

## 2016 Economic Developer of the Year Award Winners

Jocelyn Turner  
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

Throughout the years, it became apparent that there were a variety of businesses and individuals 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 categories:

- Individual EDO
- Community
- Aboriginal Private Sector Business

Canada. All winners past and present share a common desire to advance their communities as each pursues a vision of sustainable economic self-sufficiency.

Three candidates exemplifying outstanding Aboriginal economic development were recognized 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 an 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 2016 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!

## **Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner**

### **Individual Category**

**Rob Crow**



Rob Crow, Blood Tribe Economic Development

As a member of the Blood Tribe located in Southern Alberta, Rob Crow currently is the Director of Economic Development for the Blood Tribe and has been employed for over 19 years. Rob is a role model in his community and has completed outstanding work using his education to best advantage which includes a Bachelor of Management Degree as well as a Master's of Science in Management.

Rob has served on several provincial and national boards including Cando (Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers) for three consecutive terms and most recently as the co-chair of AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada). He also received his Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer (PAED) certification in 2007 from Cando.

Currently, Rob's major projects are the Blood Tribe Land Designation referendum along with the Kanai Marketplace Grocery Store. As the lead on these projects, Rob relies on the buy-in from the Blood Tribe community to get these projects into motion so he takes care of strategic planning, leakage studies, feasibility studies.

The Kanai Marketplace Grocery store is a new, 12,000 square foot, multi-million dollar commercial project on the Blood Reserve. It opened in Fall 2016 and aims to bring affordable, fresh, healthy food products to on-reserve residents. The store is supplied by The Grocery People, the same supplier of Coop grocery stores in southern Alberta.

Kanai Marketplace was built with the help of local construction workers and will employ 20 people, generating income, creating employment opportunities and training, and improving the standard of living for community members of the Blood Tribe.

Although Rob faced some funding issues with the project, his wisdom and diplomacy served him well and he was able to keep the project on track. Kanai Marketplace will service the largest land-based reserve in Canada with an on-reserve population of 10,000 plus residents. The Blood Tribe are neighbours with the Piikani First Nation and the Townships of Fort Macleod, Cardston and Magrath. This marketplace is closer to these communities than the nearby city of Lethbridge, Alberta, and will be of great use to these surrounding nations.

Rob Crow is a deserving individual and has demonstrated his passion for economic development and Indigenous lands management. Rob is an asset to his community and without him, his team and the hard work they do, the Kanai Marketplace simply would not exist.



## **Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner**

### **Community Category**

#### **Teslin Tlingit Council & Village of Teslin**



Eric Morris, Richard Sidney & Gord Curran, Teslin Tlingit Council & Village of Teslin

Teslin, Yukon is a century-old village located at mile 804 on the Alaska Highway. Teslin is home to the Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC), an inland, self-governing First Nation that migrated up the Taku River from the coast of Alaska, armed with a comprehensive land claim settlement. The Village of Teslin (VOT) is one of eight municipal governments of the Yukon with a small, active community of 450 people. Hunting and fishing play a key role in the lives of the people who live there.

Teslin's modern economy plays a huge role for these communities in the area of cultural tourism and recreational fishing and hunting. Approximately one third of residents are employed by TTC, VOT or the Yukon government.

The Teslin Community Development Plan 2015–2025 was formalized in 2014 by VOT and TTC. The 10-year plan was approved at a community-wide meeting and put into effect

during the 2015–2016 fiscal year. The plan provides a framework for projects in the next 10 years and is a great example of sustainable community economic development, characterized by its commitment to SERV: social responsibility, ecological sensitivity, cultural respect and economic viability. The goal of the plan is to guarantee people in the community are able to meet their basic needs, support healthy lifestyles, develop a diverse and sustainable economy, cultivate environmental sustainability and enhance and improve knowledge, skills, capacities and capabilities in the community.

In the first year of implementation, the plan created over 110 jobs for local residents, produced 66 contracts for local suppliers and entrepreneurs and generated approximately \$7.5 million in new funding for community infrastructure projects.

The collaboration between a First Nation and a municipality like TTC and VOT is a great example of the benefits that are realized when communities come together with a shared vision and become ‘stronger together’.

Prior to the 10-year plan, TTC and VOT were previously working together under another name on their first sustainability plan. Through that collaboration, TTC and VOT saw the benefits of working together, but they faced some obstacles. There is often a learning curve when partnering with others and sometimes the benefits of collaboration are overshadowed in order to fit within the rules and regulations in place by one funding body or another. Since that first joint venture, a steering committee was pulled together which resulted in the creation of a 10-year plan.

The Teslin Community Development Plan 2015–2025 offers hope and promise. It is a plan based on respect for others and many communities can look to this partnership as a model of what can be accomplished through team building, community collaboration and political will.



## **Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner**

### **Aboriginal Private Sector Business Category**

#### **Birch Mountain Enterprises Ltd.**

After nearly a decade in business and over 250 employees, Birch Mountain Enterprises (BME), is a proven and dependable fluid handling and steaming specialist in the Fort McKay area. Specializing in safety and service, the three cofounders and owners of the company know the importance of giving back to the community and supporting Indigenous programs, employees and business.

Primarily serving Fort McMurray’s oil sands clients and area, they are proud to be local and Indigenously owned. With a 60% Indigenous employment rate, BME has created numerous jobs in the community. They utilize Indigenous-owned contractors when possible, they are members of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association and their mandate is to support children’s health and wellness programs in local Indigenous communities.



Chris Wilson  
Birch Mountain Enterprises

Thanks to the generosity of BME, Fort McKay has been able to offer amazing educational, sports, health and wellness programs for youth in the community. The Fort McKay Wellness Director is quoted as saying, “it has helped a lot of our kids to progress in their communication skills in addition to having fun!” Since 2011, BME has been a huge supporter of the community hockey program, resulting in a very successful program with over 80 youth playing the sport.

BME was a great support to the community during the wildfire catastrophe that hit the region in May 2016; they donated truckloads of groceries and supplies to evacuees. BME is constantly striving to touch the lives of their community members and give back in any way they can.

BME is inventive and this is clear with their new Wastewater Treatment Plant project. Their goal is to be the go-to company for these types of services and they hope to streamline their services on hauling sewage, sewage processing, bio solids management and certified laboratory services. This project will also create new job opportunities for community members, increasing the overall wellbeing in the community. BME is committed to environmental sustainability and they view all their activities through a lens of reducing environmental pollution.

BME comes from humble roots and demonstrates that, with all that they do. They are extremely deserving of this award and are a great example of a thriving company that puts community first.