

# The Aboriginal BUSINESS REPORT

A CCAB PUBLICATION

Canadian Council for  
**ABORIGINAL**  
BUSINESS



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**Jonathan Kruger,**  
*Director Indigenous Relations, Western Canada*  
[Jonathan.Kruger@sodexo.com](mailto:Jonathan.Kruger@sodexo.com)

Jonathan was elected Chief of the Penticton Indian Band (PIB) for two terms from 2008-2016. He previously served on PIB Council from 2000 - 2008. Jonathan has been widely-recognized for his leadership and business achievements.

He began his leadership on the platform of creating a Comprehensive Community Plan and a Land Use Plan. This CCP became the voice of the community and vision for direction of his leadership.

Early on in his leadership he advocated separating business from politics and was a proponent in the creation of the Penticton Indian Band Economic Development Corporation. He created a business-friendly environment opening PIB and Certificate of Possession (CP) holders up for business opportunities.

He loves being on the land in his territory and believes in the Okanagan Nation Declaration "for the good of all, for all time."



**Réjean Gosselin,**  
*Director Indigenous Relations, Eastern Canada*  
[Rejean.Gosselin@sodexo.com](mailto:Rejean.Gosselin@sodexo.com)

Réjean started working with Sodexo in 1980 as a clerk at a unit in Northern Quebec. One year later he was promoted to Unit Director, and soon after Field Supervisor. In June 1990, he moved to Montreal as a District Manager and was promoted to Director of Operations in 1996.

In September 2016, after more than 35 years working in Operations, Réjean accepted the challenge to take on the role of Director, Indigenous Relations for Eastern Canada. He brings extensive experience working with Indigenous communities in Eastern Canada mainly in Northern Quebec.





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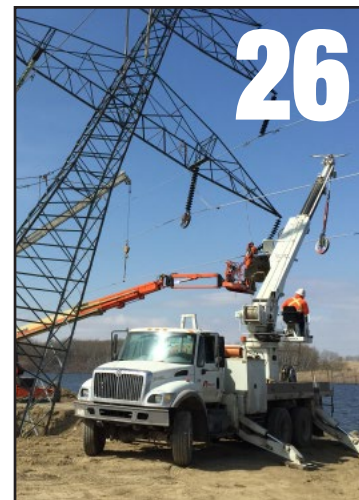
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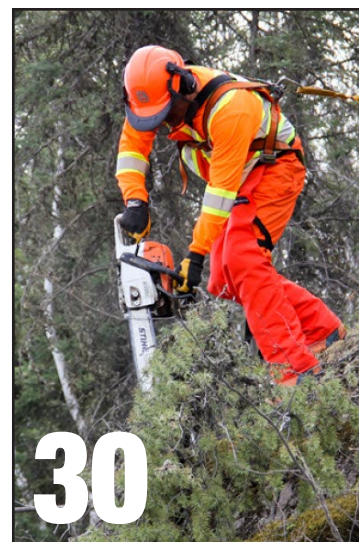
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J.P. GLADU  
PRESIDENT AND CEO

In my role as president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), I am committed to ensuring that CCAB remains a change agent for Indigenous businesses and communities. Our magazine, *The Aboriginal Business Report*, is intended to act both as a meeting place for the national business community and a resource informing both sides of the aisle. I am proud to say we are achieving our goals.

In every issue, we focus on a critical area of development. In this edition, we explore an area of growing interest among Canadians: renewable energy. Our communities are making great strides in this sector, and we applaud their forward-thinking approach at a time when challenges abound.

At CCAB, we believe that business can flourish in tandem with environmental stewardship. We support the role of the caretakers of the land and the importance of their voice. We want to ensure that energy development in this country is done hand-in-hand with our Indigenous people, and that we have a seat at the table. Our goal is to benefit from the economic activity while using our traditional knowledge to mitigate risk.

Join us as we focus on Aboriginal communities embracing a diverse mix of renewable energy initiatives. We look at Kluane First Nation (KFN), which has taken a strategic, multi-pronged approach to become a key player in the Yukon energy grid. For almost 20 years, KFN has been making forays into powering and heating their community using renewable energy – from a biomass heating system to solar panels. They are at the forefront of new technologies and renewable energy.

We also look at NRStor, a company replacing and offsetting the diesel generators used in remote communities. The energy storage provider is spearheading clean energy projects that reduce dependence on fossil fuels and the associated GHG emissions. It set up NRStor Remote Communities and Mines to identify solutions for northern communities.

## AT CCAB, WE BELIEVE THAT BUSINESS CAN FLOURISH IN TANDEM WITH ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP. WE SUPPORT THE ROLE OF THE CARETAKERS OF THE LAND AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR VOICE

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

that deliver on their energy goals while generating a viable, community-directed business model.

Another impressive initiative is the Mesgi'g Ugju's'n wind farm in Quebec. This massive project (Mesgi'g Ugju's'n means 'big wind' in Mi'gmaq) marks a huge step towards Aboriginal nation building in the province's windy Gaspé region. The 150 MW farm is comprised of a network of 47 wind

turbines roughly 40 kilometres north of the Restigouche River. It started producing power last December in the shared \$365-million Gesgapegiag, Gespeg and Listuguj Mi'gmaq project, which promises to bring sustainable prosperity to the communities and their 6,300 residents.

I invite you to learn about renewable energy and our growing national Indigenous business voice in this increasingly important market. The excitement and depth of the stories in this issue speak directly to the enormous diversity that our people utilize in business while honouring tradition, culture and language across Turtle Island.

