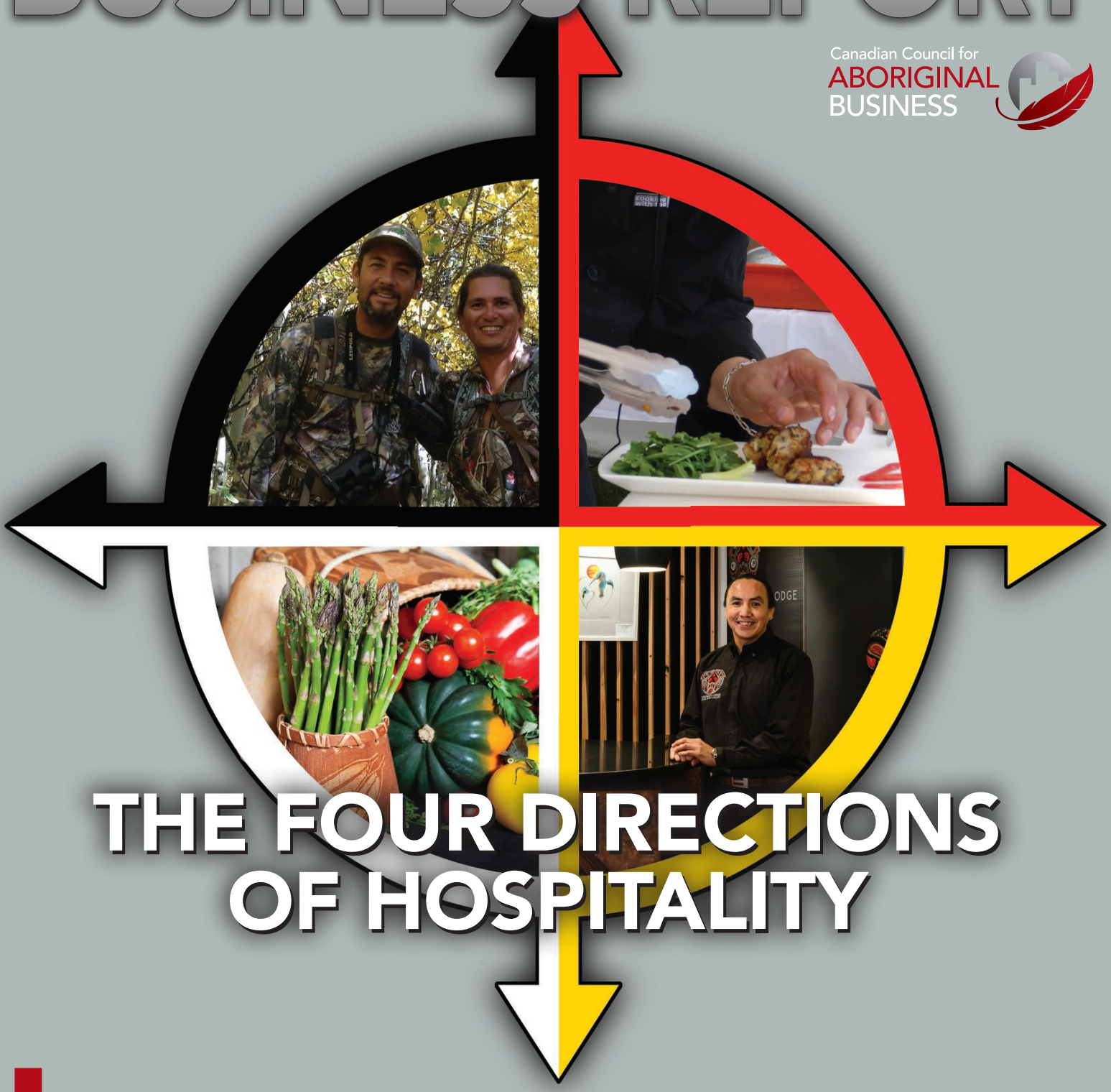
The Aboriginal BUSINESS REPORT

A CCAB PUBLICATION

Canadian Council for ABORIGINAL BUSINESS



THE FOUR DIRECTIONS OF HOSPITALITY

THE RISING POPULARITY OF ABORIGINAL CUISINE

SKWACHÀYS LODGE: A HOTEL LIKE NO OTHER

TAKING ON THE FOOD FIGHT: BATTLING OVERPRICED FOOD

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J.P. GLADU
PRESIDENT AND CEO

I would like to welcome you to the fourth edition of *The Aboriginal Business Report*. The support and interest given to the magazine has proven an important catalyst for growth at the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

A major part of my job has me travelling across the country from coast to coast. Whether appearing as a keynote speaker, solidifying partnerships with stakeholders, or visiting communities with diverse business interests, I am always on the move.

During my travels, I am constantly connecting with people on the frontlines of the service industry. These are dedicated workers whose smiles and assistance melt the miles between my destination and the comforts of home. I've seen firsthand how Aboriginal peoples are making a significant mark in this area, be it in a chic, Aboriginal boutique hotel, or an inviting restaurant filled with the scents of bannock and roasted wild game.

In this issue of *The Aboriginal Business Report,* we look at the great strides Indigenous people have made in the food and hospitality industries. We've unearthed a vibrant restaurant and catering scene in the bigger cities, as well as smaller yet no less significant efforts being made on reserves. We examine the challenges faced on a daily basis distributing food to remote parts of the country, and also look at how Indigenous people are tackling the problem of prohibitively high food prices. That too is a part of our service reality.

We also provide a glimpse into a truly novel hotel concept: the Skwachàys Lodge in downtown Vancouver. This groundbreaking boutique hotel provides accommodation for the socially conscious traveller while subsidizing the rent for 24 live-in Aboriginal artists. It embraces a type of innovative reciprocity that is deeply ingrained in Aboriginal business –

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IN THIS ISSUE OF *THE ABORIGINAL BUSINESS REPORT*, WE LOOK AT THE GREAT STRIDES INDIGENOUS PEOPLE HAVE MADE IN THE FOOD AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES

it's about giving back to our people and our communities.

Included in the growing list of Aboriginal service providers are many AEDC Award winners. Tsuut'ina Nation, recognized this year for its South West Ring Road project in partnership with the Government of Alberta, had earlier developed the Grey Eagle Resort and Casino. Chief Darcy Bear, our 2016 Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award winner, spearheaded the development of the Dakota Dunes Golf Links, one of the top 10 golf courses in the country.

It's not just for fun and games that these businesses exist. In many cases, they were created to support the community and make long-term investments in health, education and infrastructure. It is no coincidence that CCAB has just released a new research report called "Relationships and Reciprocity," as these are the fundamental tenets of Aboriginal business across the country.

I'm glad you have decided to join us for another journey. Whether travelling near or far, we hope you enjoy what CCAB has to offer in this issue as we celebrate the four directions of hospitality.

