

# 2008 ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

**Delilah Mah**

CANDO WESTERN EDUCATION & RESEARCH MANAGER

## **INTRODUCTION**

Aboriginal economic development is a journey of sustainability that is founded upon captivating business ventures or entrepreneurship. It could be simply creating employment opportunities, building a sustainable community, facilitating Aboriginal economic development opportunities, or embracing Aboriginal culture and values. Each year CANDO awards the Economic Developer of the Year Award to an individual Economic Development Officer (EDO), a community and an Aboriginal Private Sector Business.

What are the criteria of receiving the Individual Economic Developer of the Year Award? It could be recalling experiences of feeling alienated, or going through many challenges, or simply fretting when the path of economic development seems unclear. It means not quitting and in the end, succeeding.

What are the elements that are considered in earning the Community Economic Developer of the Year Award? It may be moving forward at a steady pace, listening and learning from others or gaining practical expertise along the way. It could involve multitasking, networking, planning, or building long-standing relationships within a variety of sector mentors.

What are the criteria of receiving the Aboriginal Private Sector Business Award? A few prerequisites might be success through investing in education or taking initiative of economic development opportunities. It could be

teaching or mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs or knowing when to utilize creativity and determination or it could be discerning when to proceed and when to wait patiently.

The three awards are about honouring and sharing exceptional leaders' journeys as they pave the way for future economic development officers (EDOs). The following are this year's 2008 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners.

## **LOUIS JOE BERNARD**

### **INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER**

Louis Joe is a member of the Mi'kmaq Tribe of Indians residing at We'koqma'q First Nation, Nova Scotia. Louis Joe began his career in economic development when he attended the Yellowquill College located in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. He was enrolled in the Native Economic Development Program and graduated in 1993 with the Academic Excellence Award.

After graduation Louis Joe secured employment with Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC) as a Development Officer. His responsibilities included the External Delivery Program until December 1993. Following this experience he went on to work with Ulnooweg Development Group Inc., as the Commercial Accounts Manager. After nine and one half years at Ulnooweg Louis Joe decided it was time to move on. He

successfully secured employment with the Union of Nova Scotia Indians as an Economic Development Advisor.

The Union of Nova Scotia Indians (UNSI) is a tribal organization affiliated with the seven bands in Nova Scotia: Membertou, Eskasoni, Pot'lktek, Wagmatcook, We'koqma'q, Indianbrook and Acadia. During these years with Ulnooweg Development Group Inc., Louis Joe became a member with the Institute of Business Consultants (MIBC) and obtained his Small Business Counsellor certification. Louis also received a United Kingdom certificate from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, as a Lands and Trust Officer.

During his time with UNSI Louis Joe earned his Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer (PAED) designation from the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO). In 2008, Louis Joe received the Economic Developer of the Year Award from CANDO. Currently, during the summer months Louis Joe is pursuing a Masters of Business Administration in Community Economic Development (MBA-CED) through Cape Breton University.

### **His Community**

We'koqma'q First Nation is located between 50–350 kilometres from the nearest service centre in Nova Scotia. It has year-round road access. We'koqma'q First Nation was established on January 31, 1833 originally called Whycocomagh and was not officially declared a band until 1958. It would not be until June 24, 1958 that We'koqma'q held its first election for Chief and council.

Currently, the community's *Well Being Index* is a product of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's Research and Analysis Directorate. It was derived from the *2001 Census* and has become recognized as a means of measuring the well being in Canadian communities. The index combines indicators such as income, education, labour force activity and housing conditions into a single number called the CWB score. The CWB scores may fall between zero (0) and one hundred (100) with one hundred being the highest. A score was generated for each community that participated in the *2001 Census* allowing an at a glance look at the relative well being of the

communities. Waycobah First Nation received a score of 59, the lowest of the 13 First Nations communities.