Chi Miigwetch,



J.P. Gladu  
CCAB President & CEO

## THE EXCITEMENT AND DEPTH OF THE STORIES IN THIS ISSUE SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE ENORMOUS DIVERSITY THAT OUR PEOPLE UTILIZE IN BUSINESS WHILE HONOURING TRADITION, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ACROSS TURTLE ISLAND



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# POWER TO THE PEOPLE

BY ANDREW BROOKS

THE MESGI'G UGJU'S'N WIND FARM MARKS A HUGE STEP TOWARD  
ABORIGINAL NATION BUILDING

Quebec's Gaspé region, or Gespe'gewa'gi in the Mi'gmaq language, is known for its unspoiled wilderness. It's also known for being one of the regions that Canada's Mi'gmaq First Nations call home. A third thing it's known for – its windy climate – might not seem related to the other two, but there is a very strong and timely connection.

Enter the Mesgi'g Ugju's'n (MU) wind farm, a network of 47 wind turbines roughly 40 kilometres north of the Restigouche River where it empties into the Atlantic. Mesgi'g Ugju's'n is Mi'gmaq for "big wind," and the wind farm is putting wind in the sails of the Mi'gmaq communities that shared in the challenge of getting the \$365-million project off the ground.

The 150 MW wind farm started producing power last December and represents a groundbreaking achievement for the Gesgapegiag, Gespeg and Listuguj Mi'gmaq communities and their 6,300 residents.

Together, the communities are 50:50 partners in the MU wind farm with Innergex Renewable Energy Inc. Innergex was selected by the Mi'gmaq to develop, build and manage the wind farm, one of the largest First Nations wind farms in Canada today.

The power generated annually is estimated at around 562,500 MWh, or enough to power about 30,000 households. The electricity production is governed by a fixed-price, 20-year agreement with the power customer, Hydro-Québec.



Stakeholders gather at the December 2016 inauguration of the \$365-million Mesgi'g Ugju's'n wind farm



When the Mi'gmaq first approached development companies about taking on the project, they had a list of must-haves and good-to-haves. "Must-haves included prior work experience with Hydro-Québec and experience building a wind farm in our territory," says Troy Jerome, president and CEO of Sen'ti Environmental and Aboriginal Services, a consulting firm that works with Aboriginal communities on environmental services, governance and energy matters.

Jerome is one of the pivotal figures in bringing the MU wind farm into existence. Up until last December he was the president of the wind farm board. He's also the former executive director of the Mi'gmawei Mawiomí Secretariat (MMS), the tribal council serving the three Gespe'gewa'gi communities. As well, he served as the Nutewistog (speaker) of the MMS, a role in which, among other things, he served as representative of the Mi'gmaq of Gespe'gewa'gi in dealings with the governments of Canada and Quebec.

#### SOLID PARTNERSHIP

The partnership with Innergex was announced on July 20, 2012. "There were a couple of companies that came close, but in the end it was the attitude that Innergex had toward us," Jerome says. "They included us, they shared information on the financial modelling, they weren't afraid to share their previous experience, and they included us as a real partner."

A solid track record of partnership with First Nations was a key differentiator, says Innergex president and CEO Michel Letellier. "Social acceptance is the cornerstone of our development strategy, and we take pride in developing projects in partnership with First Nations and local communities. Each partnership is different and we make sure to listen to our partners' needs and expectations while we develop a project."

Construction began in May 2015 and finished in December 2016. Innergex is receiving a majority of the cash flow in the first years of operation, but the Mi'gmaq will be able to increase their equity stake later, up to 65 per cent.

All told, the wind farm will bring the Mi'gmaq between \$200 and \$230

million in revenue up to 2036, when the power purchase agreement ends, or somewhere around \$10 million a year. "It's a real boost to our economy," Jerome says. "It increases our revenues by about 15 per cent overall for our three communities."

On the same day that the MU project was unveiled, the Quebec government announced a program to help the province's First Nations share in the development and benefits of wind power. But while the program envisioned

a total of some 700 MW of generating capacity, no individual project could be more than 50 MW in scale.

"That 50 MW limit is good for others that don't have so much potential in their territory, but the economies of scale aren't there," Jerome says. "We proposed a nation-to-nation agreement with Quebec, setting aside a certain amount of wind energy for the Mi'gmaq people directly." That agreement increased the limit for Mesgi'g Uguj's'n to 150 MW.

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Working together: The Mesgi'g Ugju's'n wind farm project is a collaborative effort between First Nations groups and Innergex Renewable Energy

This marks a colossal achievement for the Mi'gmaq of Gespe'gewa'gi, who historically have had a hard time getting involved in energy development, despite its prevalence in the region. "It's happening all around us, but we weren't included through the normal process," explains Jerome.

#### LONG-TERM BENEFITS

The added revenue from the MU wind farm is definitely welcome and

needed, but the benefits go beyond that, and they kicked in before construction even got underway. "We knew one of these major construction companies would be building our wind farm, and we told them that when they came to bid on Mesgi'g Ugju's'n, we'd be looking at what they did to hire Mi'gmaq workers on earlier projects," Jerome says.

In response, companies started ramping up the hiring and training of Mi'gmaq workers. When work on Mesgi'g Ugju's'n started (wind energy specialist Borea Construction was chosen), there was a pool of Mi'gmaq workers with experience on exactly this kind of energy project. Over the long term, some eight to 10 positions for technicians and maintenance staff will probably be created. Under the 50:50 partnership agreement, at least half of those will go to the Mi'gmaq.

When Jerome spoke with *The Aboriginal Business Report* in March, the Mi'gmaq communities were looking at how to put the new revenue to work. Fishing is a staple activity in Gespe'gewa'gi, and Jerome sees huge potential there. "Right now the fish are all processed by someone else," he notes. "Our communities could develop a processing plant, and they'd get additional revenues from that. They could also invest in education, because there's a big shortfall between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada in education funding."

Jerome hopes that these steps could reverse the talent drain so many First Nations face. "Down the road, our citizens that get training and then leave to find opportunities elsewhere will come back and find they can have a long-term career here. And that starts the ball rolling on turning around the effects of colonialism. I've always said that we're not building a wind farm, we're building a nation." ■



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# Renewable energy is also sustainable partnerships

For Innergex, prerequisites for the development of every project include the consideration of each community's needs and the participation of the driving forces that shape the region.

