

BEST PRACTICES
*Learning from
Experience*



Editors' Introduction

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First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities are unique and rich in culture and tradition. Individuals from every Aboriginal community in Canada have a vault of captivating stories to tell not only about their historic journeys, but also about their current political challenges and their visions for the future. The selections in this edition of *Best Practices: Learning from Experience* provide ample evidence that this diversity is alive and well in Aboriginal economies as well. The stories in this section remind us, that while Aboriginal economic strategies may differ, the collective vision of a strong and vibrant Aboriginal economy remains constant.

The first piece in this section, by Dr. Wanda Wuttunee, poses a reflective question: "*Who Are We? Reflections on Healthy Communities and Economies.*" Dr. Wuttunee addresses a fundamental aspect of the larger debate around the relationship between the development of healthy Aboriginal communities and economies and gaming — the topic of this Special Edition of the Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development.

The second selection entitled *CANDO Aboriginal Economic Development Recognition Awards* by Wanda Wuttunee and Warren Weir features the accomplishments of the four recipients recognized at CANDO's 7th Annual Conference in Yellowknife (October 2000). First, we hear how Darrell Beaulieu, President of Deton'Cho Corporation in the North West Territories, has manoeuvred the community-based corporation to become a successful business player internationally. Deton'Cho's investments are varied and include a diamond cutting and polishing operation, among other services that meet local needs. Darrell Beaulieu is pleased to share his management philosophy with our readers in this edition. Second, as we move south, we hear about Chief John Thunder a man who is recognized for his work in his community of Buffalo Point, Manitoba. His community operates a successful marina and vacation cabin development. The community has recently begun work on a golf course and intend to build a hotel at the resort in the near future. They are a small community, yet under Chief Thunder's guidance, they have capitalized on their resources without compromising the environment or their culture. The third recipient comes from the west. Clarence Louie, who has been the Chief of the Osoyoos Indian Band for over 15 years, has played a major role in the creation of eight profitable businesses under the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation. These businesses have not only provided employment for his band and surrounding communities, they have also ensured zero unemployment for the Osoyoos Indian Band community. We discover that these economic advances were based on solid leadership techniques and a unique management philosophy, which includes the minimization of political interference in band business endeavours. Fourth, we travel to the heart of the Prairies—to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan—where we learn about a new and exciting initiative that is bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners to train and employ First Nations people, while meeting the needs of Saskatchewan's corporate players.

The third part of the *Best Practices* section highlights the *Economic Developer of the Year Award* speech given by Chief Clarence Louie after he received the award. This speech is as motivating as it is revealing. It clarifies, in no uncertain terms, the views and philosophies of this successful leader in Aboriginal economic development.

The section ends with an interview given by the Casino-Rama Director of First Nations Affairs, Keven Wassegijig, who leads us back into the discussion of this Special Issue on Gaming. In *Rama Five Years Later: A Discussion on the Advantages and Pitfalls of Aboriginal Gaming in Ontario*, guest editor, Yale D. Belanger brings us back to Dr. Wuttunee's initial question: Who are We? Readers should address this and other philosophical, ethical and practical questions as they delve into the various discussions around Aboriginal gaming that make up the rest of the journal.