

2015 Economic Developer of the Year Award Winners

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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 2015 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 finalist who they believed was the most deserving of the top award in each category. It is an honour to present to you the 2015 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Individual Category



Cliff Fregin

Cliff Fregin, a member of the Old Masset Village on Haida Gwaii, has been involved in Aboriginal economic development for almost 30 years. He expanded his role in economic development from administration to management, all while serving his community as an elected Councillor for multiple terms. During his time as Executive Director for the Gwaii Trust Society, he worked extensively in policy and program development. He then served as the C.O.O. for the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA), a network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions growing the economy for First Nations entrepreneurs.

Cliff has been in his current role as Chief Executive Officer for New Relationship Trust (NRT) since its establishment, and has been directly responsible for the creation of unique economic development, capacity development and community programs that provide annual funding support of \$6 million to First Nations individuals and communities in British Columbia. Programs such as the Entrepreneurs Equity Matching Fund (EEMF) Initiative and the First Nations Equity Fund provide much-needed capital for BC First Nations' business initiatives, while promoting Aboriginal entrepreneurship. The Direct Support Funding program provides funding directly to BC First Nations to develop their economic development infrastructure and governance systems. In total, over 300 Direct Support projects have been funded, including Musqueam Indian Band's development of a Custom Election Code and Tsilhqot'in National Government's Mining Policy Implementation Plan.

In his role at NRT, Cliff has emphasized the importance of mentorship in Aboriginal economic development. NRT launched the Economic Development Support Team (EDST), comprised of Aboriginal business experts who work with First Nations to map out strategies and provide guidance regarding viable business opportunities. In addition, Cliff supports NRT involvement with the BC Aboriginal Business Awards. Cliff sees importance in recognizing successful Aboriginal businesses in BC and giving them an opportunity to share their stories with other aspiring entrepreneurs. He also supports the Young Entrepreneurs Symposium (YES), an annual event bringing together young aspiring entrepreneurs to learn from successful Aboriginal business leaders. YES has provided hundreds of Aboriginal youth from across Canada with the confidence and skills to succeed. He also works in support of NRT Scholarships and Bursaries, which has seen \$5.9 million awarded to Aboriginal students in various fields of study.

In addition to his corporate leadership, Cliff previously entered into entrepreneurship with two successful business ventures. In 1991, Cliff opened a sports card shop in his hometown of Prince Rupert, BC, inspired by an interest in sports memorabilia and Aboriginal professional athlete cards. This shop provided full time employment to many and had a captured market in the area. Cliff was also one of four partners that established and operated Haidabucks Café, a café in Masset, BC.

Cliff is often asked to provide his input in roundtables and conferences on Aboriginal Economic Development, governance, program delivery, or board diversity. Throughout his nearly 30-year career, he has worked in support of Aboriginal community economic development through countless programs and initiatives. The importance of his work to the promotion of First Nations governance and economic development cannot be overstated.



Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Community Category

Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation

As the for-profit business investment and development division for the Penticton Indian Band, the Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation (PIBDC) was formed to manage the band's business portfolio and to foster the development of a sustainable economy. The PIBDC has had many great achievements in less than a decade of operation; from the mod-



Chief Jonathan Kruger
Penticton Indian Band

est beginnings of a river tubing business, they are now leading the development of Penticton's only resort-style planned community and involved in a large-scale collaborative project with the City of Penticton. Focusing on responsible and sustainable business practices, PIBDC's businesses have led to successful job creation, training opportunities, and wealth generation for the Penticton Indian Band.

PIBDC currently oversees a number of diverse businesses:

- Skaha Hills is an award-winning, seven-phase "resort-style" community. It is designed to be the most energy efficient housing in all of BC, and will be situated on a spectacular 550-acre site along the south Okanagan hillside. The first phases of this development are already sold out.
- Westhills Aggregate LP specializes in construction sand and gravel services; in addition to trucking and delivering construction products for customers, Westhills Aggregates also employs excavation equipment that allows for both small and large construction jobs.
- Coyote Cruises LP is home of the South Okanagan's hottest summer attraction, providing tube rentals and transportation to visitors along Penticton's River Channel. Operating during the summer months, Coyote Cruises services over 100,000 people per year from around the globe.
- Sn'pink'tn Forestry LP manages the Penticton Indian Band's forest resources, addressing forest health issues and managing interface fire hazards.