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# GAME CHANGER

HOW ONE CANADIAN COMPANY IS ENABLING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO  
HARNESS THEIR OWN CLEAN ENERGY

BY MARK BAGGIO



There are many sources of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming, but a major one remains emissions from the diesel generators used to power remote communities. In Canada, nearly 300 Indigenous communities still rely solely on diesel generation to provide their power – something many Canadians in the south are not aware of.

These same communities are on the front line of global warming. They face significantly shorter periods for their frozen winter roads used to supply them with goods and they are seeing the early melting of coastal ice which they rely on for hunting and winter fishing. They are also witnessing firsthand the significant and disturbing trend of thawing permafrost.

There are ways to mitigate these trends by designing a community-based business model to harness energy innovation. NRStor Inc., an energy storage project developer and owner, is an example of a Canadian company embarking on partnerships with Indigenous groups to do just that.

Founded by former Home Depot Canada CEO Annette Verschuren, whose guiding principle for the company is “profit with purpose,” NRStor’s mission is to lead the development of clean energy projects that reduce dependence on fossil fuels and the associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.



With this in mind, the Toronto-based company is embarking on partnerships with remote and Indigenous communities to develop community-based and community-owned renewable energy and energy storage projects. The goal is to collaborate in designing, building, co-owning, financing and operating energy systems that align with the community's own energy objectives, with the community as a majority owner. The initiative could prove a game changer for some of Canada's most remote and challenged communities.

#### IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS

Towards this effort, NRStor set up NRStor Remote Communities and Mines, which identifies solutions that deliver on a community's energy goals and generate an economic, community-directed business model for them.

*Continued on pg. 16*

#### RECONCILIATION

NRStor is building its clean energy business at a time when Canada is going through a process of reconciliation. The company sees its own partnership efforts with Indigenous communities as a helpful step in reconciling the broader relationship between Indigenous communities and the business world.

It all starts with an open and honest dialogue. To foster this conversation, NRStor team members partnered with Indigenous leader Karen Restoule to co-found the "Bold Realities" panel series. The series brings together Indigenous leaders and the private sector to explore new pathways to partnership.

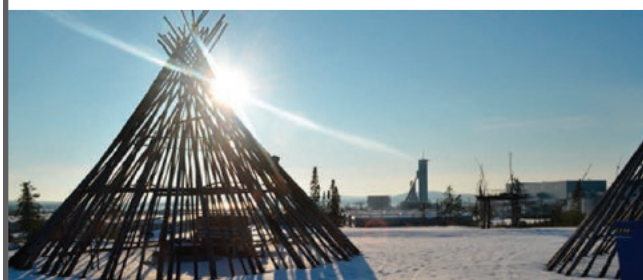
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**NRStor is enabling remote Indigenous communities in Canada to move away from diesel power**

NRStor also partners with economic development organizations and Indigenous businesses. The company is not a vendor, but rather a technology agnostic project developer, financier and operator.

Building renewable energy and energy storage projects can be quite complex. These projects have to deliver significant reductions in diesel usage and GHG emissions while stabilizing or lowering power rates. They also have to provide a reasonable rate of return to the community and private sector investors, and balance intricate relationships with governments, utilities and the financial sector – not an easy task.

The Hamlet of Arviat in Nunavut is one example of a community determined to reduce its dependence on diesel fuel and secure its own clean energy future. It is partnering with NRStor to design and deploy a hybrid renewable energy and energy storage project to bring clean, sustainable energy to its community as well as long-term economic development.

NRStor Remote Communities and Mines works with community and economic development partners to rethink energy provision within the communities and at resource developments on traditional lands. It invests in the projects and assists in attracting government investment, representing a community's equity where needed.

The company has a stable financial base, strengthened by its recent investment announcement of more than \$200 million from the LiUNA pension fund towards NRStor's clean energy infrastructure projects.

Moving forward, NRStor believes clean energy projects will provide a significant source of ongoing revenue to Indigenous communities as well as multi-faceted benefits. NRStor is committed to working with Indigenous partners to create these innovative and reliable systems, resulting in cleaner energy, reduced emissions and long-term economic development opportunities. ■

*Mark Baggio is vice president, Remote Communities and Mines, NRStor Inc.*



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# AN ENERGY INNOVATOR

BY KELLY PARKER

KLUANE FIRST NATION TAKES A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH AS IT SEEKS TO BECOME AN ACTIVE PLAYER IN THE YUKON ENERGY GRID

For almost 20 years, Kluane First Nation (KFN) in the Yukon has been making forays into powering and heating its community using renewable energy sources. That effort began in the late '90s as a simple strategy to offset the costs of the diesel generation commonly deployed in the North.

Since then, it has become part of a more far-reaching, multi-pronged game plan to turn the community into an active player in the region's commercial energy grid.

It's fair to say that Kluane First Nation has led the Yukon (and perhaps the North) in its energy approach. It first installed a district heating system – a biomass heating system consisting of a 700 BTU boiler – back in 1998, following a forest fire that left behind a large supply of fuel. This was the first renewable energy system installed in the Yukon. The

First Nation community has since continued to expand on that first system. An additional four cord boilers were installed, as well as energy-efficient stoves in every home in the community, bringing fuel costs down further and creating local jobs.

In 2011 and 2012, Kluane became the first Aboriginal community in the territory to install solar panels on a community industrial shop, which produces roughly 3.7 kW of power. "We started generating enough power with those solar panels during the summer months that revenue was actually coming back," explains Colin Asselstine, general manager of the Kluane Community Development Corporation.

"That helped push the Yukon government to look at their new micro energy generation policy that is now in effect, which applies to projects under 40 kW. Then KFN installed an additional 43 kW of solar on three additional community buildings, bringing our total

solar [power] in the community up to about 47 kW on four buildings."

