

## 2018 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 Indigenous 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.

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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
- Indigenous Private Sector Business

Three candidates exemplifying outstanding Indigenous economic development were awarded the ED of the Year at the Cando 25th Annual National Conference. Two finalists in each of the categories were selected to present to an audience during a special plenary at 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 2018 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!



Tom Many Heads  
*ED of the Year Winner —  
Individual EDO Category*



Chief Patricia Bernard,  
Madawaska Cree Nation  
*ED of the Year Winner —  
Community Category*



Juanita Kremer  
Yukon Motel & Restaurant  
*ED of the Year Winner —  
Indigenous Private Sector  
Business Category*

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

### **Individual Category**

#### **Tom Many Heads**

Siksika Resource Development Ltd., Alberta

Since becoming the CEO of the Siksika Resource Development Ltd. (SRDL) in 2010, Tom Many Heads has played an instrumental role with various business ventures on his First Nation.

The SRDL promotes all investments and economic developments for Alberta's Siksika Nation. The SRDL has been part of a number of success stories in recent years, with various businesses that have popped up on its First Nation. And there are no plans to slow down.

In fact, officials with the SRDL are going full steam ahead with their plans to have the Siksika Nation become the first First Nation in Canada to have a medical marijuana production facility on its own land. Many Heads said the SRDL has already secured what he calls a "pre-licensing authorization letter" from Health Canada. The plan is to have a 25,000-square foot facility fully operational on the Siksika Nation by some point in 2019 or at the latest the following year. Construction is expected to begin soon.

"I'd love to see it start this fall," Many Heads said. "But we're probably looking at some point in the winter."

The production facility would undoubtedly employ a number of Siksika Nation members. Plus, Many Heads believes producing medical marijuana on his First Nation would help somewhat with the massive opioid crisis occurring throughout the country.

“There is a lot of potential for economic and health benefits for our own involvement in terms of what cannabis can do in positive ways,” he said.

For his various ventures with the SRDL, Many Heads was nominated for Cando’s Economic Developer of the Year Award, and he won in the Individual EDO category.

Under Many Heads’ leadership, some brand name businesses have recently opened on the Siksika Nation. These include a Petro Canada, which opened in December of 2016 and has exceeded expectations with more than \$6 million in sales, as well as a Subway® restaurant, which has been open since June of 2017. The SRDL has also entered the hospitality business through forming partnerships with various hotels. In 2018 it announced it was buying into three B.C.-based hotels.

The SRDL will also have a 50 percent equity partnership with hotels expected to open this September in Calgary and Edmonton.

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

### **Community Category**

#### **Madawaska Maliseet First Nation**

Madawaska, New Brunswick

The Madawaska Maliseet First Nation is not resting on its laurels. Located a few kilometres from the New Brunswick city of Edmundston, the First Nation has had numerous recent successful economic stories that have greatly assisted toward its goal of becoming self-sustaining. The First Nation’s local efforts have helped it garner national recognition — it was selected as the winner in the Community category at the 2018 Cando Conference, staged in Enoch, Alberta, in October 2018.

“It’s clearly a great honour,” said Patricia Bernard, who has served as the Chief of the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation since 2013. “More importantly it’s exciting to see a small community like us succeed.”

Noting the strong competition from the other finalist, Bernard said her First Nation’s victory was a bit unexpected. “It was a surprise given the competition we were up against,” she said. “They (Cree Nation of Mistissini) were quite awesome. It was a surprise we were able to beat them.”

As for the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, the most notable venture undertaken in recent years in the community was the building of the Grey Rock Power Centre, which opened in 2013. The facility, mere minutes from the Quebec border and the border with the American state of Maine, has become the pride and joy of the First Nation.

The property, located next to the Trans-Canada Highway, includes a multi-purpose entertainment centre that features a casino and bingo hall as well as one of Atlantic Canada’s largest truck stops.

Several other businesses, including a food court and a Ford car dealership, are located in the centre. A hotel and conference centre, located next to the casino, was expected to be completed by the end of 2018, but some delays have pushed back that expected opening until the spring of 2019. That facility will include 80 hotel rooms.