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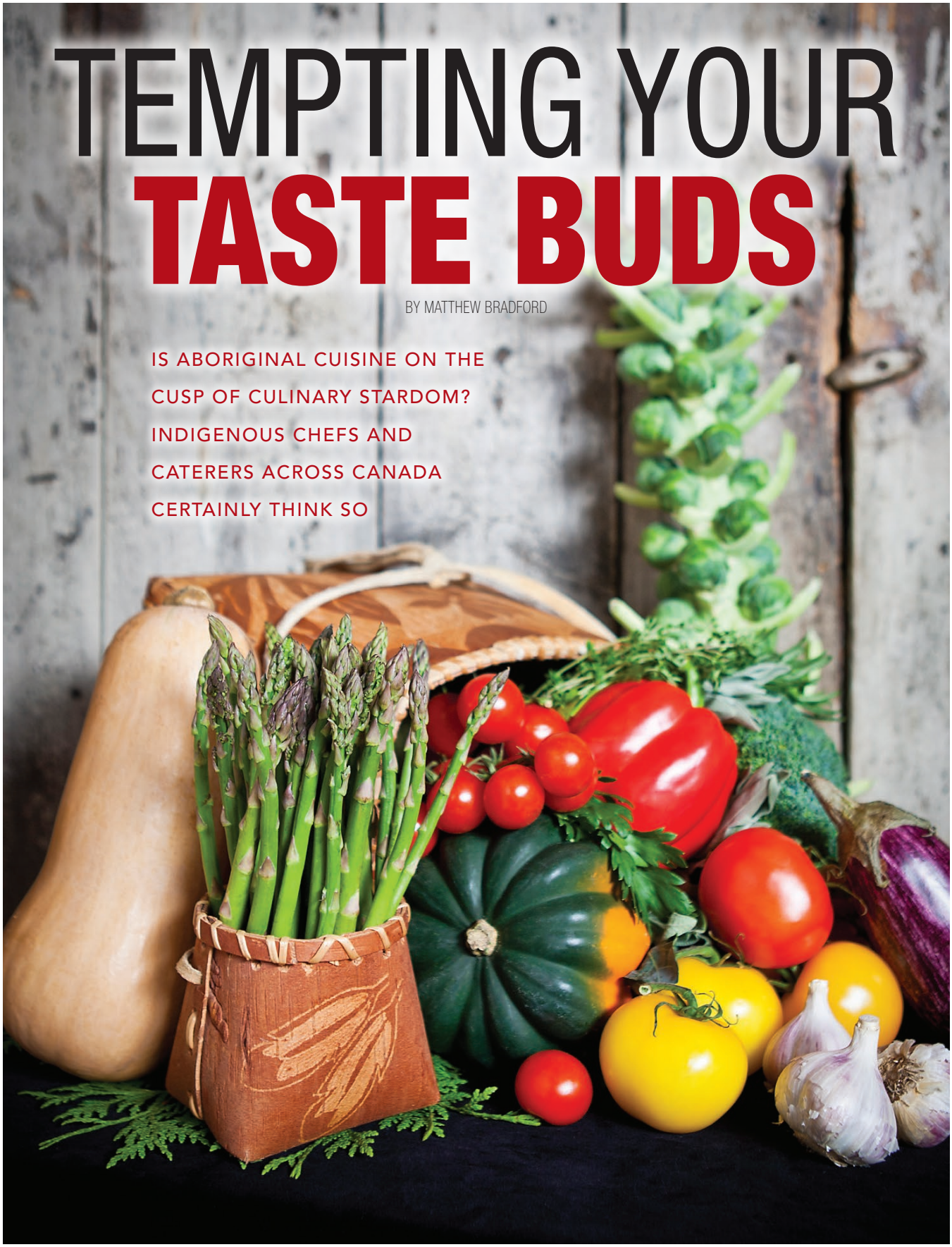
TEMPTING YOUR TASTE BUDS

BY MATTHEW BRADFORD

IS ABORIGINAL CUISINE ON THE CUSP OF CULINARY STARDOM? INDIGENOUS CHEFS AND CATERERS ACROSS CANADA CERTAINLY THINK SO



From uniquely prepared bannock to traditionally smoked meats, Aboriginal cuisine is enjoying newfound popularity on plates across Canada. This is thanks to Indigenous chefs and food connoisseurs who are mixing seasoned traditions with fresh ideas as they heat up the Aboriginal food scene.

One of those chefs is Toronto's Rich Francis, who is in the initial stages of bringing his modern twist on Indigenous cuisine to the city with his new restaurant, The Seventh Fire. "For me, opening this restaurant is about going back to our roots, revisiting some of our traditional ingredients and practices that have been lost, and presenting those in a new light for today's discerning palettes," explains Francis.

Inez Cook (Snitsmana), a member of the Nuxalk Nation, is also stoking the passions for cultural favourites. As co-owner of Vancouver's Salmon n' Bannock, alongside partner Remi Caudron, Cook infuses her menu with creative dishes made with locally sourced ingredients. "It's about sourcing food from the land," she says. "We were the original 100-mile diet. We serve wild fish and free-range organic game meats, as well as fresh bannock made daily. We also have a team from all over the country, so we're always introducing other flavours."

Aboriginal chefs are not only embracing traditional food, they're also adopting time-honoured techniques. Marie-Cecile Nottaway (Cezin) is the owner and chef at Wawatay Catering in Kitigan Zibi, Quebec, where she prepares Algonquin cuisine with an old-school touch. Along with her daughter Marie-Cecile, she gathers piigidosiig (rotted wood) to use in smoking freshly sourced meats, fish, moose and deer hide.

"I go into the bush to gather piigidosiig, and being out there makes me feel very connected and at peace. When I smoke my meats, there's a connection that I feel with my Kokoms – the ones who taught me," reflects Nottaway. "Aboriginal cuisine offers more than just food. It brings you on a spiritual journey for the mind, body and soul – not only for myself, but for the people that eat my food."

Preparing food has also served as a conduit to cultural heritage for Chef Lysanne O'Bomsawin. An Abénakise within the Odanak

community, O'Bomsawin honed her gift for Indigenous and French cooking through positions at numerous restaurants and catering companies before starting her own catering business, Le traiteur Québénakis. "I use all my knowledge of French food and add to it my cultural heritage, but occasionally I leave traditional native recipes as they are," says O'Bomsawin.

In St. Jean, Quebec, veteran chef Trevor Taylor promotes Aboriginal cuisine as executive chef and owner of Bistro Nordenger. He is also the co-founder of forklogic.com, a network for chefs, artists and fellow foodies. A Mayan Indian (Copains) trained

Inez Cook infuses her menu at Salmon n' Bannock with locally sourced ingredients: "It's about sourcing food from the land"

Game meats like bison, elk or deer figure prominently in the rich and diverse history of Aboriginal food preparation

Remi Caudron, co-owner of Vancouver's Salmon n' Bannock - a thriving Aboriginal bistro

Top left: Rich Francis is bringing his modern twist on Indigenous cuisine to Toronto with his new restaurant The Seventh Fire

Top: Marie-Cecile Nottaway prepares Algonquin cuisine with an old-school touch - she gathers piigidosiig (rotted wood) to use in smoking meats, fish and moose

Left: Trevor Taylor promotes Aboriginal cuisine as executive chef and owner of Bistro Nordenger

in French cuisine, Taylor says he is dedicated to promoting Aboriginal foods while supporting local food providers and the sustainable use of wild meat and fish. "It's important that people realize we take growing and eating our own produce for granted," he says. "I strongly believe in using strictly local, regional, home-grown products. Yes, it may cost more, but the quality is ten times better."

Taylor puts his formal training to use in his kitchen preparing a savoury mix of Indigenous and traditional fare, whether bison, elk or deer jerky, blood pudding, offal and sweetbreads, pumpkin fritters, or fresh seafood. For motivation, Taylor is inspired by his culture's rich and diverse history of food preparation. "Cooking Aboriginal food, as we all know it, was the first organic style of cooking," he says. "Each Native American tribe had their own specialties. For example, the Iroquois planted vegetables, fruit and sunflower, while the Mohawk tribes ate more meat and smoked and cured foods, which is right up my alley."