Asselstine says that the return on investment has not yet been calculated, partly because installation was based mainly on need. He expects that by May enough data will be available to determine the rate of return and how the community should expand their solar operation in the future. The information will also be made available to other communities to use as a baseline to apply to their own circumstances in assessing whether it would be advantageous to consider these technologies.

## WIND POWER

Kluane First Nation is also in the process of developing a wind turbine project. As of this writing, it was working on securing the last round of financing, with \$1 million from the Yukon government already secured, and an additional contribution still to be confirmed. "Our goal is to have



that project online in time for winter," says Asselstine.

That project is 300 kW – three turbines located between the communities of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. Budgeted at \$2.9 million, it will offset roughly one-third of the diesel those communities use and could bring in a revenue stream of \$100,000 per year to the community. This will help make it more independent and shape it as an active participant in the region's important power industry. "The big picture as to why we're doing this is self-sufficiency and independence, but there's also the goal of being a major player in the power industry in our area – we want to be that power provider," says Asselstine. "To that end, we're developing a power purchase agreement with ATCO Electric (the regulated utility) that will give us the ability to sell our larger-scale power project energy back to ATCO to be sold into the community grid."

Integrating the two power systems is an ambitious goal, and not without its challenges. "It is a small, isolated grid there. It's not connected to the bigger Yukon grid, and the Yukon grid isn't connected to the North American grid," explains Jay Massie, a manager at ATCO Electric Yukon. "It's just a small power system, so... we have to make sure that it's able to communicate and coordinate with our existing power plant so there is no interruption in service or effect on power quality."

"The biggest challenge is probably the remote grid component and working with the utilities to make sure that they're comfortable with this technology," adds Shane Andre, director of the Yukon government's Energy Solution Centre. "They're ultimately responsible for ensuring that the grid is both stable and reliable, and it's a pretty crucial piece of infrastructure when you consider how cold it can be in the Yukon and how important electricity is to most residents. They have concerns around those factors, and we're working with them to make sure that whatever is installed will not adversely affect the stability of that grid."

Kluane First Nation is not sitting still while they do that. The Aboriginal community is also looking at the feasibility of geothermal and micro hydro options – in the case of the latter a hydroelectric station producing 5 to 100 kW of power. The ultimate goal, says Asselstine, is for the Aboriginal community to be fully reliant on renewable energy. "The idea is to eventually have KFN and the community of Destruction Bay

and Burwash Landing on 100 per cent renewable, or at least as close to that as possible," he says. "Deploying just one form of renewable energy will not work, and that's part of the reason we're looking at all of these different systems. Eventually we're going to have to come up with a multi-tiered system encompassing several renewables combined in a fashion that complement one another in order to achieve that goal." ■

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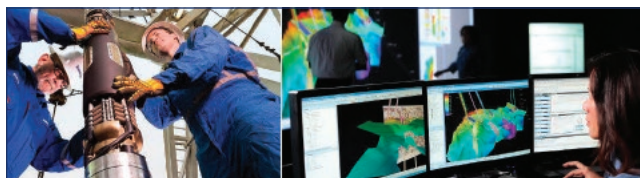
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In a complex, rapidly changing environment, Canadian Aboriginal organizations with strong governance functions are those best positioned to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities for social and financial prosperity available in today's social and political climate.

Aboriginal business leaders balance maintaining traditional ways of life while adapting to the growing socio-economic complexities of their communities. They operate in a complex financial ecosystem that is difficult to navigate – it includes a number of potential players such as chiefs, community leaders, tribal councils, the Federal and provincial/territorial governments, Aboriginal Financial Institutions, banks, energy, mining and engineering and other non-Aboriginal companies, and Federal Crown Corporations and non-government organizations.

For this reason, establishing a sound governance function is critical for Aboriginal organizations looking to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the changing social and political landscape, such as continued self-governance, increased recognition and funding of Métis and non-status Indians, and a major federal government focus on the entire Aboriginal socio-economic environment.

Strong governance reduces the overall risk of an organization to potential partners, lending institutions and granting organizations, giving improved access to grants, low- or no-interest capital and, at times, more desirable tax rates.

Aboriginal business leaders that are able to establish this foundation for their organization are better able to access substantial government grants and more capital at more desirable interest rates. Depending on the project and environment, current Aboriginal commercial building projects can receive grants for 80 per cent of the development soft costs, and enjoy site infrastructure funding and preparation up to 67 per cent of the total cost. Building infrastructure will be supported 33 per cent by grant funding, reducing the capital required to a 10 per cent equity investment on behalf of the recipient.


Establishing a sound governance framework is multi-faceted. Leaders of Aboriginal organizations must consider effective financial processes and controls, comprehensive, consistent and accurate financial reporting, and appropriate management/oversight of the organization's management. Ultimately, effective governance provides assurance that the organization is being managed efficiently, decisions align to the organization's mandate, and stakeholder needs are being addressed.

With so much funding available, Aboriginal organizations can no longer afford not to focus on sound governance.

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Ontario Dokis First Nation is a partner on the Okikendawt hydro project, seen here under construction

# TURNING ON THE SWITCH

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY EMBRACE COLLABORATIVE  
CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS AND THE ECONOMIC BOOST THEY DELIVER

BY CHRIS HENDERSON

Canada is on the cusp of a clean energy revolution. Provinces and territories country-wide have been turning on the switch to renewable energy from clean and sustainable hydro, solar and wind resources on the traditional territory of Indigenous communities.

Asserting Indigenous rights and treaties, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have increasingly become partners in clean energy projects. These projects and enterprises are poised to become a major economic development driver for Canada's First Peoples. They represent a true reflection of 'walking the talk' of reconciliation.

