



First Nations  
Community  
Economic  
Development  
Guide for Ontario

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# Introduction

The First Nations Community Economic Development Guide for Ontario was developed by the Indigenous-owned consulting group Stonecircle Consulting (now part of NVision Insight Group Inc.) for the Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, with extensive input from First Nations economic development officers and First Nations leaders in community economic development across Ontario. The Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation provided funding and leadership for the production of this document. The guide was developed as part of responding to a series of recommendations from First Nations partners for supporting First Nations community economic development and capacity building. Stonecircle Consulting and NVision Insight Group Inc. are not affiliated with the Government of Ontario.

This guide is also available online by searching “First Nations Community Economic Development Guide for Ontario” on [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca).

## How this guide can help

First Nations economic development practitioners may have limited time for training and professional development. Some economic development practitioners may be the only person assigned to work on economic development in a community, and some may be responsible for a range of other portfolios as well. The goal of this guide is to support First Nations economic development practitioners in Ontario by offering an accessible selection of practical advice, case studies and community economic development resources. The hope is that this guide will help you build and strengthen your local economies, however that may look for your particular community.

## How to use this guide

The chapters of this guide cover key elements of community economic development: planning for economic development, building institutional and workforce capacity, identifying and pursuing economic development projects, and collaborations in economic development.

In each chapter, you will find information and advice gathered from First Nations economic development experts intended to help you advance your community's own economic development efforts.

This guide also includes case studies of unique examples of successful First Nations community economic development in Ontario, which offer learning and best practices that may be applied in your community.

This guide only scratches the surface of First Nations economic development and therefore includes references to other valuable resources and tools for you to explore. Throughout the guide, and in a dedicated section at the end, you will find references and links to these additional resources, including other guides, reports and toolkits, as well as links to economic development programs and key economic development organizations.

# Chapter 1: Planning for economic development

Successful community economic development begins with good planning. Planning helps communities determine what they want to achieve and how they will achieve it. This chapter introduces the concept of community economic development, discusses plans that can guide community economic development, and offers resources and techniques to support your planning efforts.

## What is community economic development?

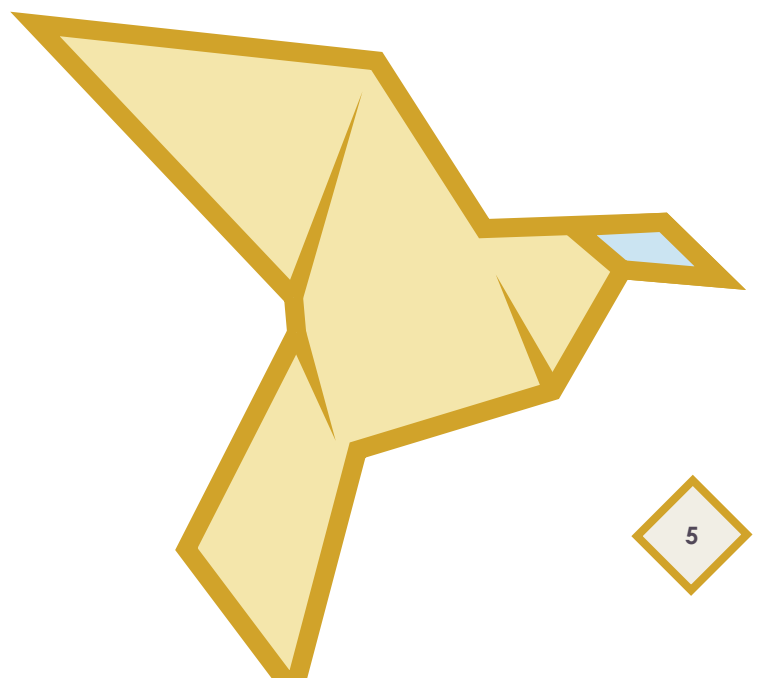
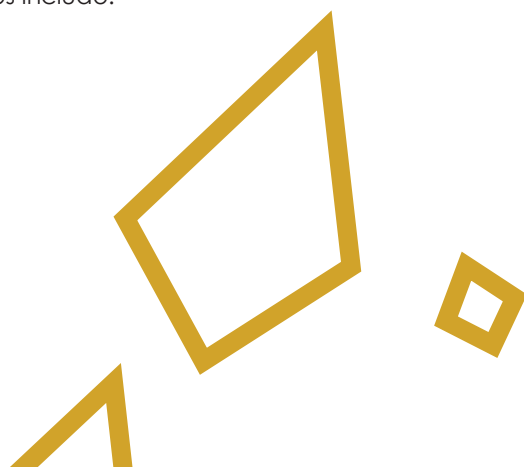
First Nations community economic development is about increasing economic well-being and quality of life for a community and its members, in a way that reflects the community's social, cultural and environmental needs and values.

