

2019 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 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 26th Annual National Conference that was held on October 27–30, 2019, in Gatineau, Quebec. 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 2019 Economic Developer of the Year Award winners!



Katie Young-Haddlesey
ED of the Year Winner
— *Individual EDO Category*

Paul Donald, Simpcw Resources Group
& Keith Matthew, Cando President &
a member of Simpcw First Nation
ED of the Year Winner
— *Community Category*



Andrew & Frank Buckshot
ED of the Year Winner
— *Indigenous Private Sector Business Category*

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Individual Category

Katie Young-Haddlesey

Curve Lake First Nation, Ontario

If you spend just a few moments chatting with Katie Young-Haddlesey chances are it won't be long before she starts praising co-workers or the importance of working well with other partners. That's even when it is Young-Haddlesey herself who is being singled out for recognition. Such was the case on October 30, 2019, when Young-Haddlesey was announced as the winner of the Economic Development Officer of the Year Award at the Cando Conference, which was staged in Gatineau, Quebec.

For the past three years Young-Haddlesey has been working as the EDO of the Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario. As expected, Young-Haddlesey was pleased to win the award. But she also quickly deflected praise towards her. "It's a true sense of accomplishment," she said. "Somebody told me that during my presentation I said 'We, we, we' too often. But I truly feel it is a team effort."

Young-Haddlesey came to the conference already knowing she was one of two finalists in her category vying for a national award. Byron Gourley, who works for the Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation in New Brunswick, was the other finalist in the EDO of the Year category. All finalists were allotted 20 minutes to make a presentation during the fourth and final day of the conference, staged at the Hilton Lac-Leamy. Delegates who attended the 26th Cando Annual National Conference were then allowed to vote on those they felt made the best presentation. Winners were announced at a conference-closing dinner ceremony.

Young-Haddlesey admitted being in the national spotlight did bring out some unexpected nerves. "I'm not a person who gets nervous," she said. "But I was extremely nervous, especially in the morning (when I made my presentation)." Young-Haddlesey did on a couple of occasions mention this was also the friendliest competition she had ever been in. That is because she quickly bonded with Gourley, an individual she had not met prior to the conference. "It made it a fun experience," she said of her instant connection with Gourley.

Before becoming Curve Lake's EDO, Young-Haddlesey had done some work for the First Nation through her private consulting company, Affinity Strategic Communications. Her resume also includes a 13-year stint working for the group now known as the Peterborough & the Kawartha Economic Development. Young-Haddlesey had also worked a couple of years for the company responsible for business development at the Peterborough Municipal Airport.

As for her work with the Curve Lake First Nation, one of Young-Haddlesey's most notable projects has been overseeing the creation of a new 20,000-square foot commercial centre. Construction on this facility is expected to begin next spring. The current business centre on the First Nation will also be upgraded in order to attract new tenants. "Our First Nation is recognizing the importance to move forward," Young-Haddlesey said. "Part of that is building relationships. The last three years I've been working towards that."

Young-Haddlesey also believes her cultural knowledge has proven to be a vital part of her success.

"I work every day to better understand the history and culture in our community," she said. "I believe that we can only do our jobs well if we can understand the events of the past

that have brought each of our community members to where they are now. We can only help if we approach each case from a place of understanding.”

Young-Haddlesey’s EDO of the Year award signified the first time in her work career that she was singled out. “I’ve won marketing awards with a team,” she said. “But I’ve never won an individual award before.” As is her nature, Young-Haddlesey also credited others. “I’m very proud of my staff,” she said. “We have a really good team. I don’t pretend that I can do anything without those people at the table with me.”

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Community Category

Simpcw Resources Group

Simpcw First Nation, British Columbia

The Simpcw First Nation is proof that even a relatively small First Nation can achieve great things. “We’re just a little band that could,” said Paul Donald, a director of the Simpcw Resources Group (SRG), the business arm of the First Nation based in British Columbia.

Primarily because of SRG efforts, the Simpcw First Nation was selected as the Community of the Year at this year’s Cando Conference. Simpcw was one of two communities that had been previously named as a finalist for the Cando award. The Kingsclear First Nation in New Brunswick was the other finalist.

“This is a community award,” Donald said, moments after it was announced Simpcw had won its category. “There are so many people that mark the success of our community.” And it’s not just those leading the First Nation. “This award is because of the chief and council, the (SRG) board of directors and also all of our crews that work,” he said.