“People will be able to come and stay now,” Bernard said. “That will help out quite a bit.”

A Yamaha dealership is also completed and opens for business in 2019.

By 2018 the Grey Rock Power Centre had opened its doors for five years. However, it was a long journey for the officials of the 550-member First Nation to come to accepting such a venture in the community. “It’s been a long shot of vision for the community,” Bernard said. “Previous administrations have had this vision all the way back to the 1970s.”

The Grey Rock Power Centre is managed by the Madawaska Maliseet Economic Development Corporation. The CEO of the corporation is Bernard’s older sister Joanna, who had served as the First Nation’s chief for a decade, up until 2013. Joanna Bernard was also nominated as one of the contenders for Cando’s 2018 Economic Development Officer of the Year.

Although Joanna Bernard did not make it to the finalists, she deserves plenty of praise for her work for the First Nation. “She’s been instrumental in getting our community where we are today,” Patricia Bernard said. “Without what she’s done we wouldn’t be where we are today.”

This year marked the first time Patricia Bernard attended a Cando Conference. “It was a beautiful conference,” she said. “It was nice to be on the Cree territory as well and to be so well received. I thought it was fantastic. I’m not an economic development officer myself, but it was really exciting for me.”

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

### **Indigenous Private Sector Business Category**

#### **Yukon Motel & Restaurant**

Teslin, Yukon

A dozen years ago, while working as a conservation officer and trying to raise three young children in addition to being pregnant again, an opportunity arose that drastically changed the work career of Juanita Kremer and that of her husband, Steve, as well.

Steve Kremer, a carpenter, had done work at the Yukon Motel and Restaurant, located in the community of Teslin, when the owner, an elderly German man, who was looking to sell, approached the Kremers. “He handpicked us to take it over,” said Juanita Kremer, a member of the Teslin Tlingit Council. “And then he stuck around for a bit to help us manage it.”

Years later, the work the Kremers have done with their business has earned them a national recognition award — Cando’s 2018 Indigenous Private Sector Business.

“It’s slightly overwhelming,” Juanita Kremer said. “I didn’t recognize the scope of this nomination.” To be recognized nationally is mind-blowing. “I’m just a small business person in the Yukon running a small business,” she added.

Despite some initial concerns, the Kremers have made their business a successful one. The previous owner had allowed the Kremers to pay him directly in instalments for the property. It took more than nine years, but they are now debt free, having paid off their \$1.4 million loan for the business.

Juanita Kremer admits she had some concerns whether she was making the right decision to switch careers. “Fish and wildlife is a difficult job,” she said. “And you work a lot of evenings and weekends. This was completely different for me, but it was a good fit.”

One of the Kremers' accomplishments is turning their business into a 24/7 operation. The business, which was previously open 15 hours a day, includes a licensed restaurant with 63 seats and a motel with 10 rooms and two log homes. There's also a gas station offering gas, diesel, and propane, and an RV park with 65 hookup sites. The business also includes a wildlife gallery and gift shop, and a Canada Post depot.

The Yukon Motel & Restaurant is one of Teslin's largest employers. During the busy summer months, the business employs 22 people, and during the winter months there are 10–12 employees. All four of the Kremer children, whose ages range from 12–18, have worked at the business. The eldest is now away, studying at Toronto's Ryerson University.

The facility, about 60 years old, will soon need some renovations. "It's a beautiful business," Juanita Kremer said. "I don't want to change it so much that it changes the feel of the business." The Kremers are not rushing to a decision. They are waiting to see what the government will do with a nearby bridge that requires updating, which will impact their decision to renovate or to expand operations at the Yukon Motel & Restaurant.

"What they do will have a direct effect on our business," she said.

In addition to winning a national award, Juanita Kremer has made useful networking connections at the Cando Conference. She met various Indigenous people from across Canada who are involved in banking and expressed interest in working with her should the Kremers require funds to expand or renovate. She also met another individual who would be able to assist with Indigenous staffing requirements if need be.

Kremer had nothing but praise for the Cando Conference. "It was a great opportunity," she said. "It was very beneficial for First Nations people. And I'm very thankful for all those who put their time in to further First Nations people across Canada."