The PIBDC has recently completed a health care centre and a cultural school. In addition, they are currently finalizing an official Comprehensive Community Plan, which identifies lands to be protected and lands to be designated for development such as residential, industrial, commercial, recreational, etc.

The PIBDC strives to form relationships and lines of communication with outside partners, including communities, government, and corporations. These relationships have pro-

vided the PIBDC with invaluable advice and expertise, and have created development opportunities. They are currently partnering with the City of Penticton on Satikw Crossing, a major development project that will connect the economies of the two communities. With the construction of a bridge across the Okanagan River Parkway Channel, an intersection feeding onto the proposed bridge, and a potable and fire protection water distribution line, the long-term goal for this project is to open up Penticton Indian Band lands for development of a hotel, retail space, and a business park.

The Penticton Indian Band and the PIBDC are distinguished by the relationships they have forged with communities and external partners. Their innovative and successful development ventures have won them numerous awards while transforming their economic prospects. The PIBDC has achieved outstanding business success in less than ten years using a combination of traditional values, collective community vision, relationship building, and strong leadership, paving the path to a future of self-determination.



Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner



Jenny Larocque and Janice Larocque

Aboriginal Private Sector Business Category Spirit Staffing & Consulting Inc.

Spirit Staffing & Consulting is a 100% Aboriginal woman-owned and operated business. As a Metis woman navigating the corporate world, President Janice Larocque experienced many employment issues based on stereotypes and misconceptions about Aboriginal employees. She became determined to dispel these myths and to help Aboriginal people advance within the workforce. As a result, Spirit Staffing & Consulting began operating in 1998, with the vision of becoming a reputable Aboriginal Employment Agency while working to reduce the discrimination that Aboriginal people face in the corporate job market.

Spirit Staffing & Consulting's vision quickly gained traction, and after only six months of being in business, they signed their first large contracts with CP Rail and Husky Energy.

Today, Spirit Staffing & Consulting continues to support and promote the economic development of First Nation and Metis Communities by creating employment and training opportunities. They have been hand-selected as a preferred supplier by various large corporations for skills development, safety training, and management and recruitment of Aboriginal employees.

Spirit Staffing & Consulting fosters long term employment opportunities for local First Nation and Metis communities by providing customized training programs, employment placements, and career coaching and mentorship for job seekers. They also work to bridge partnerships between First Nation and Metis communities and Spirit Staffing & Consulting's corporate clients. These partnerships create job opportunities, ensure recruitment of local talent, create a means for community members to support their families without relocation, and ultimately drive community economic growth. Spirit Staffing & Consulting's flexible company structure allows them to adapt to each individual project, identifying gaps and designing unique processes to create win-win solutions benefitting both clients and communities.

Spirit Staffing & Consulting's subsidiary division, Fast Labour Solutions (FLS), was created in 2000 to focus on the industrial and safety training needs of their clients. FLS concentrates on placing general and skilled labour for the oil and gas, construction, environmental, manufacturing and transportation industries. As these types of placements often require specific safety training, FLS further expanded to include a fully certified safety training facility that offers 13 instructed courses and over 350 online courses.

In addition to helping increase Aboriginal representation in the work force, Spirit Staffing & Consulting emphasizes the Aboriginal integrity of their own organization. As such, 50% of Spirit Staffing & Consulting's internal staff and 33% of their contractors identify as Aboriginal. With a team of twelve people, and branches in Calgary and Edmonton, Spirit Staffing & Consulting is able to attract and retain Aboriginal employees for large-scale corporations across the province.

Spirit Staffing & Consulting is a recognized trailblazer and leader in promoting diversity. Their success can be seen with the people they have helped, the reputation they have built, and above all, the economic growth they have sparked within the communities they have supported. With Aboriginal people becoming one of the fastest growing populations within Canada, Spirit Staffing & Consulting's 17 years of experience and unique and effective approach will continue to position them ahead of competitors in the market.