

# 2010 ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

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There have been many philosophical moments of my time working with Cando where I have stopped to ask myself: What does Aboriginal economic development mean? I have been very fortunate that during my employment with Cando I have had the opportunity to engage with and learn from EDO's across Canada about the many aspects of Aboriginal economic development. For some people, economic development is about fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship. This might include encouraging a society to support private enterprise, or it could be reforming a governance structure in such a way that allows business development to thrive. For others, the priority may be about long term strategic planning that sets the parameters of how many businesses should be developed, where they should be located, and what types of businesses best reflect the identity of the community and the vision it is trying to achieve. Let's not forget that economic development can also be about maintaining traditional sustenance economies which are blended with Aboriginal rights movements to protect hunting & fishing rights, preserve our environment, and fight climate change.

Although the path of economic development may vary from one Aboriginal community to another, the goal is always the same. That goal is to improve the wealth, prosperity and quality of life for Aboriginal people and exert the right to do what is best for our own people, in our own unique way. Economic development is about

forming a society that provides for future generations, maintains and preserves our identity as Aboriginal people, and builds communities that we are all proud to live in.

Certainly, Aboriginal economic development is not an easy feat. There are social stigmas, geographical challenges, legislative obstacles and resources required for development that are not readily accessible. It has been a long and tiresome road, but thanks to EDO's who are dedicated to their role and passionate about their communities, we are starting to rebuild our communities and overcome these challenges and obstacles each and every year. It is important for Aboriginal Economic Developers to get the recognition that they deserve for their commitment and dedication to improving the standards of living and prosperity in the communities which they serve.

It is my pleasure and sincere honour that I introduce to you this year's 2010 Economic Development of the Year Award Winners.

**CHIPPEWA INDUSTRIAL  
DEVELOPMENTS LTD.,  
AAMJIWNAANG FIRST NATION  
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR**

**40 Years Into Our Vision**

Chippewa Industrial Developments Ltd. (CIDL) will celebrate their 40th anniversary this year and

is proud to be recognized as the 2010 Economic Developer of the Year by the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers. CIDL is wholly owned by the Aamjiwnaang First Nation which is located directly south of the city of Sarnia, Ontario. The First Nation consists of 1,315 hectares with an on reserve population of just over 970. The total registered membership of the Aamjiwnaang is 1,929. It is the community of Aamjiwnaang that is deserving of this award and CIDL is proud to accept this award on their behalf.

### **It Started with a Vision**

If you ask Tom Maness, General Manager of CIDL, there is no limit to the potential for CIDL. "Forty years ago, there was a vision that was understood and supported throughout our community." This vision ensured that economic development was a pillar equal in importance to every other aspect of First Nation operations. The vision of the Corporation is to create business opportunities and long term employment for band members. This simple, concise statement has driven every development decision that the community has made. Should the community partner? *Only if it creates business opportunities and long term employment.* Should the community invest money? *Only if it creates business opportunities and long term employment.* Political stability and a confidence in CIDL have ensured that development is able to continue towards their vision. There is no finish line for CIDL and as long as there are opportunities to pursue and jobs to create, CIDL will continue to prosper.

### **It Requires a Team**

CIDL has enjoyed success based on a team mentality. No one person is responsible for success; however every individual is accountable to the success of CIDL. This organizational culture has led to a supportive team environment that involves management, staff, Board of Directors, community leadership and the community members themselves. The CIDL team has worked very hard to ensure that their corporate structure is sound and roles and responsibilities among team members are clearly identified. Add a unique element of client support to CIDL

and a unique and supportive environment for development is realized.

In 1991, the first phase of the industrial park was completed. It includes a small business plaza, a gas bar and hosts 17 tenants, some of which are large, multinational companies. Whether a lease is with a community member or a multi-national firm requiring access to international markets, all clients are considered a part of the entire development team in Aamjiwnaang. As a part of the team, their needs are considered to be of the highest priority and solutions to development issues result directly from the interaction of the clients and CIDL.

This unique team approach is best illustrated with the community's recent acquisition of Structural Tech Corporation. This award winning metal fabricator builds parts for Bombardier Transit Cars, trailers for Lincoln Welding and scaffolding for major US and Canadian equipment rental suppliers. The opportunity to purchase this successful company was the direct result of the partner-type relationship that CIDL takes with their tenants. When the time came for the previous owners to sell their business, the right of first refusal was presented to CIDL. This competitive advantage allowed CIDL to purchase the company and is now working on capturing market share in new, innovate markets. Overall, the team concept is working. In addition to creating 300 jobs, and generating approximately \$60 million into the mainstream economy, the First Nation is moving forward with a youth complex and a second phase to the industrial park.