### **His Work Experience**

I began working as an Economic Development Advisor for UNSI on October 31, 2002, and I was appointed the member at large in 2003 for the Board of Directors, Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Division. Currently, I am a part of the Mi'kmaq Advisory Board with Maritimes and Northeast Pipelines and the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs. I am also a committee member for Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK) Benefits Committee and I represent the Aboriginal organization for Nova Scotia on the Regional Project Management Advisory Committee (RPMAC) and the Project Review Committee (PRC). I am the Nova Scotia Co-Chair for the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Network (AAEDN) and am a member at large for the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Committee.

### **Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives**

I have initiated the Community Analysis and Assessment for We'koqma'q First Nation, along with the Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Union of Nova Scotia Indians. Also, I coordinated an Atlantic Apprenticeship Trades Strategy for Nova Scotia.

### **Innovative and Groundbreaking Elements of His Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives**

Since UNSI was started more than 40 years ago, there has not been a strategic plan in place. It was a legal team in Treaty Research and Implementation of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights who conducted the majority of the work. This year Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) will establish a revised funding mechanism for Tribal Councils—the new and improved *Framework Agreement on Economic INAC* and Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC). Our rebuilding the Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy will lessen the impact of revised funding arrangements from the Federal Government.

### **Community Challenges**

We'koqma'q First Nation's approach to economic development was always reactive not proactive. It clearly needed a change in policy, procedures and practices. The Chief and Council have been struggling to adapt to changes to Chief and Council and re-educating the Council by adopting a vision and mission for the future of the community. It has been a constant struggle; however, change is inevitable and leadership has to take a major role for the community to follow.

Effects of initiatives on surrounding communities Currently, there are no significant changes readily visible.

### **Partnerships**

Currently, partnerships that were formed are working well, for example; Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office is working towards cleaning up the Sydney tar ponds. A recent announcement describes one of our First Nation's companies that will be partnering with another non-native company on a contract worth 14 million dollars.

### **Contributions to the Field of Aboriginal Economic Development**

My contribution to Aboriginal Economic Development has always been to bring awareness to non-native communities and to develop partnerships such as re-building Aboriginal economic development in our communities.

We are willing to develop our capacity to do the work and initiate change for the betterment of our communities. Becoming nationally recognized as an Economic Developer of the Year by CANDO has given me inspiration and courage to say that any First Nation person can accomplish things no matter where they come from and what background especially if you have the desire to succeed.

### **Advice for Aboriginal Youth**

I would have to say, do not be afraid to take a calculated risk. Develop your capacity and take notice of successful partners and finally be aware of your surroundings and look for ways to improve.

### **KAMLOOPS INDIAN BAND (TK'EMLUPS INDIAN BAND) COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER**

#### **Community Profile**

The Kamloops Indian Band (Tk'emlups Indian Band — TIB) is located in the Southern interior of British Columbia (BC) at the confluence of the North and South Thompson Rivers. The community's reserve is home to about 1/3 of its membership, which totals 1,072. A much larger community — the City of Kamloops (population: 86,000) — occupies the opposite side of the rivers.

The Band is part of a region that is home to 17 other Shuswap Bands. Its 5-hour road market radius includes Vancouver and Seattle or some 6 million people. Archeological records prove the community has occupied its territory for some 10,000 years.

The region's First Nation and non-First Nation communities are constructively integrated. Over 7,000 First Nations live in Kamloops property (8% of the City's population), while 5,000 non-First Nations City of Kamloops residents travel to work on the KIB reserve each day. The city provides fire services to the TIB reserve, while the Band sits on the city's Chamber of Commerce and economic planning boards.

The Band's government consists of one Chief and seven Councillors, organized as a portfolio system. Each politician has a primary and secondary portfolio. The portfolios are (1) Lands Leasing & Taxation; (2) Business Services; (3) Shared Services (Finance, HR and Admin); (4) Knucwentewc (Social Services); (5) Housing Services; (6) Cultural Stewardship; and (7) Planning & Engineering.

