

2014 Economic Developer of the Year Award Winners

Crystal Swan

PROGRAM INTERN, FIRST NATIONS — MUNICIPAL CEDI, 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 advance their communities as each pursues a vision of sustainable economic self-sufficiency.

Throughout the years, it became apparent that there were businesses and individuals also deserving of recognition for their contributions to the advancement of Aboriginal economic 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 candidates exemplifying outstanding Aboriginal economic development were awarded at the 2014 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 equal opportunity to present, the conference delegates voted via a secret ballot for the finalists who they believed were the most deserving of the top award in each category. It is an honour to present to you the 2014 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Individual Category



Chris Hartman

Chris Hartman is the Chief Executive Officer of the Tsawwassen First Nation Economic Development Corporation (TEDC), a position he has held for the past five years since the creation of the TEDC. As the CEO, Chris manages all aspects of TEDC's business, and reports to the corporation's independent Board of Directors. During his time leading the TEDC, Chris has shown great enthusiasm for his work and an exemplary commitment to development of the Tsawwassen community.

The TEDC was initially formed as an initiative by the Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) following the ratification of the first B.C. First Nations Treaty in 2009. The Treaty provided

the Tsawwassen people with a land base, financial assets, and new authority, but it was up to the community to manage these. In efforts to become a successful, sustainable, self-sufficient community, the TEDC and Chris' role were created. In the five years since, Chris has launched numerous initiatives to further TFN's economic goals.

One of the most significant challenges faced by the TFN after the signing of the Treaty was the need to turn its non-productive real estate assets into much-needed revenues to support the community and its new government. However, most of the land designated for economic development was located on a low-lying flood plain that would require considerable expertise and capital to develop. To accomplish this in a cost effective manner, and to manage risk and leverage expertise of others, Chris and TEDC looked to cultivate new partnerships. Coming from a relatively small base of assets, TEDC entered into several new partnerships in the process of developing this land, and facilitated many new economic opportunities for community members.

TEDC also secured partnerships with two experienced real estate developers to build two complementary shopping centres on 185 acres of TFN land. Chris and the TEDC Board were able to negotiate ongoing participation rent and member benefits packages into the land lease, elevating TFN to more than simply a landlord; this negotiation spawned dynamic benefits in the community in spite of their limited initial resources. In addition to this agreement, the developers also agreed to fund a considerable amount of off-site infrastructure costs, a great benefit to the whole community. TFN is also working to lease the first 70 acres of TFN's 300 acres of industrial lands, which will generate a total of approximately \$81 million in prepaid lease revenue to TFN, in addition to future participation rent and other member benefits.

As CEO of TEDC, Chris has also been instrumental in the creation and advancement of various other business ventures for TFN. Since 2009, TEDC has entered into four joint ventures with private sector partners to provide civil construction services, security services, general contracting, and IT and business process outsourcing services.

Chris and the TEDC Board prioritize the betterment and the objectives of the TFN community, and look beyond financial returns for ways to benefit community members. Diverse economic opportunity benefits to TFN community members have been negotiated into all contracts. Some of these include the provision of full-time employment, employment business and training opportunities, preferential hiring processes for local businesses, discounts for local business on rental of retail space, and numerous other benefits. TFN community members are also given the opportunity to provide input on projects.

TFN is quickly becoming an economic driver in the Greater Vancouver region, and an Economic Impact Study estimates that current projects alone will generate more than \$348 million in construction employment income and \$235 million in permanent annual employment income. This is thanks in no small part to Chris and the TEDC, who overcame limited initial resources after the 2009 Treaty signing to gain lucrative returns from joint ventures. Chris's belief is that the key to success in economic development means looking beyond basic business principles, and focusing on the balanced delivery of social and economic opportunities, so that all TFN members are afforded an opportunity to thrive and achieve their dreams.



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Community Category



Nisga'a Lisims Government Economic Development

As a fully integrated part of northwest British Columbia's economy, the Nisga'a Nation boasts abundant natural resources, water supply, and full road accessibility. The primary industries in the Nass Valley area are fishing and forestry, complemented by employment in the government, education, and health care sectors.

Since becoming effective in 2000, the Nisga'a Final Agreement secured the Nisga'a Nation's 2000 square kilometres of land, and all of the resources within. Ensuring the security of this land has created the confidence and security necessary to develop the Nisga'a Nation to its fullest potential. The agreement has also brought about vast improvements in infrastructure, which have resulted in new jobs to the Nass Valley region. The maturing forest industry in the area is seeing advancement, as well as the thriving fishery which has been developed; both of these industries achieving environmental stewardship under the Nisga'a. In addition to this, burgeoning the telecommunication and tourism industries has created many employment opportunities in an expanding and diversifying economic market. From small, local business initiatives to international partnerships, the Nisga'a Lisims government actively encourages all initiatives that will bolster community employment and economic success.