### **It Requires an Understanding of Markets**

CIDL did not, forty years ago, understand the full potential of their community. Today, in 2011, CIDL fully understands what their competitive advantages are. CIDL provides companies the opportunity to locate their business where they are in a strategic geographic location, where they have access to an educated workforce, where they have access to a relatively low cost workforce. Add to this low employee benefit costs, access to a wide array of opportunities and low land costs and CIDL has developed, over time, a number of competitive advantages to offer their clients.

The low turnover of tenants at the industrial park is attributed to the competitive advantages that CIDL offers. By saving money on operations, businesses located in Aamjiwnaang are able to reinvest into modernizing equipment, expanding their market base and in turn increasing the number of jobs available within the community.

### **Don't Wait for the World to Come, Wait for the World to Catch Up**

In the early years of CIDL, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation actively pursued ventures to secure revenues and employment for First Nation membership. The intent may not have been to become leader in the world economy. Forty years later and the word leadership is becoming synonymous with CIDL. CIDL is positioning themselves as leader in the way businesses, communities and the world operates within the world we live. Phase 2 of the industrial developments is a 235 acre Eco park designed to allow corporate development in a green space.

Structural Tech Corp. is also positioning to become a leader into the future. Structural Tech is completing a business plan for an expansion to include the manufacture of racking systems and solar PV modules. This expansion involves growing their current facilities by 10,000 square feet to meet anticipated growth in manufacturing from sales due to solar projects. This has also positioned Structural Tech to assist other First Nations in the development of their solar projects.

Direct sales to the solar industry are not the only area CIDL hopes to develop within the clean energy sector. The second phase of the industrial park will start with the implementation of a MicroFit solar installation to feature the benefits of the Polaris Tilt Tracker design. The new youth centre will also be designed to feature a non-bearing rooftop solar installation. CIDL will be seeking to add additional rooftop solar to the 120,000 square feet of space currently in the industrial park. All of these efforts have the potential for additional future expansion of ground mount solar in the community with the goal of becoming an energy exporting community. Not surprisingly, these efforts would again position CIDL as a leader in yet another sector of the economy.

The CIDL approach has positioned the community for future economic success. In our leadership role we have been able to create sustainable employment for members, provide a long term revenue base for the First Nation, develop expertise in partnership development and expand our understanding of internal business development processes. In our successes have been a lot of lessons learned and CIDL would be pleased to share these experiences with other First Nation communities pursuing their own vision.

### **Encouraging Youth Participation**

CIDL and the Chippewas of Aamjiwnaang First Nation understand that the importance of youth and their contribution to economic success. With a vision that requires patience and persistence, it is important to understand that in most community development situations it will be the youth that must take the next incremental step in development. Today, the community is investing in multi-national corporations generating revenues for the future. Tomorrow, the community wants to ensure that it is the youth that are capable of managing, operating, and growing these businesses. For that reason, the community features youth development as an integral part of achieving their vision.

CIDL and the Aamjiwnaang First Nation support youth development in many ways. Whether CIDL offers cash flow friendly lease rates to youth members or the First Nation offers an apprenticeship program for community members, the community vision for development remains of primary importance. It is the hopes that the youth understand and maintain solid development principles and realize that community economic development is a never ending marathon. With proper training, the youth of the community will be fit enough to carry the development torch for another 40 years.

### **TRIBAL WI-CHI-WAY-WIN CAPITAL CORPORATION ABORIGINAL PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESS AWARD**

#### **Solid Leadership**

Alan Park has been chief executive officer of Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corporation

(TWCC) since 2002. Mr. Park's family roots descend from the Pequis First Nation of Manitoba. Alan holds several academic credentials including a diploma in Business Management from Red River Community College, a diploma in the Management of Community, Economic and Organizational Development from the University of Manitoba and has also completed the Queens Executive Management Program. Prior to appointment as CEO of TWCC, Mr. Park held the position of National Youth Business Advisor for Aboriginal Business Canada, and held a succession of senior management posts connected with Aboriginal Economic Development for more than 24 years. In 2008, Alan Park became an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Selkirk Friendship Centre when I was inducted into the Hall of Honour in the Builder category for leadership, dedication and service to the community.

In 2007, Alan was the key lead negotiator in securing a \$40-million, 10-year call centre service contract with a TSX-traded income fund—Resolve Corporation, now Davis & Henderson in support of a major government contract. This is just one example of how Alan's leadership has translated in a 240% increase in revenue for TWCC, and has grown to be one of Canada's largest Aboriginal Financial Institutions with more than 150 employees in three separate lines of business—all in just 5 years.

### Diversification

TWCC is regarded as a model of diversification among Aboriginal Financial Institutions. In addition to lending to small and medium-sized businesses at First Nations, TWCC has a call centre division and ASKI Financial, a subsidiary that offers employee benefit loans as an affordable alternative to pay day loans. ASKI is now entering into distributorship agreements with AFIs across the country to offer alternatives to pay day loans for all Aboriginal people. It also plans to unveil the first registered education savings fund for Aboriginal people in the near future.

