

CANDO AWARD WINNERS

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Sara Cardinal and Shelley Morin

This year's conference theme was *Strengthening Communities on Turtle Island*. Each of the four nominees for the 2005 Economic Developer (ED) of the Year Awards embodied this theme. Whether community-driven or partnership-based, the approaches that these economic leaders have followed take into account the needs of their communities as well as the opportunities that are available to them. All of these nominees have acknowledged the importance of working together as a nation to strengthen communities and generate economic opportunities. In the individual category, Tom Maness from the Aamjiwnaang First Nation (Ontario) and Lyle Leo from the Mount Currie Indian Band (British Columbia) were nominated for the 2005 Individual ED of The Year Award. In the business/community category both the Long Plain First Nation (Manitoba) and the Khowutzun Development Corporation (British Columbia) were nominated for the 2005 Community/Business ED of the Year Award. The following interviews were conducted at CANDO's 12th National Conference & Annual General Meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in October 2005.

INTERVIEW WITH TOM MANESS

Sara Cardinal (SC): We're here with Tom Maness, we'd just like to take the opportunity to thank you for taking the time to do this interview and I guess we'll get started. Where was your community at in terms of economic development when you started your work?

Tom Maness (TM): Actually, when I started there, I had previously worked with Imperial Oil, for twelve years before I went to work with the band. At that time they (the First Nation) were looking at the concept of developing an industrial plant; there was some infrastructure, but not a whole lot, and we also needed to service the

lots. So, we put the engineering in place so we got the lots established. That way, there we had a marketable, saleable item. There was really no point in advertising and promoting an industrial park until we had all of the infrastructure.

Shelley Morin (SM): What were some of the biggest challenges or obstacles you had to overcome?

TM: I think, initially, the plan was to teach a plan, a comprehensive game plan. At that time we didn't have a comprehensive plan in place and we really needed to take an inventory, what the band's wants, needs, goals and objectives were, that there became a tool for us to be able

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to develop them. But [it was difficult] getting that plan in place and getting the whole community to buy into the whole concept of development. See, back in those days, that would have been in the early 1980s when I started working there. But, I don't believe they really liked the whole concept or the idea of land surrender, [or as] they called it, surrendered released. So they felt that they lost some Aboriginal identity with the land, so there was the community, to get them to buy into the concept.

SC: What are some of the current economic activities taking place in your community?

TM: Well, there's a number of them, now that we've matured one industrial park. What I mean by matured is it's full. We have one lot there but it's really not one that we've developed and it's about to be set aside for one of the other companies. There hasn't been one company that's located with us that hasn't increased its capacity by at least fifty percent. So, we like to leave room for expansion. So I think that's what we'll do with that. [With] the economic development activities that are going on right now, we've probably within the last year or so incorporated additional companies. What we're hoping to be able to do is take economic development to a whole new level. Not only to become a good landlord but also become a business partner. What happens there is that we can sell goods and services that are manufactured from the park. We can tap into markets that normally see us as a small company by industry standards that [we] would have difficulty penetrating; we may be able to influence some of that market. That's to our advantage because the increase in manufactured products means increased employment opportunities created by that as well.

I think some of the initiatives that we've got going is the second industrial park. We went through the whole process of land designation, although the documentation still rests with the Justice Department and Indian Affairs; we're moving forward with the AGN to do the servicing for that second industrial park. What's going to be unique about the second industrial park is its going to have a different kind of a concept. So we're going to want to be able to attract companies that are environmentally friendly, so

we will have an eco park. So the properties that we design, or the lots we design, we won't take down all the trees; on some of the slides I had, you probably didn't notice too many trees — we pushed them down and built over them. This time I don't think we'll do that, we will protect as much as we can. With the joint venture that we're talking about, with American Railcar based out of St. Louis, is a railyard that doesn't use a lot of land so where the rails are would also be something like a bird sanctuary — a nesting sanctuary to be able to preserve and maintain the wildlife in the area. Anyways, we've diversified and tried to take advantage of the tourism.

