

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Okanagan Indigenous Business Leader Chosen as 2022 Lifetime Achievement Recipient

Indigenous Entrepreneur, Robert Louie, recognized for endless contributions to local, provincial, and national corporate boards, advisory councils and task forces in business and politics.

JANUARY 13, 2022 (**KELOWNA, BC**): Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) is pleased to announce business leader, Robert Louie, as the 2022 recipient of the annual Aboriginal Business Lifetime Achievement Award.

Louie, a former practicing lawyer, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the Justice Institute of B.C. in 2014, served as Chief of Westbank First Nation (WFN) for 24 years collectively, championed WFN to independence through self-governance and served as a chairman, director, or board member on over 30 corporate entities during his career. Currently, Louie is a business owner of Indigenous World Winery and Distillery, Kelowna West Manufacturing Home Park, and other business ventures. He continues to sit on six corporate boards.

CCAB's Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to a First Nations, Inuit, or Métis person whose business leadership has made a substantive contribution to the economic and social well-being of Indigenous people.

"Robert Louie exemplifies the entrepreneurial and leadership characteristics at the heart of this award," said CCAB President and CEO, Tabatha Bull. "His entrepreneurial spirit, work leading the Westbank First Nation as Chief, and advocacy for legislative change to effect economic growth through Indigenous land, have earned him a reputation as a role model, mentor, and deserving lifetime achievement recipient."

For decades, as a visionary for progress of Indigenous business, Louie championed social and economic growth and development for Indigenous Peoples. He recognized restrictive rules of the *Indian Act* that suppressed timely business growth on First Nation land and joined other First Nations leaders across Canada to effect change. Louie created the Lands Advisory Board and was a catalyst in the development of the Framework Agreement on First Nations Land Management. He lobbied for legislative change to return power to First Nations over land, natural resources and environment. Through his efforts, the *First Nations Land Management Act* was brought into force in 1999 providing decision-making powers to First Nation communities. He continues to be Chairman of the Lands Advisory Board today.

In his final years as Chief of Westbank First Nation, he led and finalized self-governance for his community in 2005. Since that time, economic growth of Westbank reserve lands increased from 110 businesses on reserve to over 500 today and nearly \$700M in revenue.

"I am honoured, grateful and appreciative to receive the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business Lifetime Achievement Award," said Robert Louie. "To serve, work with and support Indigenous people in

economic and business ventures makes me so proud to be Indigenous. I salute all Indigenous peoples in business."

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented by ESS Support Services, a division of Compass Canada, to Indigenous business leaders who have built full and rich careers. It pays tribute to outstanding Indigenous businesspeople across the country who are well-advanced in their careers and have built a legacy that serves as an example of excellence.

"ESS is proud to sponsor the Aboriginal Business Lifetime Achievement Award; I congratulate Robert Louie for his dedication in improving the social and economic well-being of his community and of Canada's other First Nations communities. He has worked industriously to foster opportunities for growth and development for Indigenous people," said Sanjay Gomes, president, ESS Support Services Worldwide. "Robert, your achievements are a motivation to others and we honour your success."

CCAB is proud to present this award to Robert Louie during the Central Canada Business Forum on February 24, 2022.

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About Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business:

CCAB is committed to the full participation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's economy. As a national, non-partisan association, its mission is to promote, strengthen and enhance a prosperous Indigenous economy through the fostering of business relationships, opportunities, and awareness. CCAB offers knowledge, resources, and programs to its members to cultivate economic opportunities for Indigenous peoples and businesses across Canada. For more information, visit www.ccab.com.

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