Taking this to heart, Taylor believes it is important for more chefs to embrace Aboriginal food preparation techniques. "We have to remember that (Aboriginal peoples) were here long before any other settlers, and it's important to honour the past by

bringing it into the future. As a chef, I can help with that, which makes me very happy."

THE BUSINESS OF FOOD

As any restaurateur or culinary provider can confirm, the food industry is not for the faint of heart. Staying in business means coming to the table with new ideas, a respect for the past, and a head for the complexities of modern business.

Working with traditional and locally sourced foods, for example, is a costly consideration. This is especially true for Aboriginal dishes that rely on ingredients like organic and free-range meats not typically found in the commercial market, or only available for a high price. "It's easier to buy berries from Mexico than locally," remarks Cook.

Fusing a traditional vision with modern tastes can also be a challenge. Nottaway, for example, worked in a rehabilitation centre for drugs and alcohol for First Nations, Inuit and Métis. This inspired her to run Wawatay Catering with a focus on healthy dishes, a vision she has had to balance with her bottom line and the need to draw in customers. "The challenge I had, and still have, is learning to incorporate traditional, tasty, healthy and modern recipes with dietary restrictions and aversions while trying to stay within affordable budgets," notes Nottaway. "I still serve some delicious 'unhealthies,' but it's about moderation."

Aboriginal dishes regularly rely on locally sourced ingredients

Also difficult, adds O'Bomsawin, is contending with stereotypes about Indigenous cuisine. "People sometimes talk about the past as if Aboriginals still lived in teepees, so they fear having to eat unusual meat, such as things that are raw, dried or un-seasoned," she says. "I like to remind them that everything is being made in 2016."

Misconceptions about overly fried foods, unhealthy menus or unsanitary preparations can also keep customers from trying something new. Here again is where chefs like O'Bomsawin are doing their part to change perceptions. "To be a native in society is already a challenge, and to be native and an entrepreneur is a double challenge," she says. "You will have admirers, but you will also be confronted with closed doors. Many people prefer the classic menus over exotic ones. In my five years of operation, I've learned to accept this and to address my customers' reluctance."

CAREER PREP

Making a name in Aboriginal cuisine requires an understanding of one's roots, and the passion and determination to share it with the world. For Taylor, that means knowing how to work a kitchen and acknowledging ones heritage. "The most important part when getting into the Aboriginal food scene is to do your homework and talk to elders, as I did, to get a true understanding of traditional dishes," he says. "It is important that we keep the recipes as they where a hundred years ago."

As for staying the path, Cook says up-and-coming chefs would do well to remember that success does not occur overnight. For Cook, it came after building a name and a following for her dishes, then starting her restaurant, and building from there. It also hinged on Cook staying true to her vision and, as she puts it, "Not trying to be everything to everyone."

Nottaway agrees, adding, "Stay true to your roots and who you are, and be prepared to work hard." For Francis, the biggest leap as an Aboriginal chef may still stand before him. But after formal training and experience in both New York and Toronto, the young chef is confident his vision will bear fruit. Moreover, he is proud to be serving as a "fire keeper" for Indigenous food.

While he understands that the food business is not easy, Nottaway feels if there were ever a time to light up the country's food scene with Indigenous cuisine, it is now. "Aboriginal cuisine is the fastest rising cuisine out there," he says. "There's so much potential and growth attached to it that I love being part of this movement. It is a really exciting time for our food."

Aboriginal chefs are not only embracing traditional food, they're also adopting time-honoured techniques

CHEF DAVID WOLFMAN TOUTS THE BENEFITS OF OWNING YOUR OWN FOOD BUSINESS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL

WHAT'S FOR SUPPER, WOLFMAN?

BY CHEF DAVID WOLFMAN

Over the last 21 years I have taught thousands of culinary arts and food and beverage students, and I've seen them come and go with one overarching goal stamped on their foreheads: to own and operate their own restaurant. Yes, the entrepreneurial dream to own one's own food business is alive and well.

At a downtown school like George Brown College where I teach, students are lucky to have immediate access to some of the world's leaders in hospitality, as well as part-time internships and on-the-job training in our Chef's House lunch-service restaurant.

The same cannot be said for remote First Nations communities, where great distances, small populations, and little or no infrastructure stand between businesses, consumers, educators and employers. In many cases, these can appear to be daunting obstacles for anyone interested in venturing into the food and hospitality trade.

Yet surprisingly, I've learned that entrepreneurship can be at its finest when people are determined to solve problems and overcome barriers. Time and again I've seen the spark of entrepreneurship in many of the Aboriginal communities I've visited, and it is inspiring to experience.

GRASSROOTS EFFORT

My sister-in-law Lorraine told me recently that on Kingfisher Lake First Nation in Ontario, an Anishnawbe fly-in community where she works, it is not uncommon for people to auction off a homemade chicken dinner on Facebook. When the mood strikes, people will bid higher and higher and take great pride in winning the bid, often posting a follow-up photo of them eating the food later that night.

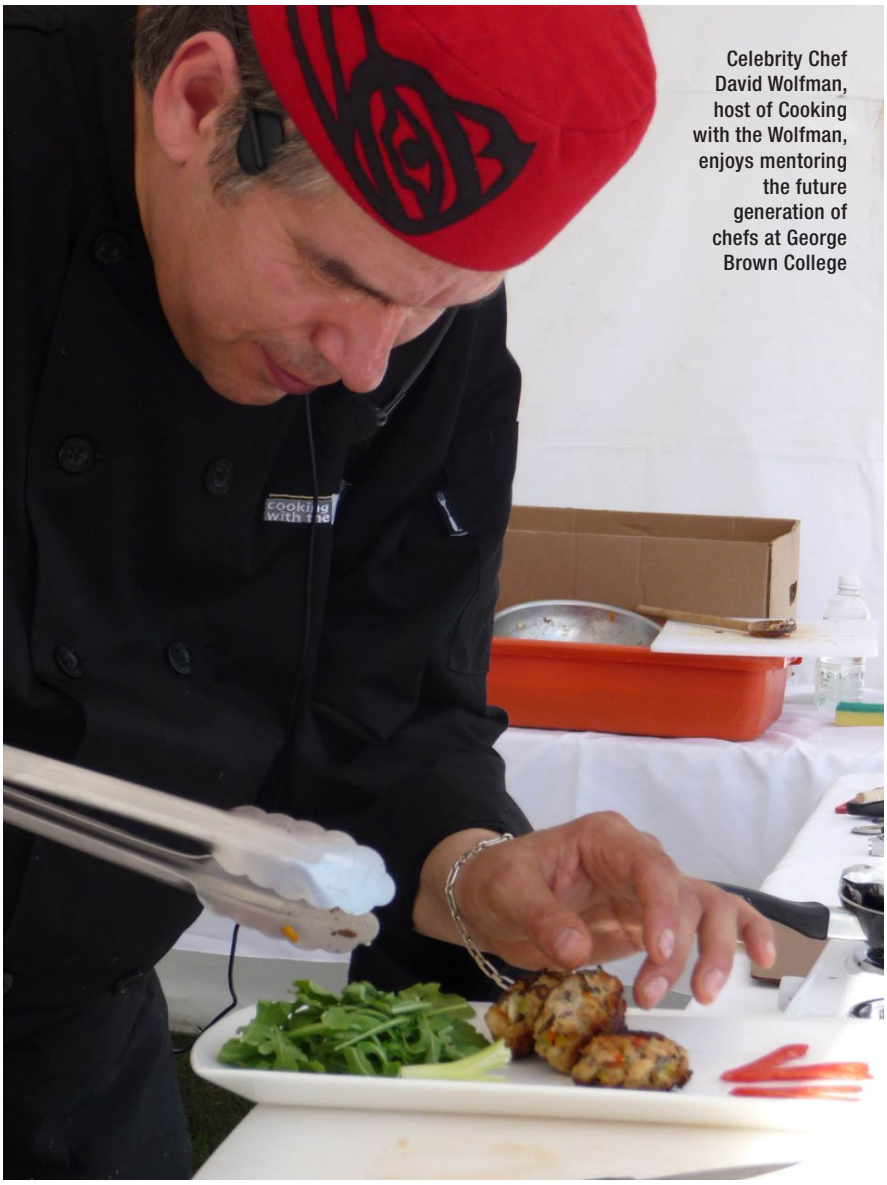
I've met First Nations entrepreneurs closer to home who have turned a room in their house into a restaurant