#### **Community Business History**

The Band's history of family private enterprise — ranching and farming — is documented as far back as 1860. Corporate (Band-owned) business history began in 1964 with the creation of an industrial park that is now home to some 350 tenants. Over time, this initiative spurred on the development of 9 other companies including a forestry company, a gas station, a car wash and a utility company, as well as a host of other business agreements. A second industrial park, an

RV park, a waterfront residential development and a restaurant are other Band-owned businesses currently under development.

### Innovation

The Band has made significant contributions to Aboriginal leasing and taxation initiatives. Two national organizations—the First Nations Alliance for Land Management and the First Nation Tax Commission—grew out of the efforts of the Band's Lands Department. Department head Freda Jules and former Chief Manny Jules were instrumental in these developments.

### Challenges

The single biggest challenge the Band faces, and continues to face, is the problem (and blessing) of growth. Over the last 4 years staffing levels have almost doubled to some 230 people. Creating the processes by which various departments interact efficiently with each other has proven difficult. In the words of TIB's Human Resource Manager David Leroux, "*we are remodelling an airplane while it is flight.*"

After much trial and error, it has been discovered that change management is best addressed by bringing in specialized consultants to deal with very specific problems as required. The process is simple. If an answer to a problem cannot quickly be found on the Internet, or within the community's network, its cost is estimated. If the cost justifies it, an expert is hired.

### Initiatives and Their Impact

It is estimated that the Band contributes some \$250 million annually to the regional economy, primarily through its work as an employer, land lord, business operator and tax collector. Through its various initiatives the Band provides direct employment opportunities for not only Kamloops Indian Band members, but also residents of other nearby communities. Its staff includes 26 non-status workers and 54 workers from other Bands.

The Band is by far the largest landlord in the region. The reserve is home to over 370 non-Band-owned businesses, government agencies and NGOs. These organizations employ almost 6,000 people, most of who live off reserve. By providing land for employers, the

Band contributes significantly to the City of Kamloops's tax revenues as most of the businesses' employees own a home and shop in Kamloops.

### Partnerships

One of the Band's strategic goals is control the management of all government activities within its traditional territory. Consequently, Band representatives sit on many boards and a variety of partnerships have been formed. The following are some of the more interesting ones:

- Participation in a local gold mine, which includes the right of first refusal on mine vendor contracts, and a Band member recruiting (for employment) program.
- Participation in a local mountain sheep management society, which includes the right to operate hunting guide, and license auction services.
- Membership in the local forestry management agency, which includes fibre management, allocation and tenure rights.
- Membership on a local tourism board, which includes promotional opportunities that are used to advertise the Band's Pow Wow, Museum and Ethno-Botanical Garden.

### Advice for Youth

Youth trying to start a career in economic development should try to get a summer job working either with a reserve or a municipal Economic Development Officer (EDO). This is the best way to determine if the work really can capture a student's interest—it serves as a reality check.

Following this approach, interested youth should sit down at a table and phone 12 EDOs. The pitch is, "*I am considering pursuing economic development as a career, and need some advice—and you have a reputation for being knowledgeable about the industry*". Using the word "advice" is essential—people love giving it (come to think of it, even when you don't want it). The youth should then say, "*I was wondering if I could ask you 4 quick questions?*", and they are in order, as follows:

1. How did you get into the field?
2. What do you like about the work?
3. What do you dislike about the work?
4. What is the starting salary?



The student then says, *“Thank you very much, that was very helpful, and if I come up with another question, would it be ok if I called you?”* They always say yes. The student then writes each EDO a short note thanking them for their time. This is important because, by telephoning, the student has just created 12 possible future job leads and references that need to be nurtured. Statistically speaking, it takes five “prospect touches” to close a big-ticket sale (such as a job); between the phone call and note, the student has already completed two of them. Some of the phone calls might actually cause the youth to be screened for a summer position, so they should be prepared to be able to explain why the work might be interesting to them.

