined in her nomination package include the following:

- As the Education Director and Curriculum Design for the training section of Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Interior First Nations, she designed, implemented and trained the Youth Pre-entrepreneurial Training Program;
- She designed and delivered a three day cross-cultural training program for organizations and industry the intent of which was to foster and promote job and entrepreneurial opportunities for Aboriginal youth. This job entailed supporting Aboriginal small business development including individual learning, business and marketing plan development. This training and support was delivered provincially; and
- She delivered a program designed for increasing tourism for the Central Interior First Nations.

As well, her consulting firm, DGLV Associates, provides services in economic development,

GIS, facilitation, cross cultural training and community assessment.

### **Innovative and Ground-breaking Elements of Those Initiatives**

As mentioned in Billy-Minnabarriet's nomination package, her work can be considered ground-breaking because of its "ongoing commitment, dedication, range and the number of individuals and communities that it has and will impact".<sup>5</sup>

### **Individual or Business/Community Challenges and How They Were Resolved**

Billy-Minnabarriet's individual challenges were described in her nomination package as follows:

... [She was a] single parent, Aboriginal woman from a small band in Interior BC raising three children, teaching them good values, working to feed and clothe them, educating them, education herself to a Masters Degree level and dedicating herself to a vocation that is about the betterment of all Aboriginal peoples.

### **Effects of the Initiatives on Surrounding Communities (Geographic or of Interest)**

The following excerpt describes the positive and inspirational effects Billy-Minnabarriet's work has had on her community and Aboriginal people across the country.

... [W]e have increasing numbers of Aboriginal peoples attending post secondary educational institutions. [Billy-Minnabarriet's] contributions in Curricula design to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal students and her work with the numerous bodies involved in improving post secondary education ... have impacted both geographic and 'interest' communities. Her work with NVIT and the

development of its community educational outreach programs has brought post secondary classes to local Aboriginal communities in BC. Her earlier work in training youth and adults in entrepreneurial skill development and her work with Interior First Nations in tourism initiatives has had social and community economic impact on a tremendous number of communities.

### **Nature of the Partnerships and Relationships Formed**

Billy-Minnabarriet has been responsible for, and part of developing, various partnerships and relationships through her work. Below is a description of those relationships as described in her nomination package.

[Billy-Minnabarriet] has been instrumental in the partnership between NVIT and CANDO. The ... impact of this relationship [is key] to both parties and what it means for the advancement of Native [EDOs]. As well in her work with CFDC of Central Interior First Nations she developed many partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and industries in order to support and facilitate job and entrepreneurial opportunities for Aboriginal peoples is yet another example of the above.

### **Contribution to the Field of Aboriginal Economic Development and Impact on the EDO Profession**

Billy-Minnabarriet has been instrumental in the partnership between CANDO and NVIT as noted earlier. She has also been invaluable as the Chair of the CANDO Standing Committee on Education & Research. Further, her contributions outlined in the above sections highlight her commitment and dedication to the economic development of Aboriginal communities and higher education of Aboriginal people.

<sup>5</sup> Source: The quote taken from Verna Billy-Minnabarriet's nomination package.

### Supplement: Verna Billy-Minnabarriet's Interview Response

I am from Two Nations, Nle?kepmux (Thompson — My father's side) and Secwepemc (Shuswap — My mother's side); I was raised on the family ranch called 89 Mile and when of school age moved to Cache Creek with my maternal grandparents. I am a member of the Bonaparte First Nation (St'uxwtews) Cache Creek in the Shuswap territory. My community is a combination of Cache Creek, Ashcroft and Bonaparte. I lived in all three townships and graduated from Ashcroft Secondary.

The Bonaparte Indian Band is a member of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation. The band's two main communities are near Cache Creek and also near Marble Canyon about 20 miles west of Cache Creek. It was created when the government of the Colony of British Columbia established an Indian Reserve system in the 1860s. It is a member band of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. The Bonaparte Indian Band is also called the Stuctwesemc, which means "people of Stuctuws" (also spelled St'uxwtews).

### Projects

Just for clarification my community is in the field of First Nations Education. Most of the projects I have been involved in have been directly or indirectly involved with First Nations/Aboriginal Education.

I am presently the Vice President of Learning Services at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). NVIT is an Aboriginal Public Post Secondary Institute, where programming, instruction and support are based on the medicine wheel. My interest and passion has been First Nations education both as a change agent and as an advocate. I am also very involved in First Nations Educational leadership within the province of British Columbia, and nationally. I chair various provincial and national committees that are in the process of evaluation and identifying the direction of Aboriginal education in our nations. The types of committees I am involved in range from post secondary program development, community economic development, First Nations institutional development and advocacy to community development with the Royal

Canadian Mounted Police in redesigning the Aboriginal Shield Drug Awareness program for grades 3–10 in the public and band sanctioned school systems.