just by taping a hand-written sign to their front door. Often, they just knock out a window to serve takeout from the bedroom. And who hasn't seen a First Nation reserve with '70s era campervans or extended yellow school buses parked under trees, selling fresh catch fish and chips or bannock?

The truth is that ambitious cooks are fixtures on the pow wow trail, often training their kids and grandkids to peel potatoes and operate the deep fryer. The really serious ones offer catering services for local weddings, parties, and school graduations or meetings.

I love meeting these simple entrepreneurs and talking to them about how they got started and how they keep their business going.

SEVERAL OF MY CONSULTING CLIENTS WERE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR RESERVE-BASED RESTAURANTS AFTER I GOT THEM STARTED



Celebrity Chef David Wolfman, host of Cooking with the Wolfman, enjoys mentoring the future generation of chefs at George Brown College

They just laugh when I ask them if they studied business or wrote a business plan before starting out. Rarely have they taken any culinary or business training, set any specific business goals, or even read a book or magazine on the subject of starting their own food business. They didn't even have a trusted and knowledgeable friend they could call on for ongoing business advice.

These folks do not have anywhere near the level of access or opportunity that my George Brown students have. But they have drive and they attribute their success to the plain and simple fact that they saw a need that was not being met so they decided to do something about it. It's as simple as that. What they didn't learn in school, they most certainly are making up for in the school of hard knocks.

AMPLE BENEFITS

I am generalizing here, of course, because I've also met my share of established Aboriginal hoteliers, wild rice producers, cranberry juice manufacturers, winemakers, herbalists, buffalo farmers, and salmon and muskox manufacturers.

There are plenty of people who have taken advantage of the employment and training programs, government funding and community supports out there, achieving a high level of recognition and respect from their industry peers and partners. Plus, several of my consulting clients were able to sustain their reserve-based restaurants after I got them started.

Above and beyond the direct benefits that business ownership can provide to Aboriginal individuals, families and communities, I believe the most valuable outcome of self-employment is the knowledge and skills that get passed down to Aboriginal youth.

Watching your parents, family members and friends carry out business activities is one thing, especially when things go well. Being part of a family or community business that struggles, experiences setbacks, makes sacrifices and delays personal gratification to achieve broader priorities in the long term, is altogether another.

Schools can't teach that way of thinking, and you cannot put a price on experience, believe me. This is why the sooner our youth are exposed to and involved in business, the better for us all.

So I salute Aboriginal entrepreneurship in all its forms – from the successful urban hotelier all the way to the guy selling the freshest, tastiest fish by the roadside.

And by the way, I'll have fries with my order!

Chef David Wolfman (Xaxli'p First Nation) is a culinary arts professor at George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology, and executive producer and host of the Cooking with the Wolfman television program. For more information, visit: www.cookingwiththewolfman.com.

Guest service agent Adrian Lewis welcomes visitors to Skwachàys Lodge, where Aboriginal culture and design is celebrated throughout

A BOUTIQUE HOTEL LIKE NO OTHER

BY ALEX ROSS

WITH ITS UNIQUE TAKE ON SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND DEEP ROOTS IN ABORIGINAL CULTURE, SKWACHÀYS LODGE MAKES ITS MARK ON DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER

Since taking the reins at the Vancouver Native Housing Society (VNHS), CEO David Eddy has steadily grown its mandate: from housing Aboriginal families and seniors, to providing supportive housing to homeless people, youth and women fleeing abusive homes.

Eddy, however, always felt the VNHS needed a more groundbreaking project – one that would signal a whole new direction for the not-for-profit organization. He envisioned something that would make use of Aboriginal art and culture to revitalize community pride and lead transformational change.

That vision has now come to fruition with Skwachàys Lodge, a boutique hotel located in historic downtown Vancouver that combines guest rooms with subsidized housing for local artists. It has 18 rooms for visiting guests and 24 subsidized apartments for Aboriginal artists, as well as an

attached Urban Aboriginal Fair Trade Gallery that showcases Aboriginal artistic and cultural works.

Apartment residents are charged the shelter rate for rent, which is $375 a month. This is only about a third of the going rate for a studio apartment in the same neighbourhood and less than the operating cost of the unit. "The actual cost of operating and maintaining each suite is about $900 a month, so we have a shortfall of $525," explains Eddy. "We make up that shortfall with profits from the hotel and the gallery. So every year we re-inject $155,000 back into the building to subsidize rents for Aboriginal artists."

The hotel represents an innovative model, and one that works: Skwachàys Lodge receives no government funding and is totally self-sustaining. The Aboriginal artists who reside at the hotel sign a three-year tenancy agreement, providing a portfolio of their work as well as a three-year performance plan. In turn, the Lodge helps them develop a business plan and provides courses on finance.

With its celebration of Aboriginal identity, and its strong, socially conscious framework, Skwachàys Lodge has become a destination of choice for socially conscious travellers. Visitors who stay at the hotel enjoy knowing they are supporting Aboriginal arts and culture during their visit to the city. The same can be

The Lodge provides subsidized housing for local artists, such as Richard Shorty pictured painting in the Feather Room

The Urban Aboriginal Fair Trade Gallery attached to the hotel showcases Aboriginal artistic and cultural works