The answers to the telephone questions will either turn the youth off to the industry, which will prevent wasting time chasing a dead end, or will create excitement, which will encourage the youth to pursue training. Two well-known Western Canada EDO programs are at Simon Fraser University and the Nicola Valley Institute. In Eastern Canada, the University of Waterloo also has a respected program, while Cape Breton University actually has a MBA in Economic Development Program.

**CREE REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
ENTERPRISES COMPANY (CREECO)  
ABORIGINAL PRIVATE SECTOR  
BUSINESS AWARD WINNER**

CREECO Inc. originates of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) signed in November 1975. The JBNQA is without precedent in the history of North America in relations between the State and Native peoples. It is a comprehensive Agreement encompassing economic development, employment and training, health and community services, land settlement, education, land transaction, environmental heritage, cultural heritage, recognition of traditional rights and interests, and compensation. There has never been any other agreement like it. The Agreement takes precedence over the Indian Act.

Soon after the JBNQA was signed, the Board of Compensation (BOC) was created. The BOC receives, manages, administers, uses and

invests the compensation contemplated under the JBNQA. Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company (CREECO) is a product of the BOC investments.

The BOC has 21 members—2 elected members from each of the nine Cree communities for a total of 18 and 3 appointed Cree Regional Authority representatives.

CREECO has 9 Board members, all elected from members of the Board of Compensation.

All BOC and CREECO employees are Cree.

All compensation received from the JBNQA is strategically invested for the collective benefit of the Cree Nation of Quebec. The BOC balances the needs of each community with the need to preserve and grow the capital by establishing an amount on a yearly basis for distribution. Once the amount for distribution has been determined, the board members will vote on the allocation to the various funds:

- Administration Fund
- Community Fund
- Cree Rights Fund
- Major Capital Projects
- Education Fund
- Cree Arts Fund
- Insurance Fund

CREECO is a holding company of the following regional companies:

- Cree Construction & Development Company (established in 1976)
- Air Creebec (established in 1982)
- Valpiro (established in 1988)
- Gestion ADC (established 1996)
- Eeyou Eenou Reality Property Inc.
- CREEADGA

These companies were established to provide long-term benefit to the Cree Nation. CREECO has the mandate and mission to provide services and economic opportunity—employment, training and advancement to the Cree Nation with the ultimate goal of attaining self-sufficiency. All beneficiaries of the JBNQA are shareholders of our CREECO companies.

**Our Corporate Structure**

See Figure 2.