Education designed and delivered by communities and for communities fits my philosophy both in work and in my personal life. I have always been taught that education is the way for our people to advance and become the builders of their own lives and experiences. I have aspired to carry out my direction from my Elders and my community to persevere in my chosen field of education and to acquire the tools to assist me in my work.

I have taken a leadership role in building governing institutions within our Province that is dedicated to advancing Aboriginal Post Secondary Education. At present I am the Chair of The Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) and it was formed at the request of Indigenous controlled Post-Secondary Institutes and Adult Learning Programs to address and further the mutual interests of all Indigenous controlled Learning Centres in British Columbia (BC). The organization receives administrative support from the First Nations Education Steering Committee.

The IAHLA mandate includes the following activities:

- To collect and disseminate relevant information to assist Indigenous adult and higher learning agencies in their provision of education services;
- To undertake research that will benefit Indigenous adult and higher learning agencies throughout BC;
- To facilitate networking and information sharing activities, such as conferences, meetings, and workshops;
- To support collective professional development and training opportunities;
- To undertake other support activities at the direction of Indigenous adult and higher learning agencies; and
- To solicit funding as necessary to undertake the activities listed above.

The first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of IAHLA took place in January 2004. At that time, IAHLA members discussed upcoming initiatives for the Association, which included

efforts to promote the programs being offered in Indigenous institutes throughout the province as well as discussions about the possibilities for collective research and professional development activities.

Some of the initiatives that have taken place with IAHLA are

- Data Collection Project (3 years)
- Aboriginal Forum Post Secondary Education Discussion Paper
- Review of Indian Student Support Program
- First Nations Post Secondary Institutions — Funding and Best Practices Research
- Post Secondary Quality Assurances Practices
- IAHLA Framework Document
- Policy Background Paper

At NVIT the Aboriginal Community Economic Development (ACED) program has been redesigned to reflect today's practices and issues for First Nations communities and is relevant to First Nations communities. My role in this project was to acquire funding and experts to work with me and once the project was complete it was my responsibility to ensure that the program was accepted in the BC Public Post Secondary System so that students who took the program were granted transferable credit that laddered into a degree track. Students must have mobility to move from one institution to another if they chose to. In addition to redesigning the program I also ensured that the program was accredited through CANDO. At this point in time we have been granted an additional seven years accreditation through CANDO. NVIT's ACED program meets the full 16 competencies required by CANDO and enhances those competencies. The ACED program also ladders directly into a Degree program with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

I also chair the CANDO Standing Committee on Education & Research and we are in the process of redesigning the CANDO Certification Process for membership. I would define the steps of organization building through community interest by explaining that in order to build organizations the community members must first agree that an organization needs to exist. For example IAHLA exists because the First Nations/Aboriginal educators and institutions in BC agreed through a collective meeting held that an

organization needs to exist to assist in advocating and advancing the education agenda. The key to maintaining organizations is communication and inclusion. Members must have a say in the organization and they must be included in decisions. This is done through various ways i.e., email, electronic newsletters, regular scheduled meetings, websites and a hard working executive of the board. A key person in making all this happen is a good Executive Director and support staff. Leaders can't do all the work — a good leader learns to delegate and trust those to whom they delegate. A sure way to cause dissention in an organization is to hover and micro manage. This lets the organization's staff know that a leader does not trust themselves or the people working with them. So, be a good leader and let the people you hire do their work and trust that the work will get done and if there is mistakes then back the staff up. A good leader does not blame the mistakes on others but takes responsibility of those mistakes regardless of who made them. That's how you build a strong, healthy organization which fosters loyal, hardworking and dedicated staff.

My future plans are to complete my Doctorial program, continue to build NVIT and the communities, work diligently with First Nations in building capacity as they define it and to work internationally with other developing countries. My dream is to teach in another country at a university, preferably in Africa, Australia or New Zealand.

My advice to other developers and builders would be to keep your vision focused, make achievable goals, work hard and have fun while you're doing it. Life is too short not to enjoy the good times, hard times and learning times. Enjoy.

## **ANDREW A. MANITOWABI GROUP BUSINESS/COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AWARD WINNER**

### **Profile**

The Wikwemikong Development Commission nominated the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group (also known as Andy's) for its role in the following key areas of Aboriginal economic development:

- Promoting entrepreneurship and Aboriginal self-reliance;
- Establishing new partnerships and creating new business ventures;
- Preserving a strong sustainable community;
- Maintaining Aboriginal culture and values;
- Facilitating Aboriginal economic development opportunities;
- Market development and innovation; and
- Creating an employment and community workforce.