Indigenous participation in the clean energy economy is powerful in several respects. Firstly, renewable energy and other more sustainable forms of energy represent the power of the

land, using Mother Nature's gifts in an environmentally respectful way. Secondly, clean energy "fits" with Indigenous culture and traditions. Thirdly, since most projects are developed through partnerships between Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs, non-Indigenous firms and business people, clean energy represents a collaborative approach to business firmly rooted in commercial principles.

The numbers are adding up. There are now over 150 clean energy projects of medium to large scale (i.e., one megawatt and larger) in operation across Canada – mostly hydropower, but also wind, solar, biomass and geothermal installations. That doesn't include hundreds of smaller scale community-sized projects. In B.C. and Ontario alone, over 50 per cent of First Nations are partners in clean energy projects. Total capex investment in these Indigenous clean energy projects already exceeds \$30 billion,

with Indigenous equity ownership averaging between 20 to 30 per cent of projects. That's a huge economic driver for Canada's economy.

Indigenous participation in clean energy has been a boon for clean energy companies, utilities, clean-tech firms and the financial sector. Simply put, without Indigenous consent and the value of Indigenous economic participation in terms of investment and employment, the majority of these projects would not have been implemented. Three types of Indigenous clean energy ventures and enterprises have emerged: limited partnerships with private and utility partners; multiple partner projects, often including several Indigenous communities; and 100 per cent Indigenous-owned projects.

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Dokis First Nation on the French River south of Sudbury is one example



of Indigenous participation in the clean energy sector. The First Nation partnered with Hydromega services to develop a \$64-million small hydro project through a limited partnership structure. In Quebec, three Mi'gmaq communities in Gaspé collaborated to implement a large 150 MW wind farm in the region with Innergex. And in Northwestern Ontario, the Rainy River First Nation fully owns a 30 MW solar array that cost more than \$170 million to build.

These projects required leadership – Indigenous and private sector leadership. First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders include people like Chiefs Denise Restoule and Gerry Duquette of the Dokis First Nation, Terry-Lynn Morrison of the Mi'gmaq Nation, and Chief Jim Leonard of the Rainy River Nation. The developments also required business partnerships from companies in the domains of energy, infrastructure, construction, engineering and finance. Indeed, the progressive Indigenous partnerships that have been forged by clean energy sector companies are a testament to their social responsibility and business acumen.

However, the story doesn't end there. More Indigenous participation in renewable energy can be expected in the years ahead as provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan also introduce clean energy innovations. Of crucial importance, the business sector can expect a major drive among remote Indigenous communities to reduce diesel energy reliance through smart micro-grids that tap into the power of renewable energy and energy storage.

Yet the story is even more positive. Renewable energy is just the first of four quadrants driving Canada's clean energy future. There are huge untapped opportunities in energy efficiency and conservation, especially for housing and community facilities, and in clean energy infrastructure like transmission and clean energy systems like district energy. Indigenous communities are now moving into these areas of energy development with private sector partners.

Lumos Energy, as a clean energy advisor to Indigenous communities,

is at the front of this parade. Last year the company launched the Indigenous Clean Energy 20/20 Catalysts Program, the country's most comprehensive Indigenous clean energy capacity building and community readiness initiative. Recently, at the Assembly of First Nations Energy Forum in Ottawa, it launched the Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE) Network, a digital platform to connect Indigenous communities with companies, governments, financial companies and technology firms to take clean energy to the next level in Canada.

Indigenous participation in Canada's clean energy economy is economically powerful, ecologically responsible, culturally respectful, technologically advanced and community beneficial. It is a fantastic economic and sustainable development story. For Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs, and private sector firms, it is time to turn on the clean energy switch. ■

*Chris Henderson is president of Lumos Energy, lead mentor of the 20/20 Catalysts Program and author of the book Aboriginal Power.*



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ALLTECK'S COOPERATIVE APPROACH HELPS  
INDIGENOUS GROUPS BECOME ACTIVE  
PLAYERS IN THE COUNTRY'S ENERGY SECTOR

# ENGAGING ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

BY MATTHEW BRADFORD

For the team at Allteck, partnering with First Nations communities isn't just the right thing to do, it makes good business sense. After all, the power line contractor has numerous operations in remote regions, so there are significant and obvious advantages to investing in First Nations tradespeople and businesses. Similarly, there are benefits to the communities themselves – communities once left on the sidelines of the country's booming energy sector.

"We're always working on First Nations land, so it makes sense that the First Nations workers and business owners there are involved in the industry," explains Dean Montgomery, Allteck's Aboriginal Advancement corporate strategy advisor. "These community members have been on the outside of the electric power sector looking in... Now they're finally seeing some meaningful benefits to getting involved with the utility industry through a number of project owners, and that benefits everyone."



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For Allteck president Robin Lucas, developing and fostering First Nations initiatives is a critical part of his work. As he explains: "I'm from a small town in northern B.C. and I raised my children in Williams Lake and have always been involved with youth activities. First Nations have always been an important part of our community and always will be. They are my friends, my business partners, and they are critical for the future of Canada."

#### ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Allteck, a Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) member with the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), has been engaging First Nations communities since it was first founded in 1982. In 2013, however, its focus on Aboriginal skills training and business growth became sharper with the formation of its Aboriginal Advancement department. Initially established to help train power line technicians among Indigenous communities, the department has broadened the scope of its mission significantly since then.

"A power line technician is a finite position, so we wanted to use the department to find new ways to work with communities," recalls Montgomery, who helped set up the department. "The first thing we did was figure out what those First Nations communities needed. That took a while, because each community has different needs and [no two] are ever the same."

Next came a number of training and entrepreneurial initiatives. The first was Allteck's partnership with Right to Play (Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth, or PLAY), a program that provides education, leadership training and employment support to First Nations youth. Originally focusing on Ontario, Allteck has since joined several corporate sponsors to extend Right to Play services to more than 35 communities in B.C. and Alberta.

