

Introduction

Bettina Schneider

This issue's Lessons from Experience provide an impressive overview of different initiatives and First Nations leaders, economic developers, and entrepreneurs who are transforming Indigenous economies throughout Canada. The first article explores the progress made by Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba under the leadership of Chief Larson Anderson. Not only has Norway House Cree Nation's payroll doubled under Anderson's leadership, but the Nation has recently secured funding to build the largest hospital on a First Nation in Canada.

The second article shares the entrepreneurial journey of Michelle Cameron, a member of Peguis First Nation in Manitoba and owner of Dreamcatcher Promotions Company, the Indigenous Nations Apparel Company (INAC), and Dreamcatcher Executive Offices. The article explores the challenges and successes Cameron has faced on her journey, including recently signing a partnership between Dreamcatcher Promotions and the National Hockey League's Winnipeg Jets to produce its Indigenous-themed promotional products.

The third article shares the work being done by James Stevens, winner of Cando's 2023 Economic Developer of the Year, for the work he has accomplished for Millbrook First Nation in Nova Scotia. Stevens has played a major role in numerous economic development projects for his Nation, from the construction of a 68-unit apartment building in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia to the construction of a new 39,000-square foot building serving as the home office for the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. He has also worked with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) to establish a branch in Millbrook First Nation, FCC's first branch in an Indigenous community in Canada.

The fourth article looks at Rose Paul and her work as the economic development officer for the Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation in Nova Scotia. Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation's Bayside Development Corporation won the Indigenous Private Sector Business Award at the 2023 Cando Conference. The article looks at how Paul's hard work and persistence to undo past wrongdoings has led to the development of a highway interchange, connector roads, and the Bayside Development Corporation, comprised of the Bayside Travel businesses which are now attracting visitors from around the world.

The fifth article by Kelly Lendsay and Craig Hall introduces us to the important work being done by Luminary, a new initiative that aims to work with Indigenous businesses and organizations, post-secondary business schools and academic institutions, research agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners to “advance an innovation ecosystem focused on Indigenous economic priorities.”

The sixth article explores the work being done by Bert Mercer, the business manager of Sii T’ax Development Corporation, one of the longest-operating development corporations in the Nisga’a Nation. Mercer has not only contributed to existing businesses that are thriving, but is also helping to lead new business initiatives such as a new mechanic’s shop, a 20-room motel, and The Gathering Place, a two-level building where Nisga’a Nation’s home-based entrepreneurs and artisans will be able to showcase their goods and interact with visitors and tourists; the Nisga’a Nation will lease out business offices on the second level.

The seventh article by Mary Beth Doucette and Ryan Stack is an excellent summary of the keynote presentation at the 2023 CANDO Annual Conference which provides a Mi’kmaw corporate perspective of the Mi’kmaw Coalition and Premium Brand Seafoods’ acquisition of Clearwater Seafoods.