Andy's provides a one stop shopping experience in Wikwemikong. As stated in the Group's nomination package,

Mr. Andrew A. Manitowabi is certainly a pillar of determination and persistence for success in the realm of Aboriginal business and economic development. Most importantly, ... he is also a loving father who takes great pride in all his children. He is especially proud of their accomplishments and achievements to expand and further develop opportunities in the service and retail business within Wikwemikong.

Andy's One Stop Shop on Manitoulin Island offers several divisions, including Andy's Freshmart, Andy's Shell Gas Station and Garage, Manitowabi Clothing and Gifts, Andy's True Value Hardware, Coffee Shop, Wiky Wash'N'Dry, F. Manitowabi Contracting, Andy's — An Agent of Royal Bank, and The Source at Andy's. Andy's One Stop Shop's goal is to "provide quality goods and services at competitive prices while providing employment opportunities for community members. All profits stay in the business to allow for growth and more employment opportunities."<sup>6</sup>

### **Background Summary of Work Experience or Business/Community History**

The following excerpt from Andy's nomination package describes the background of the business.

[Andy's] proprietorship includes a grocery store with fresh meat and produce, hardware store, garden store, clothing/general merchandise store, electronics store, gasoline and service station/fuel delivery, coffee/sandwich/ice cream shop/meals to go, video store, laundromat, lottery terminal, banking services and excavating/heavy equipment contracting.

Andy's is a family-owned business which was established in 1966 by Mr. Andrew A. Manitowabi who is a father of nine children. Manitowabi is respectfully known as "Andy" by his patrons and community members. In his early years, Andy envisioned the community of Wikwemikong growing much larger with more people buying vehicles and building new homes.

He forecasted the need for a full service gas station that could also provide home fuel delivery service. He also had a backhoe for hire, to assist with community initiatives that involved housing and road construction in Wikwemikong. He also started a little laundromat with two washers and one dryer. Today, for those who can remember, Andy's efforts to provide services for the community of Wikwemikong started as a micro-business and through the years has grown into a multi-facilitated operation which provides a variety of services and products.

When first establishing his business, Andy once jokingly announced the idea of selling groceries as well, so that he could buy enough food at wholesale prices to feed his very large family. In 1994, [having] retired at the age of 72, he had decided it was time to transfer the entire management of his business to his remaining seven children. A partnership was then created amongst the siblings

<sup>6</sup> Source: Andy's One-Stop Shop website: <<http://andysonestopshop.com/>>.

which is now known as the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group.

Andy still maintains an active role in the day-to-day operations of the business. You will see him now and then in various sections of the business operation to either say "hello" to the customers or to check in with everyone to see how the family and staff are doing. He is inquisitive to new opportunities for development, but will always caution his children about large financing matters to ensure the business can handle any new expenses and/or ventures. He especially enjoys visiting the customers as he strolls through the store as his motto for the family business is to keep their customers happy.

### **Examples of Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives**

The Group's Aboriginal economic development initiatives include their entire business portfolio. As stated in the nomination package,

Wikwemikong has a strong history of being economically inclined within the business trade. [Wikwemikong] is notably proud of Andy and his family for their ongoing commitment and dedication in providing their home community with a variety of service and retail businesses. Andy and his family are truly to be inspired in continuing the tradition of Aboriginal economic initiatives in the business trade.

### **Innovative and Ground-breaking Elements of Those Initiatives**

The most innovative and ground-breaking element of Andy's One Stop Shop is best described by the following statement from their nomination package.

[The Group was developed] through the learning of values from their parents [and] has developed a marketing scheme that encourages local residents to support their local economy to establish sustainable ability and open

doors for new opportunities for other business people. The education and business awareness that they provide to their customer base has proven to be successful with customers coming to Wikwemikong to take advantage of the local service and retail business. The entire family now operating under the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group has been able to secure business partnerships with several brand name companies/distributors. This has resulted in the development of several divisions within the multi-operation of service and retail business....

### **Individual or Business/Community Challenges and How They Were Resolved**

The primary challenge for the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group is believed to have been the start-up process to get the business off the ground in 1966. The barrier was gaining the support and recognition needed from the general public and their community. The following excerpt from their nomination package expands on how this challenge was overcome.

... It has been essential for Andy's to provide education awareness on the importance of shopping locally and to support local business to avoid any economic leakage and the advantages for the community.

Andy's has done a terrific job of making their customers feel number one and that they are valued as the essential component to the success of their family business. Andy's has earned the trust and respect from their patrons by offering Annual Andy's Community Fun Day Event and an Annual Tent Sale and Customer Appreciation Day.

Throughout the family business marketing strategy, Andy's has been able to convince the valued customer of the cost-saving for them as a consumer when taking into consideration the significant travel required to purchase any of their products and/or ser-

vices from other businesses outside the community of Wikwemikong. Andy's also reminds the community through local media about the daily savings when buying from Andy's and that the quality of services and products are comparable and competitive to favour the customer from other business outside the community. The family also distributes a monthly flyer program as part of their advertisement for amazing pricing on everyday needs. They also feature seasonal in-store specials on a wide selection of products.

