

2013 Economic Developer of the Year Award Winners

Morgan Bamford, First Nation

FIRST NATION — MUNICIPAL CEDI PROGRAM COORDINATOR, CANDO

Michelle White-Wilson

LEAD RESEARCH & SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR, CANDO

Recognize! Celebrate! Honour!

In 1995 the Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award was created to recognize and promote recent or long-standing Aboriginal economic development initiatives throughout Canada. All winners past and present share a common desire to bring their communities forward as each pursues a vision of sustainable economic self-sufficiency. Although the path of economic



development may vary from one Aboriginal community to another, the goal is always the same. That goal is to improve the wealth, prosperity and quality of life for Aboriginal people.

When the Economic Development of the Year Awards was established in 1995, only one award was given to the community who demonstrated excellence in Aboriginal economic development.

Throughout the years, it became apparent that there were businesses and individuals also deserving of recognition for their contributions to the advancement of Aboriginal eco-



From left to right: Trevor Acoose, Kahkewistahaw First Nation; Sarah Erasmus, Erasmus Apparel; and Darrell Balkwill, Whitecap Development Corporation.

conomic development. That is why today, Cando grants Economic Development of the Year Awards in three separate categories:

- Individual EDO
- Community
- Aboriginal Private Sector Business

Three outstanding examples of Aboriginal economic development were awarded for their hard work at the 2013 Cando Annual National Conference. Two finalists in each of the categories were selected to present to an audience during a special plenary during the conference. After all finalists were given an equal opportunity to present, the conference delegates voted via a secret ballot for the finalist who they believed was most deserving of the top award in each category. It is an honour to present to you the 2013 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Individual Category



Darrell Balkwill

Darrell Balkwill is currently the CEO of Whitecap Development Corporation for the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, located 26 kilometers south of the City of Saskatoon. He grew up in Saskatoon, receiving his Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Saskatchewan. Darrell has owned a number of successful businesses over the last 20 years and currently owns businesses in the health, transportation and real estate sectors.

In 1986, Darrell began employment with the Saskatoon Tribal Council as their Economic Development Officer. He worked with the seven member First Nations for 17 years assisting in the establishment of community economic development programming, planning and project development. In September 2003 Darrell joined Whitecap Dakota First Nation as the Director of Economic Development and has since been involved in additional economic development initiatives and investments to improve the economic sustainability of Whitecap and its members.

Darrell plays a critical role in establishing new partnerships and creating new business ventures to enhance the Whitecap Dakota First Nation economy. He has been involved and assisted in various economic development related strategic and investment plans. In his current capacity as CEO of the Whitecap Development Corporation, Darrell led the company through the successful implementation of numerous development initiatives, including: Dakota Dunes Hotel development; Dakota Dunes Golf Links expansion for a Club House; Saskatoon Tribal Council Casino Holdings, and; Whitecap Commercial Real Estate development. Most recently, Darrell played a key role in the creation of the Lake Diefenbaker Tourism Destination Area Plan. This resulted in the growth of both local and provincial tourism economies as well as millions of dollars in private and public investment in tourism-focused infrastructure. Darrell was also instrumental in the re-naming of Highway 219 to Chief Whitecap Trail.

Darrell has also volunteered extensively in Aboriginal economic development initiatives at the local, provincial and national levels. In 1990 he was a founding member of Cando (Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers); and served on Cando's Board of Directors for 12 years fulfilling terms as Vice-President and President. Darrell's other appointments include: Director — Economic Developers Association of Canada representing First Nations interests; Director — Saskatchewan Chapter of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business; founding member — Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce Aboriginal Opportunities Committee. Darrell is currently a Board Member for the MidSask Community Futures and Regional Economic Development Corporation; the Saskatoon Tribal Council Casino Holdings Corporation; Dakota Dunes Golf Links and Ideas Inc.

Darrell believes in preserving a strong sustainable community and works with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation Chief and Council to make Whitecap Dakota First Nation a lead and best practice to achieving economic success. Today, Whitecap Dakota First Nation boasts the lowest unemployment rate within all Saskatchewan First Nations communities. With his extensive experience and the success of the numerous development initiatives he has been a part of, there is no question that Darrell has played a key role in the economic success of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation and the surrounding region.



Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Community Category



Kahkewistahaw Economic Management Corporation

Kahkewistahaw First Nation (KFN) is located in southeastern Saskatchewan within Treaty 4 territory, and next to the Qu'Appelle Valley. In 2002, Chief and Council sought to establish a new corporate structure that would position the First Nation for future growth and development opportunities, generate wealth and employment, and that would protect the First Nation from any negative consequences should any of the business enterprises not succeed. The Kahkewistahaw Economic Management Corporation (KEMC) and its group of companies were established, separating the business and economic development function from the daily administration and politics of the First Nation.

KEMC develops and oversees all business activities associated with KFN, which includes an award winning Petro Canada Gas & Convenience Store, a Home Inn & Suites Hotel, Mamawi Holdings and a newly created Sand & Gravel business.

The Petro Canada started operations in 2004, and currently employs approximately 23 community members, has generated millions of dollars of revenue and is currently on pace to contribute over \$500,000.00 this fiscal year. Realizing the importance of partnerships, KEMC established a lucrative partnership with D3H Hotels, a hotel management company that owns and operates ten hotels across Western Canada. The new Home Inn and Suites is an \$8 million dollar facility, just opened in March 2013, and is located on KFN land in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Mamawi Holdings is the entity that manages over 40 million dollars' worth of developed property in Yorkton, all of it located on Kahkewistahaw First Nation land and generates over \$600,000.00 in lease revenue each fiscal year. These revenues have enabled the KEMC to create a new company called Kahkewistahaw Sand & Gravel, established in partnership with Peter's Crushing and Hauling. After investing nearly one million dollars into equipment required to begin operations, the new company has already begun generating revenue from its machinery and the product it makes.

Today, KEMC is a successful economic development organization with multi-million dollars in revenue and multi-million dollars in development on Kahkewistahaw First Nation land. There is no question that Kahkewistahaw First Nation is to be commended for the success of their economic development endeavors, and is set to create employment and wealth for their members and the general public well into the future.



Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Aboriginal Private Sector Business Category



Erasmus Apparel

Erasmus Apparel is an Aboriginal-owned company located in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories that embodies the hard-working and adventurous spirit that makes the north and its residents a most wonderful place. Creativity, passion, hard work, risk taking ... these are just a few of the terms that can be used to describe this successful new business. Erasmus Apparel is 100% Aboriginal-owned and an ideal example of how to become successful in the northern business world. As a youth entrepreneur, Sarah Erasmus is an inspiration and role model for Aboriginal youth and future generations on how hard work, perseverance and dedication can make your dreams come true.

In January of 2011, Sarah Erasmus was fresh out of design school, full of ambition, hopes and a vision for a successful northern business, when she decided to take a huge risk. She decided against the relative safety of taking her talent to an existing business and

instead took a chance, followed her dreams, and created Erasmus Apparel with the intent to fill a gap that existed in the northern marketplace. Erasmus Apparel was created to produce original clothing and products, designed and produced by a northerner for northerners.

The business started on little more than a dream and some support from her family. Working out of her parents' house, Sarah used the inspiration of her family and put her creativity to work making designs that would inspire all northerners. The designs she has come up with speak to all northerners but particularly to the Aboriginal community. The ingenious "*Got Diamonds? Thank a Dene.*" shirts, the children's traditional vest shirts, and even the iconic Erasmus Apparel moose logo itself are all a tribute to her Aboriginal roots and the pride she has in her culture.

Sarah is very proud of her Aboriginal heritage and looks to give back to the community at any opportunity she can find. A prime example of this is her ongoing support of local students through sponsorship of the "Outstanding Student Award" at K'alemi Dene School. Each year, one deserving student is recognized with an award, a gift and a plaque at the school. Sarah recognized the benefits that the school provides to Aboriginal youth and took it upon herself to provide a little recognition of this through the award. She fully funds the award and attends the K'alemi Dene School's award ceremony every year to present the award to a deserving student.

The creativity and generosity that have been instilled in her also take centre stage during the Breast Cancer and Prostate Cancer Awareness months. Every year during the autumn months, the Erasmus Apparel Breast Cancer Awareness and "Movember" merchandise are among the hottest items in town with a portion of the profits from their sales being donated to support these wonderful causes. The entire Erasmus Apparel family embraces this generous spirit as well, entering a team into the Run for the Cure and both donating and raising money during this event. These are just a few of the ways that Sarah gives back to the community with her time, effort and financial support.

Despite being a relatively new business, Erasmus Apparel is successful and growing with each passing season. Sarah has proven to be a savvy businesswoman. She has provided future aspiring entrepreneurs with a blueprint of how to successfully pursue their dreams while remaining true to their roots.