Championing programs like Right to Play is just one part of Allteck's First Nations engagement strategy. The company has also brought First Nations workers and contracting firms into the fold through a number of entrepreneurial ventures, and is helping communities develop their own



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## COLLABORATION

businesses. "If we have a project going on and there's a need for an ancillary contractor or business to help us, then we'll help those nearby First Nations communities build their own businesses and skills to provide that subcontractor support," explains Montgomery. "It could be related to archaeology, road building or utility services, but we'll look for those partnerships and also do revenue sharing."



Allteck regularly trains and employs Aboriginal workers to install and maintain electrical power lines in remote regions

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Equally important for Allteck has been a growing focus on renewable energy projects. In the fall of 2016, for instance, the company collaborated with members of B.C.'s Upper Nicola Band and Westbank First Nation to construct wind farms within their traditional territories and develop the supporting infrastructure. As well, the company signed memorandums of understanding with more than 25 First Nations communities that cover a range of educational, business growth and energy-development goals. These collaborations will play a crucial role in helping Allteck build its workforce and complete projects that benefit both the company and its Aboriginal partners. It is also working with several post-secondary institutions to train the next generation of energy professionals.

Down the road, Allteck is collaborating with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Manitoba to implement tele-medicine in remote communities. With Derksen Mechanical Services, it is actively supporting Live Different, an organization that engages First Nations high-school students through high-impact presentations. Most recently, it conducted an ice road tour among 13 First Nations communities in Northern Manitoba.

For their part, Aboriginal leaders are quick to praise Allteck's comprehensive approach to Indigenous collaboration. "I have seen the relationships and benefits that Allteck is providing to Indigenous communities, which include a very strong focus on social programs like Right to Play, a commitment to working with community members to help them develop the skills and training needed in the [electric energy] sector, and [its work with] the post-secondary and apprenticeship programs," says Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson.

At the same time, Grand Chief North Wilson emphasizes the need for Indigenous groups to be proactive in the country's energy sector and to take their own steps to develop a supportive business infrastructure. "First Nations must continue to pursue business partners in the electric power sector, as well as create new business ventures to supplement ancillary subcontracting opportunities," she stresses.

Montgomery couldn't agree more. "It's not just about training people to be in the power industry, it's everything around that," he says. "First Nations people are the fastest growing demographic in Canada, and they need to continue becoming self-reliant and part of the [energy] industry. For us, it's about doing whatever we can to help reach that goal." ■



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**S**askPower, the principal electrical utility in Saskatchewan, has a long history of working closely with Aboriginal communities in the province. As a CCAB PAR company, it has put in place numerous programs that engage Indigenous suppliers, which have resulted in some impressive and mutually beneficial business relationships.

People from First Nations and Métis communities help build and maintain the plants that produce power and the lines that deliver electricity to homes throughout Saskatchewan. They count

among the workers inspecting and maintaining the power poles, controlling forest overgrowth around power lines, and building ice roads. In many cases, they work in remote parts of the province, often in the very communities where they live.

SaskPower's goal is to have 2.5 per cent of its Saskatchewan spending procured from qualified Aboriginal businesses. Based on the most recent numbers, it is well on its way. In fact, its target will likely be exceeded in 2016-17, with a total spend of 8.2 per cent, or \$46.7 million (as of Q3 2016-17). In 2016, through suppliers,

partnerships and joint ventures, SaskPower invested over \$56 million in business partnerships and contracts with Aboriginal communities and businesses. This is up from \$32 million in 2015 and \$30 million in 2014.

## IN THE LEAD

SaskPower was the first company in the Saskatchewan Crown sector to establish a dedicated Aboriginal Procurement Policy. The aim was to make Indigenous businesses and workers part of its daily operation by identifying prospective collaborations and engaging Aboriginal groups and project leaders. A dedicated Aboriginal procurement coordinator is on staff to advance these objectives.

The biggest benefit to Aboriginal groups is the jobs that come with SaskPower contracts. Companies are able to offer well-paying work to their employees, as well as training and skills development. A recent example is the expansion of the ash lagoon at Poplar River Power Station near Coronach, with 42 per cent Aboriginal participation. Kitsaki Management companies Kitsaki Projects, Northern Resource Trucking and Athabasca Catering teamed up to provide labour, fuel trucks, and camp and catering services for the project.

The Island Falls Hydroelectric Station, located near the community of Sandy



Indigenous workers are regularly employed by SaskPower, in this case to trim and remove trees in rough terrain in preparation for power lines



Bay on the Churchill River, is another project with strong Aboriginal involvement. The station is undergoing structural improvements to extend its life, and, using its Aboriginal procurement process, SaskPower included the local community before the project began. As a result, between 40 and 60 per cent of people working on the project last summer were from Sandy Bay. Extra materials from the construction were then used to improve public facilities in the community.

Yet another example is the B1S project aimed at trimming/removing trees on a power line between Fond du Lac and Uranium City – a total of 190 structures stretching over 58 kilometres in tough terrain, accessible by helicopter only. More than 100 workers from several northern communities will be employed over the course of this project, and most of the money spent will stay in the North. Wages will go directly to Northerners and all fuel purchases to a local vendor in Stony Rapids. The subcontracted helicopter company is based in La Ronge, and SaskPower also purchased the required cutting equipment in the North.