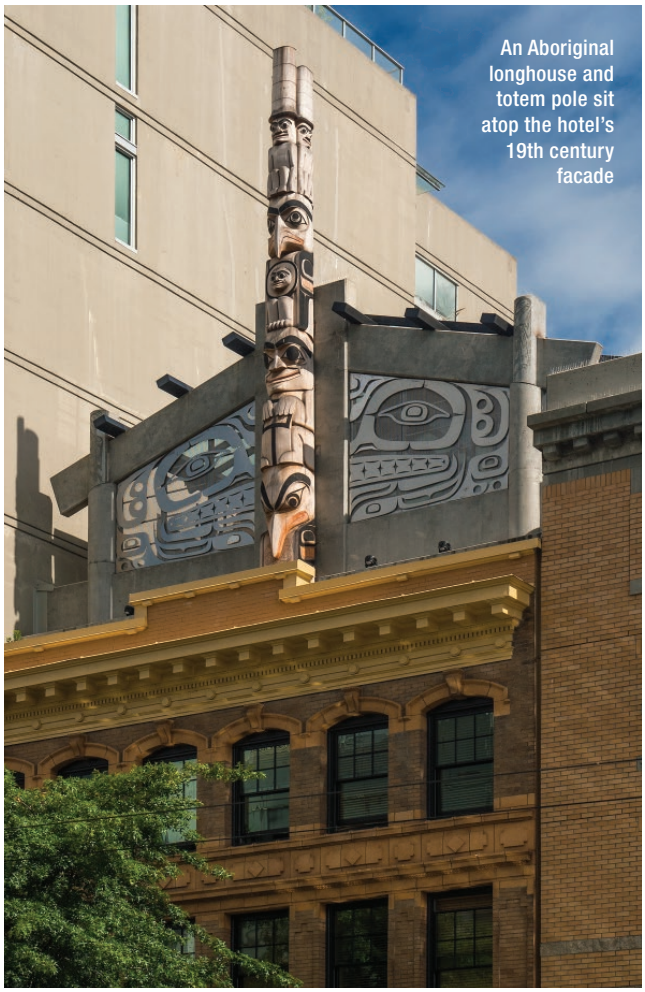
said for everyone buying the Aboriginal art that Skwachàys has to offer. Eddy estimates the Lodge sells over $70,000 worth of Aboriginal art each year, sourced from local Aboriginal artists.

ABORIGINAL ROOTS

Interestingly, the Lodge is the first of its buildings that the VNHS has ever named. Previously, buildings were simply numbered. The Skwachàys project, however, was markedly different, and the Society turned to Chief Ian Campbell, the hereditary chief of the Squamish Nation on whose traditional territory the Lodge is built, for guidance.

"Chief Campbell came back and gave the name Skwachàys," says Eddy. "He explained that this was the name of the area pre-contact. The north shore natives would come across the inlet in their canoes to camp and hunt here. There used to be salt marshes everywhere with underground springs and they thought it was a portal to the spirit realm. He described it as a place of transformation."

The region's Aboriginal roots are reflected in the Lodge in many other ways as well. The hotel has a well-ventilated smudging room and a fully functional sweat lodge heated with a kiln. Aboriginal heritage is also visible in its design, with a beautiful longhouse and totem pole sitting on top of the building's 19th century façade.



An Aboriginal longhouse and totem pole sit atop the hotel's 19th century facade

RECONCILIATION

The decision to prominently showcase Aboriginal culture in the building was not embraced by everyone. It had to be cleared with Vancouver's municipal government, and a city heritage planner initially balked at the totem pole plan, arguing it would interfere with the building's Victorian architecture. The building originally housed the Pender Hotel, a single-room occupancy hotel designed for single men working in the mining, fishing, and forestry industries.

Eddy was quick to react. "Don't you think that 6,000-year-old Aboriginal heritage trumps 150-year-old Victorian heritage?" he asked the planner. "Do you think maybe a marriage of the two might create a unique iconic building in a part of Vancouver where a large part of the population is Aboriginal or Chinese?"

Rooms at the Lodge have a northern feel and feature Aboriginal artwork on the walls

Eddy further pressed city officials to consider the positive step the City of Vancouver could take in embracing the Aboriginal design. "Do you think the city might want to mitigate some of the wrongs it's done to Aboriginal people in the last 125 years by allowing this project to go forward?" he asked.

The Lodge sells over $70,000 worth of Indigenous art each year, sourced from local Aboriginal artists

It was a persuasive argument touching on the need for reconciliation and honouring Vancouver's Aboriginal heritage. It was also successful: the Lodge's design for the façade was eventually approved for construction. And so the traditions of the past lay down the foundations for a socially conscious enterprise of the future.

More than just a hotel, Skwachàys Lodge is a gathering place for Aboriginal culture and a symbol of how this culture can be used to both heal and create change. "That's part of the healing process," notes Eddy. "It's about bringing the culture back, reconnecting with it, and being prideful of what that means."

Skwachàys Lodge delivers on all three counts.

For booking information for Skwachàys Lodge visit www.skwachays.com or call 604-687-3589.

Photos courtesy of Craig Minelly of Aura Photographics.

TAKING ON THE FOOD FIGHT

INDIGENOUS GO-GETTERS DO THEIR BIT TO FIGHT SKYROCKETING FOOD PRICES IN THE FAR NORTH

BY ROMA IHNATOWYCZ

The numbers defy belief: $16 for a red pepper, $26 for a 3-litre container of orange juice, and a whopping $200 for a turkey.

As most people now know, these hefty price tags aren't the stuff of fantasy. For hundreds of Aboriginal communities in Canada's far north, they are what awaits them at their local grocery store every time they shop for food. The hard, unpleasant reality is that it can cost upwards of $2,000 a month just to feed a family of four in the far northern reaches of the country, and that's a conservative estimate.

Government initiatives aimed at mitigating the problem have often fallen short of the mark. The largest of these, the Nutrition North Canada (NNC) subsidy program, came under fire for its many shortcomings in a 2014 Auditor General report. Among the more serious concerns were the number of communities not covered in the subsidy program, as well as lapses in ensuring that retailers passed subsidies on to consumers.

The cost of food in northern communities is often quadruple that of municipalities in the south, as shown by this photo taken by a local shopper

It all makes for fairly gloomy reading. On the bright side, however, there is perhaps a silver lining to come out of all this. No longer content to sit around waiting for the government to act on their behalf, some Aboriginal community members are taking the bull by the horns and delivering their own innovative solutions. They are looking for effective answers to the growing problem or pushing the government to come up with better options than those delivered so far.

BUILDING AWARENESS

Leesee Papatsie is one such example. Five years ago the Nunavut native decided to organize a protest against high food prices in her hometown of Iqaluit. This mushroomed into multiple demonstrations and marked the start of Papatsie's grassroots lobbying group, Feeding My Family. She has been a tireless advocate for healthy, affordable food in the far north ever since.

"It's about raising awareness of the high cost of food," says Papatsie. "It's always been hidden under the carpet before. We northerners knew about it, but many southerners did not. So we work at raising awareness and we also empower the Inuit people to stand up to something."

It has not always been easy. Holding public protests is not part of the Inuit historical tradition, Papatsie explains, and there were even those in her community who questioned her efforts. "When we first started there wasn't even an Inuktituk word for protest

because that is something we were taught not to do," says Papatsie. "For hundreds of years the Inuit had to work and live together to survive in this climate, and people would tell us that (to protest) is not the Inuit way."

That has now changed and Papatsie's efforts have borne fruit as others join her cause. Most famously, perhaps, is the group's recent collaboration with the Calgary-based creative agency WAX Partnership, which created mock ads on YouTube illustrating the gouging price points. The executives approached Papatsie asking what they could do to help. The result was a series of fake supermarket TV ads featuring a grinning store manager plugging outrageously priced food at the fictional supermarket Way North. With a straight face, he promises "high prices you just won't find anywhere else."

The ads have become a bona fide viral hit, spreading awareness of the sticker shock found in northern stores. This led to a corresponding website, endthepricehike.ca, that further informs people of the problem and its consequences, namely hunger and food insecurity among northern communities. It also directs visitors to spread the information further by tweeting about the issue, donating to Northern food banks and lobbying the government for change.

A parody ad created by Calgary-based agency WAX Partnership draws attention to the outrageous prices of food in northern communities. It can be viewed at www.endthepricehike.ca

TACKLING LOGISTICS

While it's fair to say that the problem has finally made its way onto the

A new Regional Distribution Centre will be built at the Sioux Lookout airport to facilitate food distribution to northern communities in Ontario

radar of most Canadians, what about the possible solutions? When it comes to supplying isolated northern communities, the cost of shipping food can indeed be astronomical, which drives up prices.