To start, we were in the industrial type, the manufacturing and things like that, attracting those types of chemicals. While the Blue Water Bridge — they built the second span, they had to approach the band because they had turned up artifacts and things like that. Well they developed some relationships there, and what they found out from the artifacts was a major, major trading area, right there at the mouth of the St. Claire River and Lake Huron. That's where Native people used to come [from] all over North America. They found artifacts that were from as far away as the southern states or even Mexico; they found artifacts that could come from there. So it always has been a trading area but as that relationship evolved and developed with the Blue Water Bridging Company we wanted to know what kind of economic benefit we could gain. When they built the bridge, they also had to reconstruct the truck ramps as a second development; it's under construction right now. What they had to do: rebuild the Ontario Tourist information center, so now we have this building that we'll be moving in to [and] we're going to be leasing half of that building. One half of the building is the Tourist Information Center and on the other side of the building will be a craft shop. [It] means [there is] not only a benefit to us, but also a benefit to Native people in our area; [they are] able to sell their crafts. So it has a regional economic development spin for that one.

I think that's something new for us, but its diversifying and not only tapping into because of the locations into the potential for industrial development but also tourism. The craft shop is three fold: it's a craft shop, an art gallery, so artisans will have a place to showcase their art.

It also has a theatre, a 50 or 60 seat theatre, so we can capture that kind of a market as well because there's buses' always coming through across the border into Canada. Well, we can bring them into the theatre and give them that cultural experience, teach them about the culture of Native people on audio, video or live presentations. We do have access to that, a big screen and so on. We haven't really developed that yet; we're concentrating on just opening a store. The store will be open probably within a month, hopefully before Christmas. We've got people going around the province now buying crafts to stock that. They're going to need approximately \$200,000 in crafts; \$100,000 to carry the store inventory, and then the inventory they have now is about \$10,000. I think that's going to have a pretty big impact on the Native people, it creates an opportunity.

SM: You've worked hard to strengthen your community through partnerships and job creation. Why is this kind of work important to you?

TM: You mean my work?

SM: Yes, the work that you do for the community that you work for.

TM: See that is something that I always felt, where I could contribute. What I seen a number of years ago is that the unemployment rates were 25, 30, 40, 50 percent about 20 years ago. Now, because of our location, because we've created these relationships with the private sector, not only in the industrial park but outside of the industrial park, the unemployment rate is now below the national average. That's one thing we'd like to be able to maintain, and I believe the way to maintain that is to create relationships with the private sector. We'll talk about partnerships, [and] it's not necessarily corporate partnerships. That means that they buy into the community, they buy into our human resource strategies where they create employment opportunities. Not all of them, [for] some employ more than others, but in general there's quite a few job opportunities that we're creating. I think it's the only way that you can actually improve the quality of life in the communities is

by creating long term, sustainable employment opportunities as well as distance opportunities.

SC: Do you have any advice to offer others that are trying to move their communities forward in terms of economic development?

TM: What I have always maintained, what I think that a lot of communities can develop networks, not only with the private sector, but build your network with other First Nations communities. I think it's important and that's the best resources. I've done it myself, I've went to other communities and I've learned from them, from their experiences. I've asked them what has been their barriers and what did they have to overcome as well. So that I'm meaning because we are similar, similar legislation and similar corporate set-ups, I can learn from them as well. So I think it's a learning process, that's what I would encourage, is to expand on your business networks.

SM: Last question, what does it mean to you to be nominated by your peers for the CANDO ED of the Year Award?

TM: That is something I look at as one of my greatest achievements. Just being nominated, when I got an e-mail saying I was nominated I said, "Well that's fantastic." I was thrilled at just being nominated, never mind winning, just being nominated is fine. It just goes to show that people are watching and they think that there has been some economic impact and I really appreciate coming down here and being able to talk to the delegation here. I learned a lot while I was here, I learned from other First Nations here, what they're trying to do, the types of relationships that they have developed with the private sectors, like what's going on with Garden River and their new road. So it's a lifelong learning with the business networks.

