

NATIONAL FIRST NATIONS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL RELATIONS STRATEGY



Canadian Council for
**ABORIGINAL
BUSINESS**



About BCAFN

First Nations have an inherent connection to the lands and resources that comprise their traditional territories. Legislation and policy have not yet caught up with the current jurisprudence regarding Aboriginal land title and jurisdiction perpetuating First Nations alienation from the economic resources of their territories. The Federal government has renewed hope for many First Nations and the BCAFN has intervened to strengthen First Nations economic partnerships with both the federal and provincial government.

About CCAB

CCAB is committed to the full participation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada's economy. A national nonprofit, non-partisan association, CCAB offers knowledge, resources, and programs to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal owned companies that foster economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and businesses across Canada.

The research department has been working across Canada for the last 5 years to develop cutting edge insight into the Aboriginal economy in Canada. We have recently finished a survey of over 1,100 Aboriginal entrepreneurs, which is the best data available to date on Indigenous business. We have also done work on Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations, procurement strategy, and the importance of Relationships in ensuring Aboriginal business succeeds.

Why?

The 2016/17 economic climate requires a supportive strategic framework that reflects the current legal and business environment, and actively engages First Nations peoples.

To best support the "how," the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) launched the development of a National First Nations Sustainable Economic Development and Fiscal Relations Strategy. This strategy will lay out the blueprint to meaningful engagement, and create a path to foster stronger and deep relationships between Nations, industry and government. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has provided resources for our organizations to work together to deliver this project in three phases spread over three years.

The existing project will lay out a cross section of community needs and aspirations on economic development. In the second phase, we will develop a sectoral understanding of business capacity, looking at what industries Aboriginal businesses are currently

engaged in, what their opportunities and barriers may be, and what level of the economic development spectrum they are situated in. The final phase will focus on key themes to drive sustainable business growth, while ensuring this development is tied to positive socio-economic outcomes.

How?

With the support of a Blue Ribbon committee, First Nations leaders and subject matter experts, the BCAFN and CCAB will develop key priorities for each of the 3 pillars. Research teams will be assembled to conduct data collection, analysis, and report drafting.

We will conduct original in-person interviews and focus groups to build on CCAB's existing data and to form the basis for the reports.

First Nations community and business leaders, representatives from corporate Canada, government and academia will be invited to participate in roundtables and web based forums to further inform research. These

roundtables will be used as a venue to engage as many stakeholders in the process as possible. Engagement sessions will also be organized to reach out in person to First Nations communities.

The goal will be to generate important information and ensure First Nations peoples, leadership and entrepreneurs are able to shape the direction, findings and results of the research and strategy. These community engagement sessions and roundtables will take advantage telecommunications infrastructure to ensure regular access to remote and fly-in communities.

Goals

Each initiative will have a separate but reinforcing goal. The end result will support First Nations economic development, and ensure that the efforts of government and corporate Canada work towards this goal.

First Nations Communities

- An economic development toolkit laying out a path to sustainable business development;
- An online tool that provides up to date data and analytics, leveling the playing field between communities and business proponents and allowing for communities to take advantage of the opportunities resource development opportunities provide.

Federal and Provincial Governments

- Data driven policy options;
- Neutral and positive forums for exploring progressive solutions to difficult problem.

Corporate Canada

- A business oriented action plan to work towards economic reconciliation;
- Clear deliverables demonstrating the positive contributions corporate Canada is making to improve the lives of First Nations peoples.

1st Pillar COMMUNITY AND GOVERNANCE

The first pillar of the project will gain perspective and insight on the goals, benefits and risks of economic development, from the point of view of First Nations peoples

- Chief and Councils, Elder, Youth and women's perspectives, as well as community members broadly.
- A focus on supporting nation-building through the development of own-source revenue, job creation and local economic opportunities. We need to understand how First Nations people see self-determination in their communities.
- We will work to include regional perspectives and local differences to avoid lumping peoples and communities together

2nd Pillar ABORIGINAL BUSINESS BY SECTOR

The second pillar will focus on Aboriginal business by sector, working to map business capacity and gain insight on the challenges, opportunities and impacts to economic development from the key sectors

- Industry
- Service Sector
- Arts and Culture

3rd Pillar PATHS TO GROWTH

The third pillar aims to better understand key issues that will either support or slow Aboriginal business growth, including

- Procurement
- Human Resources
- Legal Barriers, Opportunities and Governance Structures
- Financial supports and hurdles
- Geography & Location (Remote, on/off reserve)

Sustainable Economic Development & Fiscal Relations Strategy:

The BCAFN and CCAB are hoping to expand this project to ensure the highest impact for First Nations business development. We will develop additional data, processes and tools to support economic reconciliation between First Nations Peoples, government and corporate Canada. These three groups have a diverse set of needs and end goals but all three are necessary partners in creating prosperity in First Nations communities and sustainable growth in the Canadian economy. This project will implement eight unique but interconnected initiatives to provide.