FIGURE 1

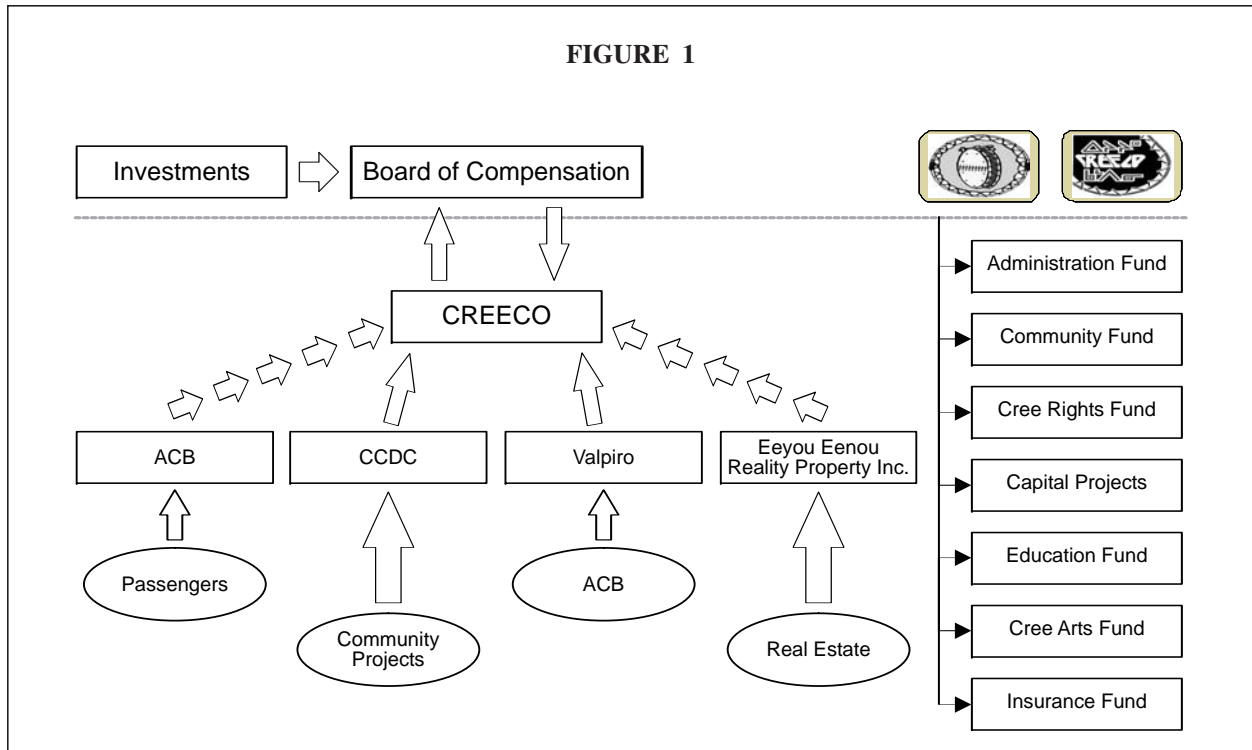
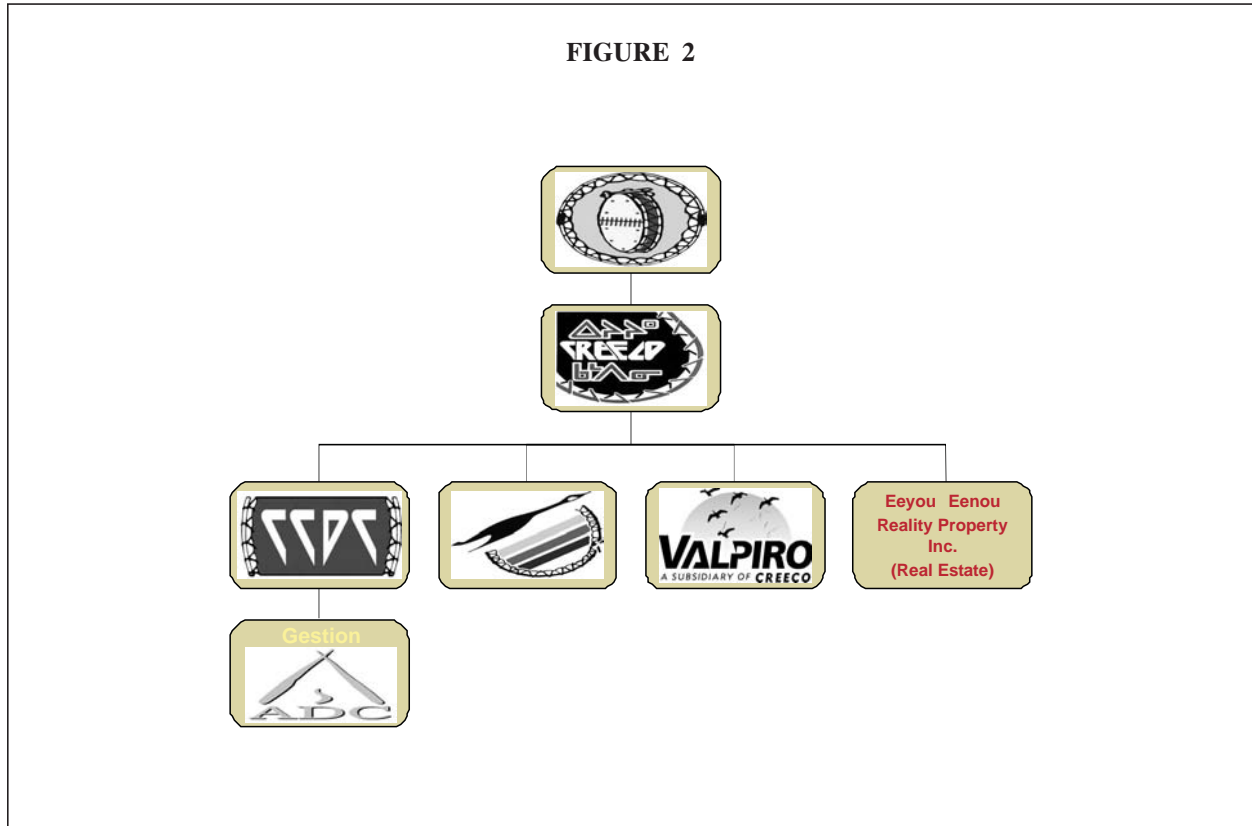