INTERVIEW WITH LYLE LEO

SC: We're here with Lyle Leo. First of all I'd just like to thank you for taking the time out of your day to sit with us to do this brief interview. Where was your community at in terms of

economic development when you started your work there?

Lyle Leo (LL): We had zero economic development. We were very fortunate that our council and our leaders in our community have always been proactive, with ensuring that we have institutions of self-government on the reserve. We've had control of our own school system for 25 years, we have our own police force in the first ever agreement with the RCMP, and we have all trained First Nations police, and we've had control of our own infrastructure, the water and a sanitary, we had our own fire department, our own post office but we had no economic base.

SM: What were some of your biggest challenges or obstacles that you had to overcome?

LL: The biggest challenges and obstacles to begin with were initiating economic development in a community that was involved with political activism and resistance and changing their attitudes towards developments that we needed to work towards and the lack of any economic revenues in our community. What we realized was that every five years there was an administrative deficit and when I started [in council] there was a \$1.5 million deficit, which grew to \$3 million. It was very challenging changing the mindset of the other political activists in the community who were at the time controlling council; the problem that we identified was that they had been only focusing on federal Canada, with the mindset that federal Canada owed the nation for broken promises for providing the resources to support our programs and infrastructure on the reserve. I had to initiate the perspective that they are in a boxing ring with two opponents—one is the federal government, one is the provincial government; and they are only paying attention to one opponent. And in the mean time the other opponent, the provincial government, is taking them out and controlling their traditional territory. Those were the most difficult parts of moving forward. No economic base and no strong political government.

SC: You worked really hard to build and strengthen your community through partnerships and job creation. Why is this work so important to you?

LL: I am of the Lil'wat Nation, I come from the land, our story is that we come from the land, and what's important to us is our laws, our land and the people. I was raised in that community. My dad is from that area and all these relatives are from that whole corridor and my grandfather is from that area. I was raised largely by my dad and my grandfather and like I said, we had unique issues in our area, in our geographical area of Indian world, where the highway didn't go through our community until 1966. So we've lived a very isolated way of life. Up until I was nine years old, we didn't have any running water in our house, we didn't have any bathrooms, etc. We had to pack water, we had to cut and pack firewood. And my grandfather, I was very fortunate, was very progressive with surviving off the land and he had cleared, by his own hand, about nine pieces of land.

In doing that you were eligible to acquire so many heads of cattle for every acre of land you had cleared by hand. So we had over 40 head of cattle, we had a couple dozen horses, so up until I was nine years old, I worked a lot with my grandfather because my older brothers were sent off to residential schools and I was the only one there to help with taking care of the animals and the fields. And as such, my grandfather only spoke the language and I became very connected, not only through a very hard work ethic, but also to our land and to our people. My grandfather had some responsibility with our community and the way of our social structure there. And my mom also was very politically involved with the band council and health; even when I was a kid, crawling around on the floor at home, she was conducting meetings with government agents in our home and dealing with band business, so I was kind of raised in that environment and I think that I just inherited it, I inherited the work ethic also.

SM: What are some of the current economic activities that are going on in your community?

LL: Right now we have a gas station that we sell 3.5 million litres of petroleum annually. We have a convenience store and also we still have our fisheries department, which we now have taken stewardship over the fishery. We have a very rich river going through our Indian reserve that has seven residents fishing and is a very highly

productive spawning area for salmon that travel all the way up to Alaska and back down and through the Fraser River drainage. We have forestry activities that are ongoing; we became the largest agricultural contractor, where I was employing up to 80 people seasonally. We have the first ever all-Native fire unit crew, which is working every year with contracts with the Ministry of Forests. We have forestry operations going and with our joint venture industry logging company. We also have a store in our community. What we also have done is negotiated an arrangement with our neighbouring municipality where they can access our potable water to their industrial sites where we had traded them off for some fee-simple lands and also for them to pay the cost of \$700,000 dollars to access our water and they now pay a fee for our water use.