The Nisga'a Nation owes a lot of its success to its commitment to inclusive nation-building, as all four Nations have collectively worked together in a regional approach to economic development. Though engaging all four Nations through every step of development has been acknowledged as a key challenge, its benefits have been undeniable. Working together has allowed for integration of all ideas. Having a shared vision, aligned interests, and collaborative decision-making has gone a long way for the communities' success. In removing any sense of competitiveness or disparity between the communities, they have succeeded in moving forward together, unified in the pursuit of their economic development goals.

A 10-year strategic economic initiative has recently been launched by the Nisga'a Nation. This initiative identifies individual and collective economic interests between local and federal governments and business entities. The initiative engages all four Nations in joint decision-making, and seeks to build action plans to capitalize on strategic goals which will serve to answer the question, "How do we plan for prosperity?" This emergent path to success for the Nisga'a requires the identification of essential components of prosperity, as well as key steps and an action plan.

The Nisga'a Prosperity Framework has become a key project for economic development in the Nation, outlining 11 key themes for implementation. The framework was created as a way for the Nation to overcome barriers and limitations in economic development. Since completing this prosperity framework, the Nisga'a Lisims Government has developed many new businesses. These include two logging trucking businesses, two restaurants, two retail outlets, a daycare, a consulting business, a tourism outlet, and numerous other ventures. Four additional tourism plans are also in the works for the four Nisga'a Villages.

The Nisga'a Nation has demonstrated innovation and excellence in their dynamic approach to community economic development. Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship has allowed community members to see themselves and their roles within the community as it moves forward. With a proactive and responsible government, and a strong workforce seeking employment and training opportunities, the Nisga'a Nation has a bright future, with insurmountable possibilities for new industries, partnerships, and projects.



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Aboriginal Private Sector Business Category



Acosys Consulting Services

Acosys Consulting is 100% Aboriginal owned and operated and considers itself to be an Aboriginal business above all else. The small, 12-person consulting firm is located in Mon-

treal, only 15 minutes away from the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory. Their mandate is to provide industry and government with professional, timely, and value-based consulting services in IT, Human Resources, and Aboriginal Policy Development, while building the presence and visibility of Aboriginal peoples within professional services.

Founded in 2006, the idea for Acosys was initially inspired by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's 1996 report, which stated that "many Aboriginal youth see themselves facing an economic wasteland." This quote struck a chord with labour lawyer Julie Lepage and business analyst and project manager David Acco, inspiring them to co-found Acosys in hopes of creating employment and educational opportunities for Aboriginal youth. They have been successful to this end, as over 70% of Acosys' employees are Aboriginal, and they have committed 33% of hiring to Aboriginal people on all project deliveries.

Collaboration is another major goal of Acosys, as the creative benefits of workplace diversity are emphasized. Putting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal minds together can create great success, according to Acco, who is also President and CEO of Acosys. In order to work together respectfully and effectively, Acosys acknowledges a need to change negative stereotypes and false perceptions of Aboriginal communities. As such, they offer sensitivity training to all clients as part of their strongly emphasized social mission, with educational workshops seeking to explore the history, breakdown the stereotypes, and highlight the future opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

No path is without its challenges, and Acosys has had to constantly face the challenging disadvantages that Aboriginal peoples face in the mainstream labour market, such as lower employment rates and lower-than-average incomes. Since 2009, Acosys has worked to combat these factors with their Aboriginal Intern Program (AIP), part of their commitment to building the Aboriginal professional workforce. The program seeks to increase the amount of Aboriginal peoples working within the Human Resources and Information Technology (IT) fields. As part of this 52-week internship, delegates can earn a competitive salary while engaging with mentors in their field and working alongside the Acosys team on relevant projects. This program benefits not only the interns, as they gain valuable experience and skills, but also benefits their communities and the marketplace as a whole.

It is Acosys Consulting's belief that Aboriginal peoples are ready to take on careers at the professional level, and have the ability to cultivate positive change in the private sector within policies, hiring, or organizations. Acosys seeks to help foster this change, with further hopes of Aboriginal role models in positions of influence, as well as increased capacity-building, with dollars being made off-reserve flowing back into communities.