

## 2017 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 of sustainable economic self-sufficiency.

Aboriginal economic development initiatives throughout Canada. All winners past and present have a common desire to advance their communities as each pursues a vision

Throughout the years, it became apparent that there were businesses and individuals also deserving of recognition for their contributions to the advancement of Indigenous 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 Indigenous economic development were awarded at the Cando 24th Annual National Conference. Two finalists in each of the categories were selected to present to an audience during a special plenary at the conference. When all finalists had been 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 2017 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!



*2017 Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award winners*

(Left to right) Tammy Belanger, Green Leaf Enterprises;  
Chief Sidney Peters, Glooscap First Nation; and Rose Paul, Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation



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

**Individual Category**

**Rose Paul**

Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation

Members of Nova Scotia's Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation have plenty of reasons to smile these days. And they can thank Rose Paul, the Director of Lands and Economic Development of their First Nation, for that.

Shortly after joining the First Nation's administration department in 2006, Paul focused her thoughts on the community's need of a highway interchange.

That's because since the 1960s, when Highway 104 (part of the Trans-Canada Highway) was built, the Paqtnkek First Nation has basically been divided into two. The southern portions of the First Nation were not easily accessible and, thus, not developed.

That is changing now, though. In July of this year members of the community voted overwhelmingly to surrender parts of their land in order to have a highway interchange and connector roads built. This will allow both residential and retail properties to be built.

“It was a very long process, very difficult, and there were a lot of barriers we had to go through,” Paul said.

In part for her continued efforts in making this deal become a reality, Paul was chosen to receive Cando’s economic developer officer of the year award. She was honoured at the Cando Conference, held October 22–25 in Fredericton, N.B.

During her allotted 20-minute presentation, Paul included various slides about her First Nation and its long-anticipated project. She discussed the history of the venture and challenges faced along the way.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of those from Paul’s community were looking to develop the southern portions of their First Nation. A total of 277 ballots were cast in the land-surrendering deal, and 265 of those were in favour.

The highway project is expected to cost \$15.3 million. The First Nation will also receive more than \$2 million in compensation for the use of its land and to move some families and reconstruct homes that will be affected by the project.

Paul believes eventually adding businesses and homes to the First Nation will be a win–win for all.

“It’s good to see my community feel better and to know we can improve the life of all of our members,” she said.

Construction on the highway interchange began in August. It is expected to be completed by the fall or winter of 2018.

Though she played an instrumental role in seeing the project become a reality, Rose said she is not the only one who deserves recognition.

“Somebody had to do the heavy lifting,” she said. “But it was the community working together with the leadership and government that helped this project stay alive.”

Paul also said the fact the highway interchange is becoming a reality now has proven to be a big boost to members of the First Nation, who have visions of starting up their share of businesses.

“People are thinking about how they can be entrepreneurs now,” she said. “A lot of people are coming forward wanting to do their own businesses.”

By winning Cando’s EDO of the year award, Paul helped Nova Scotia register a sweep of the accolades up for grabs at the conference.



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

### **Community Category**

### **Glooscap First Nation**

Nova Scotia’s Glooscap First Nation has made some giant strides in recent years.

“For such a young community, we have come a long way,” said Chief Sidney Peters, who has held his position since 2012.

The Glooscap First Nation, which was only established in 1986, has undergone tremendous growth under Peters' leadership.

In fact, thanks in part to various successful ventures the First Nation has captured some national recognition. Glooscap was chosen as Cando's community of the year.

Glooscap captured this accolade following a vote of delegates that attended the Cando Conference, staged October 22–25 in Fredericton, N.B.

"I'm happy, of course, and excited about it," Peters said. "It's nice to see your peers recognize all the efforts you have put in. Sometimes you don't think how much time you've put into it."

Glooscap currently has 375 members. About 100 of those live on the First Nation.

"We're a small community," Peters said. "But we have big dreams."

Peters said he didn't feel out of place at the Cando Conference, even while seeing others from much larger First Nations discussing projects in their own communities.

"I felt comfortable there," he said. "What I liked about it was people were coming up to me and telling me how happy they are with what we have done."

Peters believes having a progressive Council and a qualified and dedicated staff has resulted in recent growth on his First Nation.