SC: Do you have any advice to offer others that are trying to do the same with their community as you have with your community?

LL: Well, I was very fortunate that we are in an area where, when we look at the big picture, we are quite close to Vancouver, and in Vancouver there are only two highways leaving the lower mainland to go to the interior British Columbia and northern British Columbia. One goes through the Fraser Valley and the other goes smack right through our territory and our Indian reserve, which has caused a lot of problems. But it also has provided for the regional economic growth for us to be able to access opportunities and economic development, and also allows us to access better health and services.

So I think, as an economic development officer, it is important to anchor into the community needs, to anchor into the development of the people, and to do an analysis in your traditional territory what industries are operating and to bring that forward and diversify your opportunities because, if you go forward with only one opportunity of an industry that wants to come and do a mill or pulp plant or something with you, those could die out in five, 10, or 15 years and you need to be diversified, you need to really do an analysis of what opportunities you have access to and this will give you a short term, mid-term, and long-term strategy. In dealing with your people in creating a common vision and common goals, and what is accept-

able, what is central to the community that they want protected; how they want to be represented.

Also look at what capacity that you have in your community to be able to do that, and when you're going out there, and doing meetings and seeking opportunities that you have and a link back to your governance of the day. I always bring a counselor with me or I have a community member with me. When I had first started it was very challenging because they were not wanting me to be doing that kind of thing with the provincial government that they did not recognize the jurisdiction of the province. So I had one of our activist people, who used to come with me to our meetings, and when he used to introduce himself said that he was one of the political parties and he was there to ensure that I spoke the truth. So it is really challenging, but if you have that community connection and the desire and the commitment to your community, you'll find a way to be innovative because there are so many diverse options out there you can be creative in finding solutions to your problems. But at the same time it is important that you go forward and continue doing your work, and if you can't solve a problem right now, don't use that as a roadblock for yourself. Continue going forward because the answers are usually going forward, then you can back up, when you get enough information to resolve one issue and then you can deliver that to your community, administration or your council.

SM: The last question is what does it mean to you to be nominated by your peers for the CANDO ED of the Year Award?

LL: To be nominated by my peers for the EDO award, I think it's allowed me to stop and go through some personal awareness and growth within myself as a result; it's a journey into yourself, of really "what have you done?" It allows you to slow down and really connect to where you're at because you can get very committed to what you're doing and you forget to look around you and appreciate those who are supporting you as you go forward, and it's a time to allow for that. And the personal growth I think is the most important component because in my trainings with my grandfather and my culture, it was important to have to that protocol where

your personal growth allows you to grow and acknowledge your community, and your culture and your language and your family and we tend to forget those ways. So, it's been a journey.

SC: Ok, thank you for your time; we really appreciate it and congratulations on your nomination.

INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS MEECHES

SM: Well, first of all, congratulations on your nomination. Now, where was the Long Plain First Nation in terms of economic development prior to the implementation of your community economic development strategy?

Dennis Meeches (DM): We were starting off back in the 1980s and we were going through a lot of challenges as a community: political challenges and economic development challenges. Maybe we didn't have a vision, because the political instability within the First Nations was diverting all our attentions to that to try to resolve those things. But over the years we came together as a community, we've had a number of workshops, we've set a new vision, a new standard of conducting business amongst our tribal members. So what we moved forward on first: the release of information, public information, tribal information. Primarily, the focus was to release financial information through an annual report through an audit and explain to people how the tribal funds were being expensed and where the revenues [were] coming from so that people could have a basic understanding of these things through the report and we also could put in the consolidated audit. And I think that kind of basically laid the groundwork for us for the next stage of our development.

SM: What were some of your biggest challenges or obstacles that you had to overcome?

DM: I think that in itself, the release of annual reports and audits was pretty much unheard of anywhere [and] to kind of open the reserve for business. We were selling the idea that we needed population growth, we needed visionaries within the community, we needed a strong council and a staff, and communication is key.