Initiatives

1. Regional Champions
2. Provincial Roundtables
3. Government Engagement
4. Clustering Initiative
5. The Black Books Project
6. Data Smashing Initiative
7. On-line Resource Centre
8. Provincial/Territorial/National Forum(s)

Regional Champions

We will assemble First Nations community and business leaders from each of the AFNs 10 regions who have demonstrated to be economic champions in their province, region, and/or community. These business and community leaders will provide a two-way flow of information, communicating local needs, concerns and opportunities as the project progresses, and disseminating findings and initiatives to regional stakeholders.

Provincial Roundtables

The AFN and CCAB will partner with regional First Nations organizations to hold Provincial Roundtables to connect research with community political and business peoples. This will disseminate findings and refine our work. It will also support community engagement in the project, as well spread best practices in governance, corporate strategies and create consensus around next steps. These regional roundtables will provide an opportunity for First Nations political and business leaders to engage with non-Aboriginal business and government leadership and staff. Our goal is to create a neutral space to discuss project goals, challenges and opportunities. We hope to achieve this by supporting buy-in from key stakeholders, and working with local partners to explain online tools and information gathering technics.

Government Engagement

This initiative will focus on nurturing positive working relationships with First Nations governments and Federal counterparts. We will begin by conducting environmental scans of First Nations and non-First Nations government departments and policies. Identifying areas of common interest and policies that will support the alignment of

direction. Through interviews and focus groups, we will identify areas that both governments identify as concerns, then leverage the substantial data and analytical tools developed for this project to craft possible solutions.

Clustering Initiative

Across Canada there are centers of excellence in First Nations business development that have already emerged, or are emerging, which operate as industry clusters. We will identify these centers of excellence, promoting the idea of collaborating to mutually support growth, then promote them to corporate Canada and other First Nations businesses and communities. Focused initiatives to support existing and emergent First Nations business clusters will be developed, creating policy and funding's options, increasing awareness and promoting best practices. Clusters will be connected from different regions, linking centers of excellence via web based and in-person engagements.

Black Books Toolkit Initiative

Based on the success of the BCAFNs Governance Toolkit we will create 'Black Books,' a series of toolkits to inform sustainable economic development from the perspective of Nation building. This initiative will deliver a concrete, step-by-step review of the key elements necessary to create economies on reserves. The work will be divided into 4 tiers;

1. First Nations Entrepreneurship
2. Community owned Corporations
3. Industry
4. Legal Context

Data Smashing

Solid data delivered in a user-friendly format would have a major impact on First Nations community economic development, improve government policy development and strengthened corporate engagement strategies. This work will deliver detailed and accurate data necessary for First Nations to inform community/Nation planning decisions. To do this, we will collect existing data from a range of government, community and corporate stakeholders, aggregating it into a single meta data-base. We will build on this with new data, including the development of a current and comprehensive First Nations business development list and community skill set readiness analysis.

Online Resource Centre

An Online Resource Centre containing a number of tools will be created to support community business growth. Building on the existing platform developed by the CCAB, the Tools and Financing to Aboriginal Businesses (T-FAB), this web based platform will be used to house a series of new tools created to provide Aboriginal businesses concrete tools to support economic development. The Black Book, as well as its predecessor, the Governance Toolkit will be incorporated into these tools. The information and initiatives arising from the Regional Roundtables, government engagement, and data smashing initiatives will also be leveraged to provide user-friendly tools for delivering comprehensive information and data.

A user-friendly interface will be created and provided, free of charge, to every First Nations community. Allowing them to make informed decisions on project in their areas. This tool will give Canada's First Peoples the opportunity to come to the business table with the information they need to play a constructive role in local projects.

This will directly empower communities, creating a Nation-to-Nation dialogue amongst First Nations leaders, federal and provincial governments, and corporations and businesses in Canada. Moreover, with more robust data, decision makers will possess a strengthened capacity to support economic reconciliation while reducing uncertainty and business liability.

Provincial/Territorial/National Forums

As an important component of the National First Nations Sustainable Economic Development and Fiscal Relations Strategy, forums will be held as a means to bring First Nations, government, and industry leaders together to network, learn, and dialogue over the advancement of sustainable economic development within their territories. We will facilitate or support a provincial/territorial gathering of key leaders and practitioners, to be held in partnership with an existing event, such as CANDO. This will be done twice a year in different areas, ensuring the widest possible engagement of project proponents. Once forums have been conducted in all respective provinces/territories, another goal is to hold a national forum on Sustainable Economic Development, which would be modeled after the provincial/territorial forums, and would provide an opportunity for networking and sharing of best practices.