"We are also lucky that we have very positive relationships with all levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal," he said. "While we don't always agree on government policies and how they operate, we work to develop positive, honest and long-term relationships with government and their staff."

While Peters was the one who made the presentation about the Glooscap First Nation at the Cando Conference, he said many others deserve credit as well.

"A lot of it goes back to our staff and our community," he said. "We had community backing."

A boost to the First Nation came in 2014 with the creation of Glooscap Ventures, the First Nation's economic arm that oversees all of the community's businesses.

Recent expansion on the First Nation includes a highway commercial development named Glooscap Landing. The first phase of this project, which is now open, features a gas bar and convenience store.

A Tim Hortons franchise will also be included in the mix in the near future.

Peters said creating Glooscap Ventures has also resulted in growth with existing businesses.

"They have also worked to expand our commercial fisheries through increased access to the lobster fishery along with a new state of the art vessel," he said.

And the Glooscap First Nation is not resting on its laurels. Shortly after Glooscap Ventures was created, officials from the First Nation established a 5-year action plan and a 10-year strategic plan in the hopes of growing further.

Peters said being named community of the year by Cando will not affect any of these plans.

"There's still stuff in our strategies we need to focus on," he said. "It's just a matter of prioritizing it."

Peters added those in his First Nation know they are on the right path, not only because of praise they are receiving but also because of the number of others who want to work together.

"It just shows you what we're trying to do seems interesting," he said. "More and more people want to partner with us."



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

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

#### **Green Leaf Enterprises**

Tammy Belanger admits she was not quite sure which direction her life would take when purchasing some property back in the summer of 2000.

The plan was to turn the property, located in the tiny Nova Scotia community of Wilmot, into a business named Green Leaf, which would include a flower shop, Christmas shop and a greenhouse.

Belanger, a member of the Glooscap First Nation, had some obvious concerns as to whether the business would take off.

“The building was originally to be used as a shop but converted into a house if need be,” she said.

“Originally we thought, let’s see how we make out the first three years, and we’ll go from there. After that, there was no looking back.”

Well, the business has been a huge hit. And the shop has been expanded twice and is now four times its original size.

Green Leaf’s success has now also earned Belanger some national recognition. That’s because her operation captured Cando’s Aboriginal Private Sector Business award this year.

Belanger was presented with her award at the Cando Conference, which concluded on October 25th in Fredericton, N.B.

Belanger had another reason to celebrate at the conference. Hometown, Glooscap First Nation, was named the community of the year.

“We are one big family,” she said of those from her First Nation. “They won just before me, so we were all so pleased.”

Belanger is also thrilled that her own business has flourished despite her not having poured money into advertising or marketing campaigns. A Facebook page for Green Leaf Enterprises is maintained.

“Our best advertising, though, is word of mouth,” she said. “They’re singing our praises, which brings new people into the store.”

One of the Green Leaf Enterprises’ attractions is that it has the only Christmas shop in the Annapolis Valley. Various Christmas ornaments and decorated trees are available for purchase year-round. Staff at the business host classes covering topics such as floral design, wreath making and centrepiece making. It also provides training courses for First Nation communities across the province on how to grow their own vegetables.

“I’m really pleased with what we’ve done for the community and what we give back to the community,” Belanger said.

The national accolade from Cando will put even more of a spotlight on Green Leaf now.

“I think it’s fantastic,” Belanger said. “It’s very rewarding and it’s a huge compliment.”

This marked the first time Belanger had attended the annual Cando Conference. Green Leaf was one of the four businesses nominated for its category for a Cando award this year. And it was one of the two finalists in its grouping invited to the national conference.

“It was a huge honour to be recognized, even to be recognized in your own community,” she said.

As one of the two finalists in her category, Belanger was required to make a 20-minute presentation on her business.

Conference delegates then voted on the winners in all categories.

“I spoke to a lot of great people and learned a lot at the conference,” she added.

And she was also glad she could extol the virtues of her own business.

“People could see how we’ve diversified and what our ambitions are,” she said.

And then capturing the top honour in her category was just icing on the cake for Belanger.

“Words can’t describe how happy and how proud we are,” she said. “It makes us reflect on the work we’ve done. And we’re very proud as a team.”