One of the first things I undertook to do when I became the chief was enforce the annual audit report and communication through the acquisition of a local radio station to basically disseminate information to the tribal members. And that's actually done wonders for the community; it's actually brought the community closer together, the empowerment to have their own radio station. The next challenge was restructuring the organization.

SM: And have you seen any benefits from that open communication strategy that you've taken?

DM: Yes, primarily the reason that we were doing this was for the Long Plain people and over time, as I've stated earlier, it's taken a life of its own. It's become a national model for the country. We've given the annual reports to the chiefs of Manitoba in the hope that maybe they would follow a template close to that because I know what First Nations people want, in every community; it's pretty much the same challenges we face and we need open and transparent, accountable governments. That was our biggest challenge, to move towards that and have a new standard of accountability and transparency and I think we've pretty much done that. To me, that was one of the bigger achievements, although we had a lot of economic development achievements that followed because of that.

SC: What are some of the current economic activities going on in your community?

DM: We have a tremendous amount of economic development happening in Long Plain. Right now, we have five different corporations, one non-profit and four economic development corporations. We have the Arrowhead Development Corporation, which is pretty much the major corporation, and we have some subsidiary corporations, Keeshkeemaqua Development Corporation, the Long Plain Irrigation Management Company Ltd., and the Arrowhead Portage Corporation. They all involve diverse sectors, in terms of tourism, agriculture industry, and commercial industry. We have three operating gas bars, one in Portage La Prairie on the urban reserve; we're building a new one at Arrowhead Crossing gas bar and we're renovating the main gas bar. On October 25, 2005 [we signed a]

new agreement with First Canadian Fuels, which is owned by Tribal Councils Investment Group. So the concept there is to expand First Canadian Fuels similar to ESSO stations and Domo but this would be owned by Long Plain First Nation's independent dealer, which would be part of a franchise owned by First Canadian Fuels. The concept is great; it will promote First Nations business networking throughout Manitoba and eventually we will move into other provinces, and I think that's the ultimate goal.

We have a number of gaming operations and a number of community halls. In Portage La Prairie we have the Keeshkeemaqua Conference and Gaming Centre and we hope to have Bigfoot Bingo there, that's a gaming lease on our conference center. On the main reserve, we have the Long Plain Community Hall for gaming and we have a Spirit Lodge, a cultural center, we have about four halls at Long Plain. So it's quite a bit for a First Nations to have that many halls. And in Long Plain, I invite people to come out there [to see] the infrastructure, the community buildings; they're all the standard of buildings, the design of buildings; they're all up-to-date and well maintained. Infrastructure is really good in Long Plain, over the years we've built it up, the water and sewer, the roads, the whole community has come a long way. Other businesses we have are the Long Plain Irrigation Management Company; it's a project in the agricultural area to irrigate approximately 5,000 acres of land, a \$6 million project of a period of three years. The Government of Canada is contributing \$3 million and Long Plain is contributing the balance to that, so we should be finished by 2008.

We're looking at an Indian Residential School Museum of Canada and that's a gift from Long Plain to the First Nations people of this country. Once the museum is established, we'll propose to have directors from across the country that represents all our people across Canada. And we're shooting for June 21, 2008. June 21 is an Aboriginal Solidarity date and that's the day we're proposing for the grand opening of the Residential School Museum. And we've already started collections and working towards that.

We're going into a lot of commercial leasing; we have some major tenants, such as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Southern

Chiefs Organization (these are major political organizations) and we have the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council head office in Long Plain. So, we're building a new 20,000 square foot office complex for our tenants and also the treaty commission office will be housed there. Just this past week, we had a couple of young ladies, entrepreneurs, open up a new business and it's called Mother Earth Tobacco; the tobacco that they are selling will be for ceremonial purposes. Tobacco is really important to First Nations people, in my language we used to call it "kinikkiniq," it was a mixture of different Ojibway languages, but now we say tobacco, we could also say "semaa" which means to smoke tobacco.