The SRG was established in 2011, originally operating out of a basement office on the First Nation. When it first began SRG had three employees, who focused on forestry management and logging opportunities. Fast forward to the present, and SRG has its own office space and about 100 employees working in a number of industries. Services SRG offers include those in environmental, archaeological, pipeline maintenance, site rehabilitation, road building and maintenance and security. “We’ve outgrown that already and are looking to go elsewhere,” Jason Dorey, SRG’s senior operations manager, said of the business’s current office space. SRG has also turned into a business that can provide stable jobs for many of the Simpcw First Nation members. “It’s gone from being seasonal work in construction to a year-round career for people,” Dorey said. The Simpcw First Nation currently has about 700 members. Less than half live on the First Nation, in the community of Chu Chua.

Donald is hoping SRG’s efforts will help bring more of its members home to live on the First Nation. “I think what we’re doing is ensuring long-term prosperity,” he said. Recent financial figures indicate SRG is on track to achieve that. During the 2018–19 fiscal year, it registered \$4.5 million in profits from the slightly more than \$18.6 million in revenue it brought in. These figures were significantly higher than just one year earlier. During the 2017–18 year, SRG had about \$13.4 million in revenue and made a profit of \$2.35 million.

“We just want to keep building our business,” Donald said. “We’re not done. We’ve got big aspirations and we want to keep working on our strategic plan.” Donald added SRG officials have succeeded in part because their cultural knowledge hinders them from doing things that would harm the First Nation. When the business was being formed, planning ses-

sions included developing guiding principles. “We want to make money,” he said. “But the preservation of our Simpcw culture and heritage is one of our guiding principles.”

For Donald this year marked the ninth time he has attended the Cando Conference. “It’s always very informative,” he said. “I always learn a lot.” He was especially impressed with a panel focusing on international trade. “Maybe we’re not thinking big enough,” he said of his own First Nation’s plans. But obviously big enough at this point to be recognized as Cando’s top community for 2019.

Cando Economic Developer of the Year Award Winner

Indigenous Private Sector Business Category

Buck’s Auto Parts

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, Quebec

Frank Buckshot is proof a lot of hard work can take one a long way. Though he has just a Grade 9 education, Buckshot, a member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in Quebec, is a self-made successful businessman. In fact, one of his businesses, Buck’s Auto Parts, took top honours in the Indigenous Private Sector Business category at this year’s Cando Conference. “It’s something I didn’t think I’d be able to achieve,” Buckshot said of his national award. Heading into the conference Buckshot knew his company was one of the two finalists in the running for the Indigenous Private Sector Business award. The other finalist was Supercom Industries, a business partnership featuring six First Nations in north-western Ontario.

Buckshot had his daughter Amanda and son Andrew make the presentation on behalf of Buck’s Auto Parts. “It meant the world to me,” Buckshot, who is 62, said of the fact his children spoke on behalf of the business. “They’re the ones that are going to take it over some day.” This marked the first time Buckshot had attended the Cando Conference. And he was rather appreciative to be included in the awards presentations. “I’d like to thank everybody involved in this project,” he said.

Buck’s Auto Parts has been operating on the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation since 2015. But Buckshot has been involved in the auto parts industry much longer. He previously owned Mani Pieces Plus, from 1997 through 2015, in Maniwaki, about one kilometre from his current business. He sold Mani Pieces Plus so he could open Buck’s Auto Shop, right across the street from a successful sports store which he has been operating since 2006.

Buckshot also continues to run a seasonal brush cutting business, from May through October. Buckshot believes the facts he provides quality service and that those customers spread the word are among the reasons his auto parts and body shop is successful. “It’s who you know all the time,” he said. “The best publicity is word of mouth.” Buckshot believes winning the national Cando award will further help his business. “More recognition,” he said, when he was asked what he thought the accolade might help achieve. “That’s what we’re hoping for.”

Buckshot said some of his customers travel great distances. “I have a lot of customers from James Bay,” he said. “They have 10 Cree bands there. A lot of them come to Ottawa to shop, and they have to pass through Maniwaki. They don’t have very much up there. They live 1,000–2,000 kilometres away. Some of them drive 15–20 hours to get here.”

Buckshot believes there's a rather simple reason why Buck's Auto Parts has been a success. "I think it's the service we give," he said. "People keep coming back." Buckshot added he believes the fact he is fluent in three languages — English, French, and Algonquin — is a huge benefit when talking to his customers. And he also thinks his cultural knowledge has played a huge role in his accomplishments. "I think that for myself, having been born and raised in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, the strong presence of our culture and cultural practices has been vital to my success in the business world," he said. "Success in business relies on core values and principles like hard work, discipline, determination, and communication. These core values have been more a way of life for me [than they have] been simple business principles."