

*2024 Cando Economic Developer
of the Year Award Winner:
Community Category
Bearspaw First Nation*

Robert Shotclose

BEARSPAW FIRST NATION CEO

Rob Shotclose is a member of the Bearspaw First Nation, which has about 1,900 citizens. Rob is originally from Bearspaw First Nation's Satellite Reserve Eden Valley IR #216, which is located one hour southwest of Calgary. Rob has held the position of CEO of the Bearspaw First Nation since September 2011. Previously, he was the Bearspaw Band Manager from 2005-2009. Before his positions as CEO and Band Manager, Rob worked mainly in construction and ranch work before pursuing his education. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Calgary in 2010 and has taken many professional development courses from the Banff Centre, CANDO, the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA), and local post-secondary institutions. Rob is married to Natalie, and they have two daughters, Rianne and Reegan. Rob says, "in my spare time, I like to play basketball, softball and golf. I enjoy reading, music, and attending my daughters' sporting and cultural events."

Since becoming CEO fourteen years ago, he has led the development of many profitable major businesses for the Nation. Rob project-managed and developed the Bearspaw Service Centre (Centex Gas Bar and C-store, Car Wash), and Subway Franchise from 2012-2014. He played a lead role in the development of the Stoney Nakoda Telecom (Internet, VOIP, and Shaw TV) company in 2012, which provides internet services to all three Stoney Nakoda Nations Reserves (Mini Thni, Eden Valley, and Bighorn). Rob also project-managed and developed the Bearspaw Kananaskis Travel Centre Project on Designated Lands in Mini Thni (Esso retail, ESSO Cardlock, C-store, electric charging stations and Tim Hortons) from 2016-2019.

When asked what Bearspaw First Nation's biggest economic development achievements have been under his leadership, Rob responded that their Kananaskis

Travel Centre (ESSO Cardlock, Esso Retail Fuel, C-store, and Tim Hortons Franchise) on the 8 acres of designated land adjacent to Stoney Nakoda Resort & Casino “has been a very profitable business for Bearspaw First Nation. This project, owned entirely by Bearspaw First Nation, has brought a much-needed service to this highly travelled corridor on the TransCanada Highway east of Canmore and Banff.” Rob noted that the business has created 25 jobs for all three Stoney Nakoda Nations members. It is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is strategically located close to the Mountain Parks. The facility has 12 Tesla chargers and 4 other electric chargers from Parkland Fuels. Rob also mentioned that on the highway to Kananaskis, Bearspaw First Nation has a Centex gas bar and Subway enterprise in Minithni (formerly known as Morley) that opened in 2013. It also created another 25 critically needed jobs for all three Stoney Nakoda Nations members.

Stoney Nakoda Telecom has been another successful enterprise, providing wireless and fibre high-speed internet to all three Stoney Nakoda Reserves (Mini Thni, Eden Valley and Bighorn). While Stoney Nakoda Telecom provides about 6-7 jobs, it has over 600 customers and offers a great service to the community that they would not otherwise have. Bearspaw First Nation has also acquired an internet service provider in Edmonton; they are building and managing important networks for other First Nations until they are ready to take them over.

Rob has worked with Chief and Council, along with Bearspaw First Nation’s consultant, Munro and Associates Inc., to establish an independent Capital Trust for the Bearspaw First Nation. Bearspaw First Nation removed their funds, which were previously held in Ottawa (together with two other Stoney Nakoda Nations, Chiniki and Goodstoney First Nations), under Canada’s Indian Moneys Legislation and Policy. According to Bearspaw First Nation, “The ‘Ozija Thiha (Bears-paw in Stoney) Legacy Trust’ was created to invest, grow, and protect Nation Members’ Non-Renewable Mineral Royalties’ and other funds for Future Generations.” As of March 31, 2025, Bearspaw First Nation has \$63 million in Trust Capital and an annual distribution of \$3.4 million and growing. For more information, please see: www.bearspawcapitaltransfer.com.

Rob also serves on the Joint Eden Valley-GOA Task Force to exchange with the Province of Alberta Fee Simple lands for future economic development along Highway 541 for the Eden Valley Reserve 2018-2024. Bearspaw Development Corporation now manages 98 acres under fee simple.

Rob has been the Board Chair since 2011 of the “Mini Thni Foundation,” which is the charity that manages Casino Revenues from the Stoney Nakoda Resort Casino. The Board oversees the spending of approximately \$2 million in charity gaming revenues per year. Rob is also Board Chair of the Ozija Thiha Education Trust, which was established in 2022. It supports Bearspaw First Nation Post Secondary Students with bursaries and financial awards. Over \$200 thousand has since been disbursed to Bearspaw students, mostly post-secondary students, from the Trust. For details, please see: Otet.ca.

Rob Shotclose serves on the Ozija Thiha Land Trust, which is tasked with the development of a 298-acre fee simple parcel of land in the Municipality of Rocky View County, along the Trans Canada Highway between Mini Thni and the City of Calgary, for the economic development of the Bearspaw First Nation. Rob has also

been the Bearspaw First Nation Representative on the Stoney Nakoda Nations Treaty Land Entitlement Committee since 2023. Canada has recognized that the three Stoney Nakoda Nations, including Bearspaw First Nation, are entitled to a total Treaty Land Entitlement shortfall of 21,696 acres.

Before Rob retires, he would like to see Bearspaw First Nation's Treaty Land Entitlement land claim settled and used to create urban reserves for economic development, residential developments, cultural areas, environmental protection, and Nation members attending education facilities in Calgary, Alberta. Bearspaw First Nation would like to get Alberta to the table. Bearspaw First Nation also has some fee simple land on Highway 1 west of Calgary. Regarding this land, Bearspaw wants to let people know that this is Bearspaw land and that we want to develop it for economic development, residential, senior facilities, medical, recreational, commercial, and more. Rob shared, "Bearspaw wants to build facilities for people to pursue treatments and surgeries on our land. We want to take care of surrounding communities as well as ourselves."

Bearspaw First Nation has accomplished so much in the field of Indigenous economic development through Rob Shotclose's leadership and the visionary work of his Nation. There is no doubt that Bearspaw First Nation is very deserving of CANDO's Community of the Year award. It is very clear that Rob and Bearspaw First Nation will be achieving even more in the world of economic development in the coming years.