Community economic development focuses on community ownership, control and benefit. Community-owned businesses generate profits that are used to benefit the community and create jobs for community members. Effective economic development decisions are made in a holistic and interconnected manner and promote the community's overall vision, goals and priorities.

First Nations community economic development does not stand on its own: it is recognized as one important step in building a vibrant community. It is part of what the Anishinaabeg call Mino bimaadzewin, or "the good life."

The economic development process and the types of opportunities that are pursued will vary across communities. Some common economic development objectives include:

- ◆ creating jobs and opportunities for community members
- ◆ investing in and managing community-owned businesses
- ◆ supporting member-owned businesses
- ◆ bringing financial returns to the community to be used to benefit all community members
- ◆ using community-driven approaches to improve quality of life
- ◆ supporting projects that meet the community's unique needs, traditions, culture and vision
- ◆ entering partnerships with other communities or industry to access new economic opportunities



A number of different individuals and institutions have a role to play in First Nations economic development:

- ◆ Chief and Council sets and approves the community's strategic direction and priorities, including the overall strategic direction for community economic development.
- ◆ The community economic development department oversees and implements the community's economic development plan or strategic direction for economic development, supports community and member-owned businesses and seeks new economic opportunities for the community.
- ◆ Economic development entities, such as economic development corporations, often own and manage community businesses and other economic development projects.
- ◆ Economic development staff, such as economic development officers, carry out the responsibilities of the community economic development department or economic development entity.
- ◆ Community-owned businesses bring in revenues to support community priorities.
- ◆ Member-owned businesses and individuals contribute to the local economy.

The “**Economic Development Toolkit for First Nations Economic Development Officers, Chiefs and Councils and Community Members,**” published by the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business, provides more information on the roles of Chief and Council and economic development officers in economic development (pages 20-23).

## Getting started

Communities with experience in economic development have stressed the need to have a strong foundation in place from which to pursue economic development opportunities. For many communities, developing this foundation requires planning, which will be discussed in Chapter 1, and building institutional and workforce capacity for economic development, discussed in Chapter 2.

## Community planning

Planning can help communities determine their vision, values and objectives related to economic development, and the actions they will take to work towards those objectives. Plans often focus on a specific time period, so they can be revisited and updated as time passes and changes occur in the community or the economy.

### Types of plans

**Strategic plans** outline the strategic priorities of Chief and Council. Chief and Council generate these plans, often with input from department staff and community members. Strategic plans generally include goals, objectives and activities for a period determined by Chief and Council.

- ◆ Time horizon: Two to five years.
- ◆ Benefits: Outlines Chief and Council priorities on community economic development; short timeframe allows the plan to be nimble and easily adaptable to changing socio-economic environment; more action-focused and therefore usually easier to track and measure results.
- ◆ Challenges: Often linked to political cycle; may not always reflect long-term needs of the community; requires careful integration of input from staff; often not comprehensive.

**Economic development plans** focus specifically on economic development goals, objectives and activities. Economic development plans may be created by community leadership and/or staff with relevant expertise, such as knowledge of economic development, strategic planning and financial and business structures, working in collaboration with the community. Expert staff may work in the community's economic development department or in a community economic development structure.