That's always been a big issue for us because sometimes we send the wrong message about tobacco and its effects on our people but it's really important on the spiritual side of it because that's our relationship with our Creator. So we were very honoured to have these two young ladies and open up this Mother Earth Tobacco and move towards giving us a more traditional aspect of tobacco. I think they've undertaken a great step. That's the first business we've allowed to lease there on Long Plain land because we can't keep up with the demand in terms of commercial growth over the next few years.

So we have a number of other small businesses in the community that are in the First Nations. Things are actually going really well, we have construction companies that do a lot of work and our own people try to do as much as possible. We're going to be moving into different areas of development over the course of the next five to ten years. We're going to get a medical clinic next year for sure, because we have a doctor from Long Plain, Dr. Paula Flaherty, and she has a desire to return home, open up a practice, and it'll be our gift to her. So with economic opportunities, there is unlimited potential here in the Long Plain First Nation.

SC: What needs necessitated the formation of your organization, and your community economic development strategy?

DM: Well, social needs, unemployment rates, education, cultural loss of identity, all those things have played a critical role in developing our long term strategy. Because I think a lot of

the youth especially had an identity crisis as who they are as Anishinabe people. So we needed to set a new standard for them and also to empower them and we're slowly working towards that in recreational and cultural programs in place. They have a lot of challenges in terms of alcohol and drug abuse so we needed to provide a positive goal moving towards that end to have a balanced life and to have other choices other than negative effects of their lifestyle. And as a parent, we struggle with that and those are big challenges because we know our children will probably want to experiment with these things but they need to understand the negative effects of long term use.

So we're moving towards cultural programming, recreational programming, we've put a lot of money towards our schools and lunch programs, providing post-secondary scholarships. That's one thing I forgot to mention, post-secondary scholarships ... we have to make sure that our youth are eligible for scholarships for them to get their education. So just the poverty of our people ... we needed to do something different. I think we've been able to achieve that for the most part, but we still have a long way to go with our challenges. Especially drug use, I'm really concerned about drug use in our community and other First Nations right across, crack cocaine, crystal meth, and all those things. We've undertaken an aggressive drug prevention strategy at Long Plain; we have billboards up that say "crack cocaine destroys families", misuse of prescription drugs, we're trying to send a message that this is the wrong thing to do. We actually undertook drug testing throughout our workforce and we just completed that last week; over the past week and a half, over 200 employees were tested and we still haven't done all of them. We tested from the Chief of Council all the way down, because it's important to have a drug free lifestyle, for sure. We need to set a new direction for our people.

SM: Why have you chosen this approach, your community driven strategies, to economic development?

DM: I've been in politics since 1988 and I think the existing bottles weren't working so we needed to take down the box and move in another direction. That's why the annual report

and audit was unheard of in First Nations community. Ten years before Corbiere, the decision to allow off-reserve people to vote, we've already introduced 10 years before Corbiere, people from Long Plain were allowed to vote whether they lived in Winnipeg or Vancouver, they were allowed to vote 10 years before Corbiere because that was a big issue amongst First Nations across the country; they limited it to people who lived on a reserve could vote, which created a lot of controversy and mistrust amongst people. So we're way ahead of the game in that area. We had a fairly liberal policy in transfers of people coming in and out of First Nations. The average size of a First Nation in Canada is about 500 people and in the past eight or 10 years, we've transferred well over that number all coming from other communities. Communities that are adjacent to us, some from Ontario, some from Saskatchewan.

A lot of it was marriage, there used to be this idea that a woman that married a man from another place, that person was supposed to move over there, and if a Long Plain male band member married a lady from another reserve, they would come there, that was the thinking. To me, that was Indian Act, Indian agent kind of thinking. It really wasn't the true idea of citizenship amongst our people. I never believed it was, but we were ingrained to believe that was how it was supposed to be and to me that was very, very wrong. Just understanding our history, I knew that was not the original concept of membership. Men, women, from other communities, nine times out of 10, their children will be put on the Long Plain band list and be transferred to Long Plain. They have historical blood ties to our First Nation, if they want to be.