There is one project currently underway looking to curb some of these costs. It is the construction of a Regional Distribution Centre in Sioux Lookout, Ontario to service 31 northern communities in the province.

Sioux Lookout, together with Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) First Nation and Lac Seul First Nation was one of six groups invited to participate in a First Nations – Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI). It was as part of this program that they developed the idea for the Distribution Centre.

"There was a lack of required infrastructure for reliable distribution anywhere along the 51st parallel and the far north region, so we had to start looking at another formula," explains Vicki Blanchard, economic development manager for the Municipality of Sioux Lookout and the lead in the CEDI program. "The centre will provide a single point of distribution."

Known as Ontario's "Hub of the North," Sioux Lookout was an obvious choice for the 10,000-square-foot Distribution Centre, which will be built airside at the town's airport. The building will be outfitted with fridges,

freezers and storage areas to properly store food before it is shipped further into the communities. "We are trying to find a manageable way to get healthy foods to the far north, to reduce shipping costs, and to ensure goods don't perish on the tarmac," says Blanchard. "It will be all about logistics. We are not buying foods or goods."

Once built, the $1.5-million centre will streamline the supply chain through a single point of entry, helping connect communities and businesses to the regional economy. A feasibility study estimates it could cut the cost of shipping perishable food by as much as 40 per cent. "The more we can ship up north from a closer, end-of-road point, in a more secured environment where we can measure what is or isn't being shipped, the better it is for everybody," says Blanchard.

A BUSINESS SOLUTION

Equally interested in finding a viable solution to lower the cost of food is Whalefeather Inc., an Aboriginal company that presents business solutions to Indigenous peoples, businesses and communities in the area of food, housing or education.

"It's one thing to provide a community or an Indigenous family with money. We want to work with them to help them develop a program or business that's sustainable," says Whalefeather CEO and president Edward Cavalier (Tuscarora/Onaway).

On offer is a state-of-the-art greenhouse that can grow food in even the coldest, arctic climates. The structure is powered by a micro-utility that runs on solar power, wind or biomass and comes equipped with LED lighting that moves around to maximize the potential of plants and growth. You can virtually build it anywhere and it will grow food, says the company's senior vice president Lucy La Grassa. "This type of greenhouse is not affected by the elements. You can have it anywhere in North America, whether it's the tundra or the far north."

Each three-acre greenhouse yields 20 times more than a standard greenhouse and 100 times more than open field farming. The large yield would allow most communities to supply themselves and make additional profit selling the surplus to the market. "The objective is to have a high yield so you can sell the extra produce to food wholesalers and retail grocery chains," says Cavalier.

Whalefeather's end-goal is to run like an equity fund, and it is already putting together the financing for its first four greenhouses. The company organizes the funding and project underwriting, maintaining 49 per cent of the ownership. For partners short on capital, the plan is for Whalefeather to start off with 100 per cent ownership, letting the partner buy 51 per cent over a three to five-year period. Whalefeather would also provide all the necessary training to operate the greenhouse and run the business.

Whether it's about raising awareness, improving logistics or presenting

Whalefeather's Edward Cavalier is presenting a novel greenhouse option to northern communities

"IT'S ONE THING TO PROVIDE A COMMUNITY OR AN INDIGENOUS FAMILY WITH MONEY. WE WANT TO WORK WITH THEM TO HELP THEM DEVELOP A PROGRAM OR BUSINESS THAT'S SUSTAINABLE"

EDWARD CAVALIER
CEO & PRESIDENT
WHALEFEATHER

viable business solutions, members of Indigenous communities are taking their own steps to address high food prices head on. The initiatives mentioned here represent just a sampling.

More Canadians are now aware of the severity of the problem, and some have even started their own campaigns to send food and money to those in need. There is also the Liberal government's recent commitment to pump $64.5 million over the next five years to its Nutrition North program, and $13.8 million per year ongoing to expand it to all isolated communities in the north.

For some, these may sound like baby steps to what is ultimately a colossal and complex problem, but things are at the very least moving in the right direction. When it comes to curbing overpriced food in the north, the ball has started to roll, and many members of the Indigenous community are doing their bit to push it.

DELIVERING THE GOODS

BY KELLY PARKER

A GLIMPSE INTO THE REALITY OF SUPPLYING FOOD TO SOME OF CANADA'S MOST REMOTE LOCATIONS

In the more heavily populated southern regions of Canada, supplying food to supermarkets, restaurants and cafeterias is a fairly straightforward equation.

Not so in the far north. When it comes to delivering food to remote locations and work sites, it's an uphill battle most of the time. In fact, getting food to isolated clusters of people at northern mining sites or oil projects is a complex and involved task.

First, there are long distances and remote, often hard-to-access locations. Then there are extreme and often unpredictable weather conditions, and sometimes even natural disasters like forest fires. For foodservice companies delivering food supplies to these northern locales, this presents numerous challenges. A tremendous amount of planning, time, and money is required to keep essential supply lines up and running. Let's have a look at what's involved.

Deliveries by road, which are the most common, can be on dedicated roads or sometimes on ice roads that by their very nature are directly affected by the weather. "It can definitely create some havoc when things are warmer than they should be for an extended period of time," says Chris Fry, VP of supply management at Sodexo, which services oil sands and hydroelectric sites in northern Manitoba, Quebec, B.C. and the Yukon.

"In one case," recalls Fry, "we didn't know when a barge would be available because it happened to be an exceptionally cold year. In another, we had to make sure we had things out of another camp before the ice road was closed (due to the warming weather). You can end up being stuck for access in areas depending on the time of year."

There are also other considerations. The right vehicles must be sourced, and these are not always the optimal vehicles for transporting large volumes of goods. "Typically, food is shipped between major centres on anywhere from 20 to 53-foot trailers, but in most of these isolated locations, you can't even dream of getting a 20-foot trailer onto some of the roads," explains Kevin Palmer, director, Supply Chain Remote Workplace Services, Aramark. "So you're forced to use a smaller vehicle more suited to off-road travel."

Aramark Remote provides foodservices for the Horn River Basin gas and oil projects in Northeastern B.C., as well as hydroelectric construction sites in Happy Valley, Labrador and other locales. When forced to use smaller vehicles, the company faces increased costs, either per pound shipped or per kilometre travelled. That's because the smaller vehicles are more expensive to operate and haul smaller loads. For a large camp that needs 30 palettes of food per week, this could mean three or four trips with a smaller vehicle instead of the one trip that a larger transport vehicle could manage.

With established roads, there is another problem that, as Palmer puts it, "You can almost set your watch by." These are the spring road bans. As the frost comes out of the ground, the allowable weight on some roads is decreased by sometimes as much as 50 per cent, doubling the required trips to the site.

Distributors to the north face regular challenges shipping food to remote northern work sites. Photo courtesy of ESS Support Services

AIR TRAVEL

When a site is inaccessible by road, goods are normally flown in. Fly-in locations typically have a maintained runway or a body of water to land on; however, neither is always ideal and there are a host of other considerations.

ESS Support Services, part of the Compass Group, services numerous oil sands, mining and forestry sites, as well as Canadian Armed Forces bases. It often finds itself flying in food supplies when roads are not usable. While it sounds good on paper, there are a number of variables that impact cargo space availability, which in turn affects the company's ability to bring in supplies.