- ◆ Time horizon: Three to five years.
- ◆ Benefits: Helps focus approach on specific goals and outcomes; can be used by both practitioners and leadership; usually easier than other plans to measure results.
- ◆ Challenges: Specific focus can often leave out important socio-economic aspects of community planning; often requires high level of technical expertise; not every community may require a standalone economic development plan.

**Comprehensive community plans** outline a vision and direction for a community. While Chief and Council may initiate the creation of a comprehensive community plan, and ultimately endorse the final plan, comprehensive community plans are developed through a community-driven process. A planning committee that conducts extensive community engagement usually leads the process. Comprehensive community planning takes a holistic and integrated approach, considering all elements of the community, including governance, land and resources, health, infrastructure, culture, social issues and the economy.

- ◆ Time horizon: Varies significantly from 5 to up to 50 years or more.
- ◆ Benefits: Endorsement and input from community members helps to ensure a more comprehensive and responsive plan; can be used to address community-specific challenges and opportunities; not linked to political structure or election cycle; can consider full range of community needs and aspirations.
- ◆ Challenges: Requires significant and often lengthy community engagement; each community will have vastly different needs, making it difficult to compare CCPs across regions; long time horizon means plans can become outdated or lose relevance.

*"A few years ago, a concerted effort was undertaken to explore and implement economic development ventures in Curve Lake First Nation. Because very little was going on in this area, the prevailing feeling at the time was that something had to be done. Led by the Economic Development Committee, a plan was developed that first looked at business opportunities. The team felt some of those opportunities appeared too small, so they took a step back and envisioned higher-level goals. Thinking big was essential to the current – and anticipated – success of economic development in the community." **Shawn Williams, Economic Development Coordinator, Curve Lake First Nation***

*"We completed a comprehensive community plan in 1983 and from the comprehensive community plan we were able to identify economic development projects. However, the strategy got pretty dusty because we didn't have buy-in from the community. In 2012, we took it upon ourselves to update the comprehensive community plan (CCP). This time we made sure to include community consultations. The CCP has a number of key pillars and one of them includes economic development, and from this CCP, we were able to complete a long-term economic strategy. Chief and Council endorsed that CCP; they are following the plan and they ensure all of the departments implement and update the plan every second year. Every First Nation should do a CCP as a way to move things forward." **Mary Lynn Odjig, General Manager/Economic Development Officer, Enaadmaagehjik Wikwemikong Development Commission, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory***

## Planning tools

There are a number of resources available that provide detailed guidance on developing different types of community plans, such as:

- ◆ **"The Community Strategic Planning Toolkit,"** developed by the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund
- ◆ **"Gaining Momentum: Sharing 96 Best Practices of First Nations Comprehensive Community Planning,"** developed by the New Relationship Trust in British Columbia
- ◆ **"CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia,"** developed by the Government of Canada for communities in British Columbia, but could be adapted for use in Ontario
- ◆ **"Economic Development Toolkit,"** developed by the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business, contains a draft outline for a First Nations economic development plan on pages 33-35

*“When drafting your economic development strategy, keep it a lean and pragmatic business plan model. You don’t need a big document. Keep it concise, clear and polished so that you can see how the strategy ties back to the long-term plans for the community.”* **Matt Jamieson, President and CEO, Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation**

SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is a method of analysis that can inform planning. A SWOT analysis identifies internal strengths and weaknesses that a community can build upon or work to address, and external opportunities and threats that a community could pursue or may need to guard against. SWOT analysis can be used on key planning areas, or later on, on specific economic development projects under consideration. The Government of Canada’s **“CCP Handbook”** provides a template for SWOT analysis for comprehensive community planning that you can use or adapt as required, as well as a sample completed SWOT analysis.