As the saying goes, a little bit of effort goes a long way. With its Aboriginal Procurement Policy, SaskPower shows how a dedicated strategy can strengthen collaboration with Aboriginal businesses – to the benefit of all parties involved. ■



The expansion of the ash lagoon at Poplar River Power Station was conducted with 42 per cent Aboriginal participation



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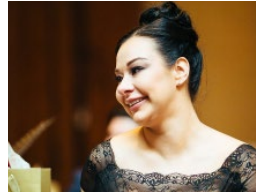
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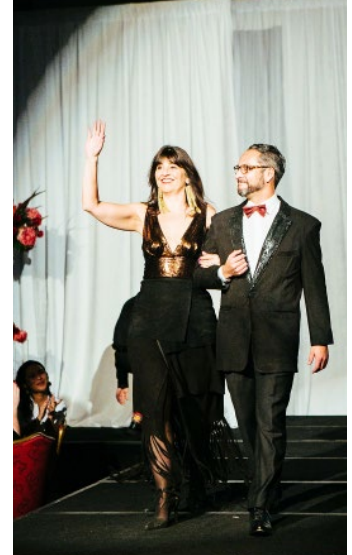


(ABOVE) A lively introduction to the night by Troy Sexton from STOMP and BluePrintForLife



(RIGHT) CCAB past award recipient and designer Angela DeMontigny and J.P. Gladu, President and CEO, CCAB

(LEFT) Isabell Ringenoldus of TAWS Security, 2017 National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award Recipient



On January 31, 2017, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) celebrated and honoured the achievements of the 2017 Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame Award recipients. Respected Métis leader Dr. Herbert Belcourt, CM, LLD (Honorary), was presented with the Aboriginal Lifetime Achievement Award, and Isabell Ringenoldus of TAWS Security received the National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award.

The evening began with an opening performance from Troy Sexton, cast member of the stage show STOMP and senior facilitator with BluePrintForLife. Adding to the excitement, guests enjoyed an exclusive fashion show by Angela DeMontigny, a past CCAB award recipient. Angela was awarded a CCAB fashion design internship in 1993 and has since developed successful custom couture collections worn by celebrities, musicians and other high-profile clients across North America.

CCAB would like to recognize and thank ESS, the founder and exclusive sponsor of the Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame.



J.P. Gladu, President and CEO, CCAB; Dr. Herbert Belcourt; Lesley Belcourt; Isabell Ringenoldus; Dave Chizen; Michael Hachey, President, ESS North America; David Cabral, ESS North America

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# ABORIGINAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: GOVERNMENT RELATIONS 101

## PANEL AND LIVE WEBINAR – DELOITTE, TORONTO

On February 28, 2017, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), in partnership with Deloitte, presented a discussion on government relations strategies – a critical part of business in every sector of the Canadian economy. Panelists for the event included Bliss Baker (Partner, Maple Leaf Strategies), the Honourable Greg Rickford P.C., B.S.N., M.B.A., LL.B., B.C.L.; Leanne Hall (Partner and National Indigenous Services Leader, Deloitte), Nicole Verkindt (President, OMX), and Sean Willy (Vice President, Des Nedhe Development & Creative Fire).

In a CCAB first, the event was live streamed to members and non-members as a webinar via our Tools and Financing for Aboriginal Business program (TFAB). Participants were able to participate live as our expert panelists explored the state of government relations, defined effective strategies and tactics, shared their professional experiences, and reflected upon the challenges facing Aboriginal businesses engaging with governments and agencies across Canada.



Panelists, Leanne Hall (Partner and National Indigenous Services Leader, Deloitte), Nicole Verkindt (President, Offset Market Exchange, OMX), Bliss Baker (Partner, Maple Leaf Strategies), Sean Willy (Vice President, Des Nedhe Developments & Creative Fire) and the Honourable Greg Rickford P.C., B.S.N., M.B.A., LL.B., B.C.L.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## GALAS, LUNCHEONS & HOT TOPIC SERIES

### COME TO ONE OR JOIN US FOR BOTH

Due to the overwhelming success of our 2016 AED Conference in Banff, Alberta, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) will be hosting its 3rd Annual Aboriginal Economic Development Conference (AEDC) on May 11, 2017 in Calgary. This year, the AED Conference will take place alongside our Calgary Gala, where our Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Award will be handed out.

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### 3RD ANNUAL ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

May 11, 2017

Calgary Telus Convention Centre  
Calgary, AB

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) will be holding its 3rd Annual Aboriginal Economic Development Conference (AEDC) this year, highlighting innovation in the Indigenous economy. AEDCs work in a competitive environment, with constantly moving targets and changing expectations. Companies are continually innovating to gain market share, develop and apply new technologies, and improve operations and processes. These innovations take place every day across the country, in big and small ways. From the construction of sophisticated energy and internet infrastructure, to new ways of engaging cultural tradition in business operations, Aboriginal AEDCs are innovating to deliver a better future to their communities and to Canada. Keynote speakers include Jim Balsillie, Chair of the Council of Canadian Innovators, Former Chair and Co-CEO of RIM; and the Honourable Jim Carr, Canada's Minister of Natural Resources.



To register for this event, please visit [www.ccab.com/events](http://www.ccab.com/events).

AEDC Lead Sponsor:



AEDC Afternoon Lead Sponsor:



AEDC Lunch Lead Sponsor:



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## ANNUAL CALGARY GALA

May 11, 2017  
Sheraton Suites Calgary Eau Claire  
Calgary, AB

The Annual Calgary Gala will highlight and affirm the substantial value Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations bring to Aboriginal communities by way of employment, business development and revenue generation. This exciting evening celebrates success in the Aboriginal business community and provides a space where guests can build relationships with new clients and decision-makers from a strong network of successful businesses across Canada. The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) is pleased to present Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation (SNGRDC) as the recipient of the 2017 AEDC Award. The Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation Award is founded and exclusively sponsored by Sodexo.



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Congratulations to the Six Nations of the Grand River Economic Development Corporation on your AEDC Award.



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### CONTACT INFORMATION:

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**WEBSITE:** [www.cambiumaboriginal.com](http://www.cambiumaboriginal.com)  
**TOLL FREE:** 844-855-8523

## HALIFAX HOT TOPIC SERIES

Aboriginal Tourism  
June 28, 2017  
Halifax Convention Centre  
Halifax, NS

Visitors from all over the world are learning about the diversity and depth of Canada's Aboriginal peoples through immersive and transformative experiences as Indigenous communities and companies market unique tourism opportunities. From eco-tourism to art galleries, fishing lodges to boutique hotels, these ventures showcase the best of traditional and modern expressions of Aboriginal culture. Join our expert panel as we explore the exciting ideas and visions promoting cultural awareness and reshaping the Aboriginal economy.