"(It depends on) the loads on the aircraft. If they have to bring in a lot of extra equipment or people, the groceries could become a lower priority depending on what's happening on the site," says Jacques Webster, regional vice president at ESS Support Services. "This might mean that our stuff gets bumped to the next day, or sometimes, if the weather is bad, the planes can't fly and there's nothing you can do about that."

As a contingency for those scenarios, ESS keeps extra supplies on hand at the camps. "We'll typically keep two weeks' worth of extra food," says Webster. This too is not always easy, as it requires significant resources in the way of additional storage space, fridges and freezers. The latter need to be maintained and cost money to operate. "It ties up a lot of capital and inventory, but that's just a cost of doing business," explains Webster. "Because for a food service company, the worst thing that can happen is that you don't have food to serve your customers."

At the end of the day, transporting goods of any kind to the far north is a challenge. Add perishable food to the mix, and it is doubly so. This is something foodservice companies currently tasked with the job are only too well aware of. While it may prove an exhilarating challenge at times – even entertaining judging by the popularity of TV shows like *Ice Road Truckers* and *Ice Pilots NWT* – it is never straightforward. Certainly, it is never easy.

For those involved in ensuring the food gets to where it needs to go, much planning is required, both for when things go right, and when they go wrong. As Palmer aptly puts it, if you're servicing a northern location, "You've got to have a Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, and sometimes even a Plan D."

The Aboriginal BUSINESS REPORT

Canadian Council for ABORIGINAL BUSINESS

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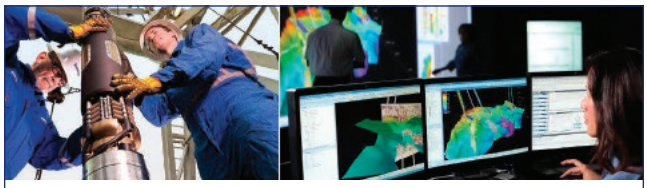

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STAYING CONNECTED TO THE LAND

BY J.P. GLADU

CCAB PRESIDENT J.P. GLADU SHARES HIS LOVE OF HUNTING AND FISHING AND THE SPECIAL ROLE IT PLAYS IN THE CULTURAL FABRIC OF OUR COUNTRY

CCAB president J.P. Gladu, left, with his friend Jacob Handel during one of their hunting trips

Gladu sees value in instilling the next generation with a love for fishing, hunting and the great outdoors. Pictured here are his daughter and two nephews

I remember my first moose hunting trip with my dad. One of the grass blades on the old road we were walking down poked me in the eye and tears ensued. I was just a little guy and not exactly a stealthy hunter in those early days.

But that poke in the eye was the start of something very special. Being on the land has always been a way for me to reconnect with my culture, my spirit and my family. Coming from a family of loggers that had a strong connection to the forest and its way of life (my mom also picked cones for tree nurseries), the natural environment has always been an easy fit for me.

My father's roots revolved around chopping wood, hauling water and harvesting animals. He often reminded me that if we didn't harvest any animals, we simply wouldn't eat. As a result of his experience in the woods, I inherited a significant amount of knowledge and respect for the bounties of Mother Earth.

When I was about 14, my childhood friend and I would point to a lake on a map that had no road access. My dad would then drop us somewhere on a dirt road in the vicinity of the lake after school on a Friday with plans for a pick-up on Sunday. Simply put, we explored fishing lakes and tested our navigational and general bush skills. Getting off the beaten path was perfect for us. The skillsets we developed – self-reliance, confidence and

Former Chief Paul Gladu with his son J.P. Gladu, holding a walleye breeder about to be released

Hunting has a special meaning for Gladu, who is already teaching proper hunting skills to his daughter

"It's about being connected to the land and respecting what the Creator has given us" J.P. Gladu

friendship building – were and still are immeasurable. My love for the outdoors has never abated.

A GOOD YEAR

I've had some pretty incredible experiences on the land in the way of hunting and fishing, and while there are far too many stories to share in one article, 2015 was an exceptional year.

It started that July, when I was blessed with a 46-pound Chinook Salmon from Tsimshian Territory on the Alaskan border. The meat on the fish was incredible.

Then in August, I went hunting for stone sheep in Kaska Territory with a childhood friend. We were flown in on a single Otter into the middle of the mountain range. We hiked over 130 kilometres with multiple base camps searching for the illusive stone sheep. Eventually, on the very last day of the hunt, we were rewarded with a beautiful sheep… and a sow grizzly

and her two gorgeous cubs. The family of bears was just 200 yards from us and our harvested sheep. Luckily, they didn't want to join us – or have us – for dinner. After our tobacco was laid, we packed out all the meat 24 kilometres to our pick-up site.

My last adventure that year took place about six weeks later in the foothills of Alberta in Black Foot territory. I was mentoring a friend keen to learn about hunting, and a cougar snuck up on us at 15 yards first thing in the morning. Again, we were lucky the beautiful cat decided we weren't worth the risk and it moved on.

Later that day we were blessed with a moose. We had just an hour of light left to field dress the 900-pound animal, and then spent the next five hours packing out all the meat in complete darkness. We had only our little headlights to help us and were still in the vicinity of the cougar encounter. Let's just say our adrenaline was in overdrive, but I would not trade this or similar experiences for anything.

AN OPEN MIND

I believe that as a society we are far too removed from our natural environment. We expect clean water and produce, building materials such as wood and concrete, oil and gas for our homes and cars, metals for our phones and vehicles, and meat in nice packages for our consumption. We don't reflect on our northern peoples, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who live on the land. These are the people who mine, harvest trees, work in the oil and gas industry, grow wheat and vegetables, raise cattle and sheep, and yes – hunt.

I am not suggesting everyone go out and harvest an animal, or mill their own wood to appreciate the effort and energy required. But they can at least keep an open mind on why we do the things we do. Canada is a resource-rich country. Our economy relies on our natural resources, and we need to manage them the best we can with best practices, traditional knowledge, and technologies. We need to be sustainable when we can, and responsible leaders when we can't. We also need to recognize the culture and traditions of indigenous people – a community I am very proud to be a part of.

I am also happy to be able to hunt and provide fresh, free-range organic meat for my friends and family. These are very special experiences and, like my father before me, I am now teaching them to my daughter. I hope that she too will enjoy hunting, and will one day share this pastime with her own children.

Harvesting animals is an emotional affair, and those of us who hunt know what I am talking about. It's about being connected to the land and respecting what the Creator has given us. That is very special, and well worth that poke in the eye so long ago.

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18TH ANNUAL TORONTO GALA

Michael Hachey, Reggie Leach, Chief Darcy Bear, Jacob Pratt, Waneek Horn-Miller, J.P. Gladu

On February 2, CCAB welcomed over 400 guests to the Ritz Carlton where we honoured and celebrated the 2016 Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame (ABHF) recipient, Chief Darcy Bear of Whitecap Dakota First Nation, and the third recipient of the National Youth Aboriginal Entrepreneur of the Year Award, Jacob Pratt of Wambdi Dance. ESS, a member of the Compass Group, founded and exclusively sponsors both awards.

The evening was filled with inspiring speeches given by our Master of Ceremonies Waneek Horn-Miller and our keynote speaker Reggie Leach.