**“The First Nations Economic Development Readiness Questionnaire,”** developed by the Government of Ontario in partnership with First Nations, is useful for assessing your community’s economic development capacity and identifying any gaps your community should plan to address. For example, you may identify that your

First Nation requires additional funds for economic development activities, such as hiring and training qualified economic development staff. Planning can reflect this need and give direction for current staff to pursue funding from economic development programs, such as those listed in the “Additional resources” section of this guide.

## Performance measurement

Performance measurement is the process of collecting, assessing and reporting on data in order to track progress toward a desired objective or outcome. Including performance measures in a plan allows you to track its implementation, assess its effectiveness and determine where changes may be necessary in future planning exercises. Reporting on performance also demonstrates accountability and transparency. The Government of Ontario resource **“Measuring Up! Performance Measurement for Economic Development”** is designed to help economic development practitioners use performance measurement frameworks and improve the effectiveness of their economic development plans. You can request a copy by calling the Agricultural Contact Information Centre, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at 1-877-424-1300.

## First Nations Progression Model

The First Nations Progression Model, developed by Membertou First Nation, is one way to understand First Nations economic development. According to this model, First Nations economic development has three stages:

1. Capacity building (e.g., building community capacity to manage economic development processes, including financial and quality management capacity)
2. Preparation for economic development (e.g., linking economic development to existing plans, undertaking any additional planning, resource allocation, investment and implementation planning)
3. Pursuing economic development opportunities (e.g., pursuing new ventures, establishing partnerships and entering agreements)

The Anishinabek Nation developed **“The Anishinabek Nation Economy: Our Economic Blueprint”** around the three stages of the First Nations Progression Model. In Appendix 6 of the Blueprint, the Anishinabek Nation outlines the process they used for its development. This process, and its use of the First Nations Progression Model, may be helpful for your community’s planning activities.

## Integrating culture into economic development

Planning provides an opportunity to integrate cultural considerations into the community's vision and direction, which will guide the community's economic development approach and the type of opportunities that are pursued. For example, Aamjiwnaang First Nation based its comprehensive community plan around an Elder's vision.

In a report entitled "**Guiding Principles for Aboriginal Economic Development**," the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies found that "for Aboriginal economic development to occur, the incorporation of culture or establishment of a cultural match is critical."

*"Our community is a healthy tree. To grow economically, you need a well-balanced tree with roots. You need nutrients to feed the tree (this is where the planning takes place), you need pruning and the tree needs to withstand the elements. The roots of the tree are the years of work that people put into building this tree. The seeds are our future generation. This became the philosophy of the economic development process that we now follow."* **Carole Delion, Business Development Officer, Aamjiwnaang First Nation**

*"Membertou believes that the pillars of conservation, sustainability, innovation and success support our Indigenous economies. And we believe that you can govern and do business by maintaining traditional ways of looking at things, inherent to who we are as a people, yet adapt to the future by striving to be innovative and measuring that by success, success that translates into profit."<sup>1</sup>* **Berndt Christmas, former CEO of Membertou First Nation**

## Case Study

**Aamjiwnaang First Nation has engaged in comprehensive community planning since 1985, and has been able to incorporate cultural values into its planning. Find out more about their planning process by reading the case study on page 34 of this guide.**

## Land use planning

Land use plans establish a vision, objectives and strategic direction for future land use, allocation, management and protection. Land use plans often identify potential community economic development opportunities and the lands that are available for economic development.

First Nations that develop land use plans have greater clarity regarding use of their reserve land, and sometimes surrounding public lands. For example, many land use plans include a detailed map of boundaries, commercial areas, residential areas and areas of cultural or spiritual significance, including protected areas.

The **National Aboriginal Land Managers Association** (NALMA) and the **Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association** (OALA) provide tools and resources for First Nations land managers and community economic development staff. Additionally, the New Relationship Trust developed a First Nations land use planning report entitled "**BC First Nations Land Use Planning: Effective Practices**," that you can adapt as necessary for your use in Ontario.