FIGURE 2



## Our Companies

### *Cree Construction and Development Company*

Our most senior company, Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC) was originally created to address the need for housing and infrastructure. Our growing population and increased size of our communities continues to place demands providing CCDC with a wealth of experience — experience that has enabled it to expand its operations outside our territory. The company's mission is to promote local employment and economic development.

Founded in 1976, CCDC has become one of the largest and most successful construction companies in Quebec and was the first native entity to obtain ISO certification in Canada. It is acknowledged as the leader in its industry and region. For over thirty years, our team of project managers, technicians, procurement specialists, administrative and support staff has been delivering projects on time, on budget and at the highest level of quality.

CCDC mainly performs the following activities:

- **Civil Engineering** specializing in roadwork, municipal infrastructures, water and sewage networks, treatment facilities, excavation, earth moving, dikes, dams and other heavy equipment related projects.
- **Environment and Special Projects** managing projects related to crushing, reforestation, tree clearing for roads, power transmission lines, campsite installation and operation, airport maintenance, air traffic control and other environmental projects.
- **Building Works** erecting schools, sports and recreational centres, office and apartment buildings and other industrial and commercial facilities. It also develops turnkey housing programs.
- **Equipment and Road Maintenance** controlling CCDC's equipment fleet and managing over 1000 km of road maintenance contracts.

CCDC operates subsidiaries and participates in joint ventures for the construction of major highways, urban planning, tree pruning, food catering and maintenance for industrial facilities. Over the years, the company developed a strong

ability in community planning, construction and management. CCDC's knowledge of the essential ingredients to build an environment where the quality of life is optimized is an added value for large groups of occupants in any particular context. Capability and experience in managing and undertaking major projects in remote and semi-remote areas either directly, through its subsidiaries or in partnership within the Cree territories, across Canada and internationally.

In peak construction period, approximately 700 workers are employed by the CCDC group, 60 of them being assigned to our administrative offices and workshops of Mistissini, Chisasibi, Laval, Nemiscau and Eastmain.

### *Gestion ADC*

Gestion ADC is our catering and janitorial services company. It is the first Cree-owned company to make the PROFIT 100 list. Ranking Canada's Fastest-Growing Companies by five-year revenue growth, the PROFIT 100 profiles the country's most successful growth companies. Gestion ADC is a subsidiary of Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC).

Gestion ADC achieved revenue growth of 270 per cent in the past five years — 2002 to 2007. The number of employees has jumped from 237 five years ago to 446 today in a company that prides itself on hiring Crees where possible. Today more than 30 per cent of their workforce is Cree. Gestion ADC is presently counting over 325 employees in the catering sector and janitorial services distributed in 16 different locations in the province of Quebec. William MacLeod, President of CCDC, the parent company, says Gestion ADC, has major contracts supplying meals to work camps at the hydro electric projects in the heart of the Cree Nation in the James Bay area of northern Quebec.