Additional speakers to be announced.

### PANELISTS



Keith Henry, President and CEO,  
Aboriginal Tourism Association  
of Canada



Robert Bernard, Executive  
Chair, Aboriginal Tourism  
Association of Canada

For more information or to register for these events visit: [www.ccab.com/events](http://www.ccab.com/events).

# 15TH ANNUAL VANCOUVER GALA

September 28, 2017  
Fairmont Waterfront  
Vancouver, BC

The 15th Annual Vancouver Gala will celebrate and honour the recipient of the Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations, as well as CCAB Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) certified and committed companies. In 2016, the recipient for the Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations was Senator Murray Sinclair. The 2017 nomination deadline is June 29, 2017.

Lead Sponsor:



## 2017 VANCOUVER PAR LUNCHEON

September 28, 2017  
Fairmont Waterfront  
Vancouver, BC

The 2017 Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Luncheon in Vancouver will bring together Canadian companies that are committed to promoting and developing partnerships with, and investing in, Aboriginal businesses and communities. The PAR Luncheon features two keynote speakers discussing the benefits of investing and partnering with Aboriginal businesses and communities to build capacity, and expanding on their experiences from development to delivery.



## THUNDER BAY HOT TOPIC SERIES

Leveraging Business Strengths

October 12, 2017  
Valhalla Inn Hotel  
Thunder Bay, ON

This Hot Topic session will focus on partnerships between Canadian companies and Aboriginal communities to launch businesses in urban and rural markets. The discussion will explore issues such as the creation and alignment of shared goals, team building and management, and resource maximization.

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For more information or to register for these events visit: [www.ccab.com/events](http://www.ccab.com/events).





# Celebrate Aboriginal Excellence



Canadian Council for  
**ABORIGINAL  
BUSINESS**



## 2017/2018 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

### Aboriginal Business A W A R D

EXCELLENCE IN  
ABORIGINAL  
RELATIONS



### Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations

The Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations recognizes a Canadian who has contributed, through professional and voluntary commitments, to building bridges between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. Their efforts will have made a substantial impact across Canada and across sectors, including the business sector. Past recipients include Willa Black, Mary Simon, Phil Fontaine, and The Right Honourable Paul Martin. The recipient is celebrated at our Annual Vancouver Gala in September.



**Nomination deadline: June 29, 2017**  
**More information:** [www.ccab.com/awards](http://www.ccab.com/awards)

**Senator Murray Sinclair**  
2016 Award for Excellence in  
Aboriginal Relations Laureate

### Aboriginal Business HALL OF FAME

LIFETIME  
Achievement



### Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame: Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award is part of CCAB's Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame, which recognizes Aboriginal persons whose business leadership has made a substantive contribution to the economic and social well-being of Aboriginal people over a lifetime. The inaugural award was given in 2005 and there have been over 22 laureates since then. Past laureates include Chief Darcy Bear, Mel Benson, Chief Commissioner Manny Jules, Chief Clarence Louie and Chief Jim Boucher. The recipient is recognized at CCAB's Annual Toronto Gala in January.



**Nomination deadline: September 15, 2017**  
**More information:** [www.ccab.com/awards](http://www.ccab.com/awards)

**Dr. Herbert Belcourt, CM, LLD**  
2017 ABHF Lifetime  
Achievement Award Recipient

### Aboriginal Business HALL OF FAME

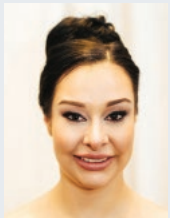
ENTREPRENEUR  
of the Year



### Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame: National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur Award

CCAB calls for self-nominations from up-and-coming Aboriginal entrepreneurs under the age of 35. The recipient will receive a \$10,000 financial award. Past laureates include Jacob Pratt, Kendal Netmaker, and Savannah Olsen. The recipient is recognized at CCAB's Annual Toronto Gala in January.

**Nomination deadline: September 15, 2017**  
**More information:** [www.ccab.com/awards](http://www.ccab.com/awards)



**Isabell Ringenoldus**  
of TAWS Security LTD  
2017 ABHF National Youth  
Aboriginal Entrepreneur  
Award Recipient

### Aboriginal Business A W A R D

INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN  
IN LEADERSHIP



### Indigenous Women in Leadership Award

CCAB wishes to celebrate successful, accomplished, committed women with a new award that will serve not only as national recognition but as a platform to the future. In keeping with the changing times, CCAB is moving forward with a strong message supporting Indigenous women and the leadership they have championed.

**Nomination deadline: January 18, 2018**  
**More information:** [www.ccab.com/awards](http://www.ccab.com/awards)



**The Honourable  
Jody Wilson-Raybould**  
Inaugural laureate of the  
Indigenous Women in  
Leadership Award

### Aboriginal Business A W A R D

ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION



### Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation Award

The annual Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Award goes to an outstanding AEDC and affirms the substantial value AEDCs bring to Aboriginal communities by way of employment, business development and revenue generation. Past laureates include the Tsuut'ina Nation, Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation, and Membertou Development Corporation. The recipient is celebrated at our Annual Calgary Gala in May.

**Nomination deadline: February 2, 2018**  
**More information:** [www.ccab.com/awards](http://www.ccab.com/awards)



**Six Nations of  
the Grand River  
Development  
Corporation**  
2017 AEDC Award  
Recipient

For more information, please contact Andre Morriveau  
at [AMorriveau@ccab.com](mailto:AMorriveau@ccab.com)

Canadian Council for  
**ABORIGINAL  
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