## Land management

Under authority and responsibilities set out in the *Indian Act*, the Government of Canada provides land management services related to ownership, use and development of land to most First Nations across Canada. Land management programs have been developed to assume greater control over land resources and environmental management from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to First Nations.

<sup>1</sup> Christmas, B. (2002). First Nations Progression Model – The use of multiple lines. Canadian Evaluation Society conference. Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Through the federal **Reserve Land and Environmental Management Program**, First Nations can receive funding support to assume responsibility for *Indian Act* land management activities on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Community-based land use planning is a component of the program that is supported by the program.

Through the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management and ratified by the *First Nations Land Management Act*, First Nations may opt out of 33 *Indian Act* provisions related to land management and implement their own land code. This allows First Nations to make laws with respect to land, the environment and resources. First Nations can receive federal support for developing a land code, negotiating an individual agreement and holding a ratification vote, as well as ongoing operational funding for managing land, natural resources and environment. Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada transfers land administration to First Nations once their land code comes into effect.

The **First Nations Land Management Resource Centre** provides services and resources to support First Nations implementing land governance over their reserve lands through the First Nations Land Management Regime.

## Off-reserve land use planning

Land use plans for public land in Ontario are prepared under either the *Far North Act* or the *Public Lands Act*. In the Far North of Ontario, under the Far North Land Use Planning Initiative, Ontario is working with local First Nations to jointly prepare community based land use plans. The planning areas encompass the off-reserve, traditional land use areas of each of the one or more participating First Nations. The community based land use plans, which are approved by both the participating First Nations and Ontario, use land designations to provide broad direction on what land uses will be permitted in which areas. The land use plans also typically describe what economic development opportunities a First Nations community would like to pursue.

First Nations in the Far North can access funding from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to prepare land use plans. Ontario has created a draft Far North Land Use Strategy to assist joint planning

teams in the preparation of these plans and to guide the integration of matters that are beyond the geographic scope of individual planning areas. For more information, visit the **Far North Land Use Planning Initiative** website.

On public land south of the Far North, existing land use plans are publicly available through the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas. The **Crown Land Use Policy Atlas** contains a map browser that allows easy access to the land use plans and policies that detail land use decisions in a particular area. In some instances, an economic development proposal may require a land use amendment to allow it to proceed and, within policy, MNRF can work with First Nations communities to consider aligning land use planning with community development objectives. Communities can also apply to use Crown land for economic development projects. Project applications are reviewed under the Crown land **Application Review and Land Disposition Process**.

## Recap

- ◆ First Nations community economic development is about increasing economic well-being and quality of life for a community and its members in a way that reflects the community's social, cultural and environmental needs and values.
- ◆ Many communities with success in economic development stress the importance of establishing a strong foundation from which to pursue opportunities. For many communities, this strong foundation begins with planning and building institutional capacity.
- ◆ Planning activities that can support economic development include strategic plans, comprehensive community plans, economic development plans and land use plans.

## Links from this chapter

**“Economic Development Toolkit for First Nations Economic Development Officers, Chiefs and Councils and Community Members – Basic Information and Guide,” Industry Council for Aboriginal Business**

<http://www.sauder.ubc.ca/Programs/Chnook/Students/~media/Files/Chnook/ICAB.ashx>

**“The Community Strategic Planning Toolkit,” Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund**

<http://www.nadf.org/upload/documents/community-strategic-planning-toolkit2005-with-appendices.pdf>

**“Gaining Momentum: Sharing 96 Best Practices of First Nations Comprehensive Community Planning,” New Relationship Trust**

<http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/comprehensive-community-planning-long-version.pdf>

**“CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia,” Government of Canada**

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1377629855838/1377632394645>

**“The First Nations Economic Development Readiness Questionnaire,” Government of Ontario**

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/28005/317418.pdf>

**The Anishinabek Nation Economy: Our Economic Blueprint, Union of Ontario Indians**

[http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FINAL-Consolidated-ANEB\\_PDF-sm.pdf](http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FINAL-Consolidated-ANEB_PDF-sm.pdf)