"This is an honour we share with every single worker who has ever been on our payroll," says Anthony MacLeod, Director of Gestion ADC. "Without the entrepreneurial foresight of the Cree leadership using money wisely to establish this much-needed business, our success would not have been possible." Gestion ADC was honoured at the 6th annual PROFIT 100 CEO Summit and Awards Dinner on June 17, 2007 in Toronto.

### *Air Creebec*

Air Creebec is our regional airline. Air Creebec's beginnings date back to 1979. In 1980, the Crees were told "Indians don't own airlines". This statement not only did not stop us — it propelled us to move ahead and prove them wrong. Air Creebec was established in June 1982. At that time the Crees owned 51% of the company and Austin Airways owned the remaining 49%. In 1988, the Crees purchased all the airline assets in the largest commercial deal to that date performed by any Native group in Canada, making Air Creebec a wholly owned subsidiary of Creeco.

Air Creebec's primary purpose is to provide safe, reliable, and efficient air transportation within the Eeyou Istchee and beyond. It is acknowledged for its expertise and experience in aviation and in the region we serve. Billy Diamond was Air Creebec's first President (1982–1991). Albert W. Diamond became President 1992 and is still our President. We've grown from 1 plane to 17 planes. We've grown from 14 employees to 270 employees. We fly 130,000 passengers a year, make 15,000 departures a year and fly 4 million air miles a year. The year 2009 marks Air Creebec's 27th Anniversary. I also always think about how the Cree leadership at the time decided to get into aviation by forming a partnership with the owners of Austin Airways. I always felt and continue to feel that this was such an astute decision, in the sense that the Crees had never owned or managed an airline and needed the time to learn.

The decision made by the Cree leadership to get into the aviation industry through a partnership with people who were already in the airline business tells me that the leadership that we had at the time certainly knew what they were doing. It was the Cree leadership that negotiated with the Federal Government to provide the funding that made sure that the airports and other facilities were there in the Cree communities. Imagine how difficult it would have been for our airline, not only to get established, but also to be successful if such a program had not been negotiated. Albert is playing a leading role in the development of Aboriginal business in the country. Economic development groups — Cree and others — respect his views and appreciate his insight. He is sought after as a guest speaker, inside and outside the Cree community. Air

Creebec has become the "flagship" of the Crees of Quebec.

### *Valpiro*

Valpiro is our airport services company that not only supports our airline, but also provides services to other lines at the airports we operate from. Valpiro purpose is to provide safe, reliable and timely airport ground transportation services.

### **CREECO Career Opportunities**

In September of 2007, CREECO, upon receiving the mandate from the Cree Nation Regional Government — coordinated a Regional Economic Development Conference within the Cree Nation of Quebec. Among many important results, this event highlighted that the youth segment of our population is our fastest-growing demographic. This generation represents the next big workforce entering the labour market. The issue of youth employment is now elevated and is more emphasized. In order to compete in this market, youth will need to enhance their personal qualifications, achieve higher levels of education, diversifying their knowledge base and by gaining exposure to different fields of expertise. There is a need to create and deliver informative presentations of career information that will create greater awareness and direct and encourage more of our young people towards higher education and specific skills training that will lead to meaningful employment in growth sectors of our workforce. CREECO is aware of this and is doing its part to encourage and increase employment within its ranks — within its subsidiaries: Air Creebec, Valpiro, Cree Construction Development Company and Gestion ADC. For more information please contact Rodney W. Hester, Business Development Coordinator at (418) 745-3931 or visit our website at <[www.creeco.ca](http://www.creeco.ca)>.

### **CONCLUSION**

Clearly, economic development involves taking steps forward towards self-sufficiency and when it comes to the accomplishments of Aboriginal peoples it is evident the award winners have strived to contribute to economic development opportunities of all types. By sharing their knowledge of



their journeys, this year's award winners have left a path to follow. Congratulations to the 2008 Economic Developer of the Year Award win-

ners! Thank you for sharing your insight and best practice models!