There are concerns; I'm not saying that all Long Plain people have embraced that [and] there are concerns among the membership about that because they believe that education opportunities are being taken away, employment opportunities, housing opportunities, but I think that over that period of time, it really wasn't an issue, it actually enhanced the First Nation. The idea of citizenship amongst First Nations people has to be understood about nationhood. Like Ojibway people, Anishinabe people, they have bands in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, even some in Quebec, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Minnesota, so we're a very, very large

nation. We don't really operate as a nation, we operate as about three or four hundred different kingdoms, and every once and a while they come together and gather, but we're not there yet. Maybe down the road we may have a national organization as Anishinabe people; these are my own personal opinions about these things.

We have the same values, customs, traditions, and we need to strengthen that through a national organization and I think we're a long way from that. But even citizenship, based on that principle, I should be able to move to Batchewana or another Ojibway First Nation, without any First Nations chief and council saying "Why are we not letting him in? He is an Anishinabe person; he is part of our tribe." But there is a restriction on who comes in and who goes out, right in the membership, so it's a citizenship issue. So that's the principle we used, and the other thing about the transfers in, it actually enhances your budgets over a period of time, because you lobby with the government while there's a huge population growth. Some of these other bands, their populations are starting to decline, and what's going on with Long Plain? It's worked okay for us, although we still have challenges in housing but every First Nation has challenges in housing. That's one of the areas that we're going to be keen on, for population growth.

SM: What does it mean to your community to be nominated for the CANDO ED of the Year award?

DM: It has to be, for Long Plain, probably one of the greatest honours to be nominated by your peers across the country. That wasn't our goal, our goal was to provide our people at Long Plain a sound government, good governance, provide employment opportunities, training opportunities, to empower them with information that they are entitled to. By doing that, we became a model for the country, for the province of Manitoba, and these were added benefits on the road that came to us. Just acknowledgements that Long Plain is doing this and it's different, it's never been done that way before, let's take a look at it and see what we can learn from them [Long Plain people] because they're willing to share that information with us, from the outside looking in.

It's there for people to take what we have and what we've been able to do and to try and make the application on their First Nation, to use it as a template. We never want to impose those things, they're just there and we open them up for people to take a look at it and take what they need from it. I think that a lot of First Nations have taken that opportunity presented, and they're using them as models. A lot of my colleagues are putting out annual reports now, and using the financial information from the audits. That was really the endgame in terms of giving that information to the First Nations people.

SC and SM: Thank you very much for your time.

DM: Thank you. Meegwetch.

INTERVIEW WITH TED WILLIAMS

SC: Alright, we're here with Ted Williams from the Khowutzun Development Corporation. I'd just like to thank you for taking the time to do the interview. I guess we'll get started with the first question. Where were the communities you represent at in terms of economic development prior to the formation of the KDC?

Ted Williams (TW): I grew up in the Cowichan Communities, so where I would say they were, was that there was a lot of struggles going on between our governments, between the Cowichan Tribes, the government and the local city of Duncan and the municipality of North Cowichan. So there was a lot of division going on, not only between the local governments but also the provincial and federal governments. So basically from a development perspective, there was virtually no development going on.

SM: What were some of your biggest challenges or obstacles that you have had to overcome in your work?

TW: I would say, from my own personal experience, I would say that I was very fortunate that the barrier between governments and industries had been broken, not necessarily broken but they had been penetrated because of the initiative that late Chief Dennis Alphonse had taken.

What he had decided to do was I guess, basically, take another chance and go out to make a move and step out to try to develop another business opportunity and fortunately this one worked for us. Because he basically opened the door for us I was one of the first ones to go through and I experienced that for five years through his efforts and then after that [have it] recognized [as] a template for partnership success. I was really one of the first beneficiaries of that and I've been developing it ever since.

SC: What are some of the current economic activities going on in the community? I know there's probably many.