Spencer Fraser, Nicole Verkindt, David Zimmer

Elder, Duke Redbird

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UPCOMING EVENTS

GALAS, LUNCHEONS & HOT TOPIC SERIES

ANNUAL CALGARY GALA

May 11, 2016 | 5:30 pm - 9:00 pm
The Hyatt Regency | Calgary, AB

Join us for the third Annual Calgary Gala as we celebrate the accomplishments of Tsuut'ina Nation – Economic Development Lands and South West Ring Road – the recipient of CCAB's 2016 Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Award. Tsuut'ina was chosen among a field of excellent candidates for its historic Transportation and Utility Corridor (TUC) Agreement with the Province of Alberta that transferred 1,058 acres of land to the province for the construction of the final portion of the South West Ring Road.

This unprecedented multibillion-dollar endeavour was made possible through Tsuut'ina Nation's partnership with the provincial government, and represents one of the largest infrastructure projects ever undertaken by an AEDC. The First Nation plans to use the revenues generated from the Ring Road project to support long-term investments in employment, education and health.

The Annual Calgary Gala is a fantastic opportunity to network with the country's top Aboriginal businesses and forward-looking Canadian companies focused on the future of business in Canada.

Sodexo Canada founded and exclusively sponsors the AEDC Award.

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PAR AND TFAB INFORMATION SESSION

May 11, 2016 | 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
The Hyatt Regency | Calgary, AB

The 2016 Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) and Tools and Financing for Aboriginal Business (TFAB) Program Information Session in Calgary, will bring together Canadian companies that are committed to promoting and developing partnerships and opportunities with Aboriginal businesses and communities.

TOOLS & FINANCING FOR Aboriginal Business
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

Progressive Aboriginal RELATIONS
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

MONTREAL KEYNOTE PRESENTATION AND NETWORKING RECEPTION

June 15, 2016 | City Hall of Montreal
Networking Reception – Ashukan Cultural Centre
Montreal, QC

Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

Our keynote speaker, Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), will discuss Inuk priorities and participation in the design, development and implementation of federal economic development policies.

Lead Sponsor: **TD**

EDMONTON ABORIGINAL BUSINESS LUNCHEON

Canada's Global Competitiveness and the Role of Aboriginal Business

September 13, 2016 | 11:30 am - 2:00 pm
The Westin Edmonton | Edmonton, AB

Representing one of the largest growing market segments, Indigenous businesses continue to grow in most sectors across the country and are net contributors to Canada's bottom line. How are Aboriginal businesses performing in the global marketplace and what are the benefits and obstacles to doing business outside of Canada? Our keynote speakers are Perrin Beatty, President and CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Herb Belcourt, Métis entrepreneur, philanthropist and activist, and Dr. Marie Delorme, CEO, The Imagination Group.

Perrin Beatty, President & CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Herb Belcourt, Métis Entrepreneur, Philanthropist and Activist

Dr. Marie Delorme, CEO, The Imagination Group

14TH ANNUAL VANCOUVER GALA

September 22, 2016 | 5:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre
Vancouver, BC

The 14th Annual Vancouver Gala will celebrate and recognize our Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Certified companies and honour the recipient of the Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Relations.

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PAR LUNCHEON

Progressive Aboriginal RELATIONS
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

Investment and Capacity Building
September 22, 2016
11:30 am - 1:30 pm

Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre
Vancouver, BC

The 2016 Progressive Aboriginal Relations 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 keynote presenters, PAR 2016 Gold and Silver Certified companies, will discuss the benefits of investing and partnering with Aboriginal businesses and share their capacity-building experiences from development to delivery.

Supporting Sponsor: **BC Housing**

2ND ANNUAL ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION CONFERENCE (AEDCC)

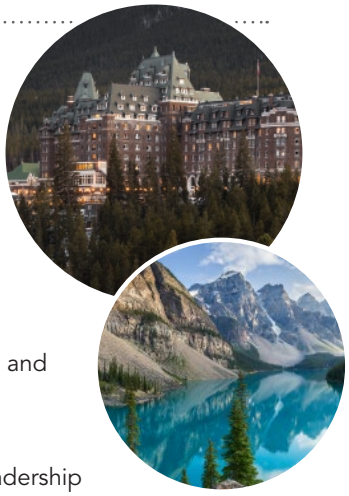
October 19 and 20, 2016 | October 19: 5:30 pm - 9:30 pm, October 20: 8:00 am - 9:00 pm

Fairmont Banff Springs | Banff, AB

CCAB will be hosting its 2nd Annual Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation Conference (AEDCC). This exciting event recognizes the contributions AEDCs make to Aboriginal business, community prosperity, and the Canadian economy. AEDCs are a growing force in Aboriginal commerce. The themes of this year's conference will be financing and the importance of maintaining positive relationships between AEDCs and their communities. This event will offer networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities for businesses, AEDC executives, community leaders, government, and corporate Canada.

Our expert panels and keynotes will speak to the unique challenges and opportunities facing AEDCs across Canada. Topics include:

- Intergovernmental Relations
- National Strategy for Economic Investment in AEDC Financing
- Getting Everyone in the Canoe
- Start-Up Financing
- Big Business Financing
- Trust and Community Give Back
- Building Strong Community Relations
- Managing Expectations and Goals
- Building Synergies with Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Governments
- Potential of Defence
- Aligning Political and Business Leadership
- Impact of Business Development on Communities



Join us and be part of the conversation. Tickets are limited. Register today and get yours at www.ccab.com

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A LOOK BACK AT THE 2015 ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION CONFERENCE

November 26, 2015 | TCU Place, Saskatoon, SK

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CCAB President J.P. Gladu with Andre Morriseau, CCAB Director, Awards & Communications

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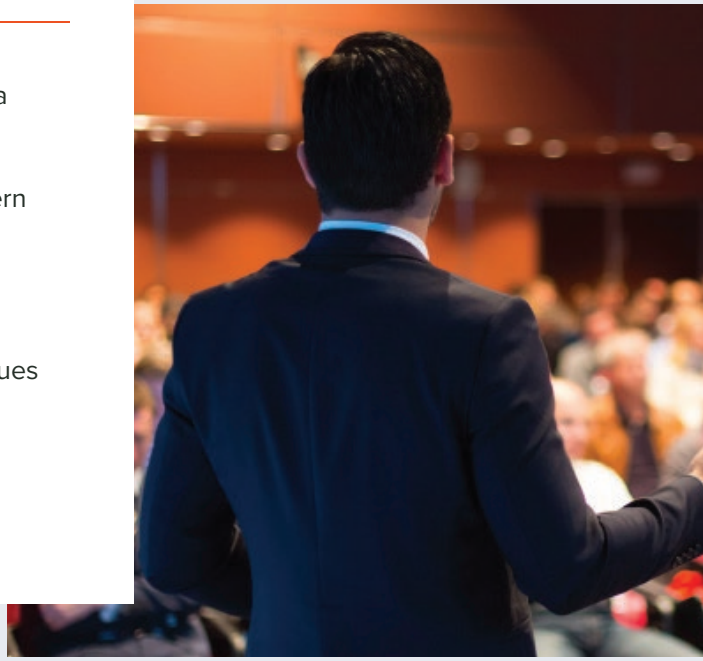
- The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
- National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations
- Dr. Wilton Littlechild
- Honourable Carolyn Bennet, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
- Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
- Honourable James Gordan Carr, Minister of Natural Resources
- Provincial Leaders who have natural resource development issues and interests
- The National Energy board
- Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- Canadian Energy Pipeline Association
- National and Regional Indigenous Leaders



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