### Challenges

Like all other Aboriginal Financial Institutions, we found ourselves in a situation in 2009 in which Ottawa was giving subsidies to our com-

petitors—banks and credit unions—but not to us. So we went to Federal Court to seek a judicial review. The case is not over yet, but Ottawa has agreed to review the subsidy program and we have accomplished wide support among Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike.

### Aboriginal Based Partnerships

We like to do business with complementary Aboriginal groups, particularly other Aboriginal Financial Institutions. A recent example is an agreement we signed with Tribal Resources Investment Corporation of Prince Rupert, B.C., to act as a distributor of ASKI financial services products. Other such agreements are under negotiation.

### Continued Success

In early 2010, TWCC was selected as one of *MANITOBA BUSINESS Magazine's 50 Fastest Growing Companies*. At the same time, TWCC gained ISO 9001:2008 certification as part of the financial institution's commitment to high management standards and service quality. The dedication and commitment of TWCC to become the financial institution of choice for Aboriginal people is paying off. To date, TWCC has provided \$40 million in loans to small and medium sized business in 45 First Nations communities since its inception. TWCC is a fine example of what Aboriginal people can do with solid leadership, and dedication to a seeing a vision realized.

### Youth: "It's Simple"

Get an education and live by the famous words of Barack Obama—

- "Yes we can"
- "Failing to plan is planning to fail"
- "Success happens when preparation meets opportunity"

### RODNEY W. HESTER INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

Rodney is a member of the Cree Nation of Waskaganish, QC which is located on the shore of Rupert Bay, south of James Bay. Waskaganish was originally established in 1668 as a Hudson

Bay Company trading post and is one of the oldest settlements in Canada. There are approximately 2100 residents in Waskaganish, whom participate in both traditional and commercial economies. Economic activities are focused primarily in arts and handcraft, commerce and services, trapping, construction, transport and outfitters. The territory is home to many businesses, including: cleaning devices, arts and handcraft, bingo, commercial centre, boat factory, gas station, hotel, general store, furniture, hardware store, restaurant, bank services, consultants, taxi, clothing.

Rodney currently holds the position of Business Development Coordinator for the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company. He is held in high esteem by his colleagues who admire him for his perseverance, outstanding work ethic and unfaltering pursuit of higher learning. Rodney Studied at Cambrian College and Laurentian University, obtaining degrees in Business Administration and Native Studies. He is presently pursuing his Professional Masters Degree at Queens University that has an emphasis on policy development, human resource management, governance and law.

### **Champions Business Development with a Focus on Partnerships**

Rodney is recognized for his positive contribution to the Cree Nation of Quebec and his commitment to promoting entrepreneurship, facilitating Aboriginal economic opportunities and new partnerships. Born from his determination to stop economic leakage from the Cree Nation of Quebec, Rodney has been instrumental in the creation of two major partnerships.

The first partnership resulted in the creation of a new Quality Inn and Suites in the city of Val d'Or, which opened for business in March, 2011. This hotel is owned and operated by Cree Regional Economic Enterprise Company and Trahan Holdings of Eeyou Istchee and Val-d'Or. As part of this agreement, CREECO has also gained exclusive rights to the Quality Inn and Suites brand in the Abitibi-Temiscamingue

and Northern Quebec regions. This partnership will bring many benefits to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee through the transfer of hotel management skills and improved business relations with the city of Val d'Or. More importantly, this project will inspire pride in ownership for the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee and contribute to the economic base of the Nation that will benefit all.

The second major partnership agreement resulted in the establishment Eeyou Baril, a new construction supplies distribution company dedicated to supplying hardware, plumbing fixtures, tools and construction materials at wholesale prices for Aboriginal development projects. Eeyou Baril subsequently developed ties in various industries, including institutional markets and mining. The agreement combines the forces of two companies who have pooled their resources and expertise to capitalize and further develop the construction market in Quebec and other regions. This new partnership is poised to respond to the steady growth in housing, infrastructure, mining, hydro-electric and other development projects. Active in northern Quebec for over fifty years, the team has expertise to support such developments and is backed by more than one hundred employees working from multiple locations in Quebec and Ontario. This partnership contributes to the promising future for the economic and social development of Northern Quebec.

### **Strategically Oriented**

Rodney W. Hester was the leader of the strategic five-year action plan for the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company, Air Creebec, Cree Construction & Development Company, Valpiro and Gestation ADC. This strategic plan has since been implemented, and like Rodney, will be instrumental in guiding the path to socio-economic success for all citizens of the Cree Nation of Quebec. Rodney W. Hester is a proud Cree and born leader, there is no doubt that Rodney will help to lead the Cree Nation of Quebec into a brighter and better future for years to come.