### **Effects of the Initiatives on Surrounding Communities (Geographically or of Interest)**

There is no doubt the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group has had positive effects, both geographically and of interest, on its community members and other Aboriginal communities across the country. Not only has the Group offered tangible benefits to their community, they have also served as an inspiring role model for all Aboriginal communities. The following excerpt taken from the nomination package expands on these positive effects.

It is believed that the customer service that is presented to each person that walk through the door of Andy's is presented with the natural friendliness and welcoming attitude of Aboriginal hospitality. This has contributed a great deal toward the appreciation of Aboriginal business and services from the non-Native sector.

It is strongly believed that the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group has been instrumental and has played a significant role in placing an increased value and appreciation for Aboriginal tourism and hospitality in Wikwemikong and on Manitoulin Island in general. It is an exceptional gesture that members from neighbouring communities are coming to Wikwemikong to shop at Andy's regardless of the economic disadvantage of being located

on the Eastern end of the Manitoulin Island.

### **Nature of the Partnerships and Relationships Formed**

The Andrew A. Manitowabi Group formed a number of key partnerships and relationships during their start-up and expansion. The following description taken from their nomination package highlights those relationships.

The Andrew A. Manitowabi Group has demonstrated high achievement within the Aboriginal business sector. The family continues to demonstrate strong Aboriginal leadership in their achievements by developing other business partnerships with the retail and service business such as the Freshmart, True Value, Shell Canada, Royal Bank of Canada, and The Source. The family has established/formed many other working relationships that have contributed to the success of their multi-facilitated operation in Wikwemikong to date.

The main aspect for the success of the business has always been the grocery sales as stated on the website for Andy's One Stop Shop [<http://andysonestopshop.com>]. The Manitowabi Grocery operated independently for the initial 40 years of operation. In 2006, the family successfully negotiated a Freshmart franchise with National Grocers/Loblaws and Andy's Freshmart was officially launched on June 21, 2006, which was their 40th Anniversary celebration ... Andy's Freshmart was launched to improve product selection and pricing for their valued customers. The family is now able to access the full line of President's Choice and No Name products through their supplier. The family also follows the recommended pricing structure and flyer program to ensure competitive pricing for the community of Wikwemikong.

A business partnership was pursued with the Source as there is a

growing demand by the people of Wikwemikong and the Manitoulin Island for a local electronics outlet. The Andrew A. Manitowabi Group's Source recently opened electronic product line to meet the demand as a Source dealer since 2006. The family can access a wide range of electronic products at national advertised pricing. The family also offers special products through special orders which only takes a couple of days with no additional shipping costs to their customers. Their customers are constantly on the watch for "Salebrations" throughout the year.

Andy's True Value Hardware opened its doors in the Spring of 1997 bringing the much needed hardware products to a growing community. The customer will find paints, power tools, household items, sporting goods and so much more. The buying power of the True Value cooperative allows the family business to acquire a wide selection of products at competitive pricing. The family is now planning to slowly expand into the supply of building materials and home improvement products which will also create more opportunity and advantage for the community.

### **Contribution to the Field of Aboriginal Economic Development and Impact on the EDO Profession**

Andy's has significantly contributed to the field of Aboriginal economic development by paving the way for its own success and creating an inspiring example in the process. Further, the Group has had an overwhelming impact on the EDO profession by illustrating the opportunities available to EDOs in their communities and entrepreneurs across the country. Andy's One Stop Shop is a simple yet exceptional model of economic development and success. The excerpt

below expands on these contributions and impacts.

The Andrew A. Manitowabi Group is always ready and willing to share their best practices for success and achievement.

[Andy's] has created approximately 50-60 employment opportunities for community members both on a yearly and seasonal basis. The family is definitely a primary community employer within the private sector that is able to offer a variety of employment and training opportunities to [the] band membership. This has been an overall advantage for the EDO for the Wikwemikong Band in the creation of meaningful and sustainable employment.

The support and dedication of the Andrew A. Manitowabi Group certainly has been an inspiration for the Economic Development Branch of Wikwemikong. The family is always willing to provide opportunity for training for community members.

### **CONCLUSION**

As illustrated by the award winners profiled above, Aboriginal economic development is alive and well in Aboriginal communities across the country. CANDO is honoured to have the privilege to profile these exceptional individuals, businesses and communities; and to be able to share their stories with economic professionals across the land. CANDO looks forward to presenting even more inspiring stories and examples of successful Aboriginal economic development through these awards and the new best practices models, to be featured in both the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* and the CANDO website at <[www.edo.ca](http://www.edo.ca)>. Congratulations once again to the 2007 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners, and thank you for your dedication and ambition.