TW: Currently, there's a lot of current initiatives, developments going on right now. I would say in our construction company, the structural construction, we're getting to be a very large player in residential and commercial construction. One of the latest ones we're working on right now, we're keeping with our traditions, we put out an all out effort right now to build a 50-unit independent living facility for our Elders. That will be coupled with a 10-unit complex care facility as well as a 10,000 square foot Elder day care facility, that's one of the ones on the structural side. Another one on the structural side or this one is on the civil work side, we're looking to do all the earth works for the new Walmart that's going to be constructed on Cowichan Tribes lands. So, on the civil side, that's the latest one for civil. Another one for civil is the partnership we have with Chemainus First Nations to construct a liquid natural gas facility in Chemainus First Nations traditional territory. It's approximately about a \$110 million project and we've managed to work together with the Chemainus First Nations to play the lead role in accessing approximately \$30–35 million of that work. That's going to involve of course the natural gas portion, which is about 10 km of the natural gas mainline, which will play a role.

Then we have our civil side, which will be doing all the right of way clearing, earth works, site preparations and then our structural division which will be building a lot of the off buildings. Then, forestry, we have a number of companies, in forestry we're going to be logging, this month we're going to start logging the 20,000 cubic meters of timber that we have in our community

forest. Then [this past] January we harvest[ed] another 10,000 cubic meters. So there's a lot of activity going on right now in forestry, in our forestry company. Of course, with the independent living facility we have our Millwork Joinery Company [which] will build all the cabinetry for the facility. Then, of course, just the ongoing, right now, I believe they just finished the harvesting at the Cherry Point Vineyards and their making a whole new batch of wine, different varieties of wine right now. So, that's underway and with the natural gas pipeline, we're headed into April of next year, we're going to be getting the contract with the Terrason Gas again, a contract that we've had for 14 years so we're going to be getting very busy preparing for that as well. So that's some of the activities.

SM: Which needs necessitated the formation of the KDC.

TW: What happened in Cowichan, was that the Cowichan people were traditionally very involved in the forest sector as well as the commercial fisheries. I would say about 20–25 years ago, that started to change. The forest industry as well as commercial fisheries was no longer viable industries. Our people went from basically having no unemployment really and then they just shot right up into over 90 percent unemployment when those two major industries failed. What happened was the necessity was for basically for us as a people in terms of employment, we had to recreate ourselves; we had to go and get involved in areas we traditionally had never had involvement in. Because we have gone that way we've broken that barrier and now we're finding ourselves getting involved in this entire host of activities that we are unfamiliar with. We're finding that as fast as we can find these opportunities and present them to the people and provide training. We're finding that they can be very successful in untraditional areas.

SC: With all the different approaches to economic development, why have you chosen the particular approaches to economic development that you have taken?

TW: Our approach to economic development that we're finding success in right now is because Cowichan tribes flows approximately \$70–75 mil-

lion through the community each year. Where we're managing to find success is harnessing the internal market within our own community and we're taking that internal market and preparing feasibility studies and business plans around specific opportunities and finding that with that internal market we're being able to transform that internal market into real profitable business opportunities for the people

SM: What does it mean to you or your organization to be nominated by your peers for the CANDO ED of the Year Award?

TW: The nomination, when I view to be nominated by CANDO is the highest recognition you

can achieve in Canada for economic development. So we were, many things, we were so excited about it. We were excited, we were considered to be very privileged to receive a nomination and even to make it to this point. So, we hold CANDO in very high regard in regards to the nomination.

SC: Well that concludes everything. Thank you again for your time and congratulations again on your nomination.

TW: Thank you.

All of these nominees were well deserved in receiving their nominations for the Economic Developer of the Year awards. However, the Long Plain First Nation was ultimately awarded ED of the Year, while Khowutzun Development Corporation and Tom Maness were awarded the Economic Developer of the Year Recognition awards. Each of these nominees exemplified what it means to strive to strengthen our Aboriginal communities on Turtle Island. While each nominee had their own individual approach to economic development, all have found some success in economic development for their people and their communities. For that they should be recognized and celebrated for their successes. Congratulations on your awards!