

# Introduction

---

Wanda Wuttunee

In this section, I am pleased to highlight some of our regular features and introduce some different ways of describing the successes that leaders and businesses are making in their communities. If you like what you see, I encourage you to shine a spotlight on hard-working and inspiring leaders and business owners that you think our readership need to meet by submitting their stories. The following give short summaries of the works that are included in this section.

The 2016 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners are recognized for interesting projects and experiences across a number of communities. Rob Crow, winner in the individual category and director of Economic Development for Blood Tribe, Alberta is leading a multi-million dollar grocery store project as well as advising the community in their land designation referendum. The community category winners reside in Teslin, Yukon and include the Teslin Tlingit Council and Village of Teslin. While cultural tourism, recreational fishing and hunting connect with the rest of the world, this community is also very reliant on hunting and fishing. They have a 10 year sustainable plan that will help the community meet basic needs while cultivating environmental sustainability with a focus on community capacity building. Birch Mountain Enterprises Ltd, Forth McKay, Alberta works closing with oil sands clients with a strong focus on supporting Indigenous programs, employees and business.

Putting people first before profit is at the heart of Aki Energy, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Its story is captured in a case study that is perfect for the classroom. The company's activities are outlined, a series of questions for further study are presented and then extensive teacher's notes prepare instructors for utilizing the material to best advantage. Aki Energy starts

green businesses in their communities, creating local jobs and growing strong local communities.

Jamie Wilson is a leader to take note of and his accomplishments are outlined by a student who has had the opportunity to be mentored by him. Leadership is always a challenge so it is critical to acknowledge those who are making best efforts of demonstrating emotional intelligence and personal integrity. This is a new addition to this section. Share your profile of our strong leaders in future issues.

Important learning came out of a national gathering focusing on Aboriginal experiences in the cross-cultural workplace. Well-attended by a cross-section of Aboriginal community members, academic and human resource specialists of various ethnicities. A number of speakers set the tone for topics that were then discussed in small sharing circles. Elders were integral to the event and spoke throughout the gathering.

Marilyn Courchene, Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba is a band councillor who is making a difference in her community. Her focus is on housing needed to improve the foundation for community economic development and she has also dedicated her time to supporting rights and opportunities for Indigenous women and children. She is working to keep their children in the community when family issues make that difficult which also goes to building a strong community.

When communities can partner to the benefit of both, then these experiences need to be shared. Cando and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities are working to promote partnerships between First Nation communities and municipalities. These partnerships offer a means to identifying projects of mutual benefit. Tools to build successful partnerships are also offered to those partnerships accepted into the program. This article offers a short profile of one partnership between Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Town of the Pas and the rural municipality of Kelsey. Some of the challenges and rewards are presented with a final word to encourage persistence in keeping such partnerships alive and healthy.