**“Guiding Principles for Aboriginal Economic Development,” Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies**

[https://www.cbu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Guiding\\_Principles\\_for\\_Aboriginal\\_Economic\\_Development\\_sm.pdf](https://www.cbu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Guiding_Principles_for_Aboriginal_Economic_Development_sm.pdf)

**National Aboriginal Land Managers Association**

<http://www.nalma.ca/>

**Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association**

<http://www.nalma.ca/associations/oala>

**“BC First Nations Land Use Planning: Effective Practices,” New Relationship Trust**

<http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/land-use-planning-report.pdf>

**Reserve Land and Environmental Management Program, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1399305895503/1399306034289>

**First Nations Land Management Regime, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1327090675492/1327090738973>

**First Nations Land Management Resource Centre**

<https://www.labrc.com/home/>

**Far North Land Use Planning Initiative, Government of Ontario**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/far-north-land-use-planning-initiative>

**Crown Land Use Policy Atlas, Government of Ontario**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/crown-land-use-policy-atlas>

**Crown Land Application Review and Land Disposition Process, Government of Ontario**

<http://files.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/crown-land/255939.pdf>

# Chapter 2: Building institutional and workforce capacity for economic development

Building capacity is part of forming a foundation for economic development. Building capacity means ensuring your community has the economic development institutions, tools and staff it needs to achieve its community economic development goals. Specific capacity-building initiatives for your community to undertake may have already been identified in your community planning processes. This chapter will highlight key considerations and resources to assist your community in developing institutional and workforce capacity for economic development.

## Economic development departments

Many First Nations have community economic development departments. Common responsibilities of an economic development department include overseeing and implementing the community's economic development plan or strategic direction for economic development, supporting businesses and seeking new economic opportunities for the community. Economic development departments may be standalone departments, or linked with a lands, resources, business development or other related department.

There is often a need for different departments to work together to advance community economic development. Your First Nation may have a lands and resources department that is developing a land use plan, and your economic development department could work with them to ensure the community's economic development and land use planning are complementary. Your economic development department could work with an education department to take an inventory of the skills and education in the community, so economic development staff know what kind of opportunities best suit the community and the education department can identify what skill-building needs to occur. When an economic development project moves forward, the

departments could work together to ensure that members can access the necessary training and education to participate in the project.

*"It's important for the team to be always learning. It's a learning process; you are learning every day no matter how skilled you are. Also, communication and information sharing among the team is key, because you can't work in silos."*

**Thomas Lambert, Economic Development Officer,  
Nipissing First Nation**

## Economic development entities

A First Nation undertaking economic development may own community businesses or may enter into business agreements with other partners. Many First Nations have set up separate economic development entities through which to invest in, own or manage community businesses and economic development projects. There are many different ways to structure economic development entities, and legal advice is recommended when selecting or establishing an entity for your community. This guide profiles the most common type of First Nations economic development entity, the economic development corporation.

*"There is a need to have an entity that is autonomous from the political structures because while our custom election code is three years, the business project lines of development to implementation can be three to five years. Therefore there is a need to have economic development as their own entity."* **Matt Jamieson, President and CEO, Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation**

## Economic development corporations

Economic development corporations are legal bodies separate and apart from a First Nation that serve as the community's economic and business development arm. A First Nation owns the community economic development corporation as the "sole shareholder," but the economic development corporation is controlled by an appointed or elected board of directors.

Engaging in economic development through a corporation reduces a First Nation's financial risk. As a shareholder of the corporation, the First Nation would generally not be held personally responsible for any of the corporation's debts or liabilities – for example, if a community business or a joint venture with industry suffers losses. The debt remains with the corporation. Engaging professional counsel when establishing the corporation will help ensure financial risk is minimized.

The corporation structure also has the effect of separating the First Nation's business operations from its political operations. Although Chief and Council establish overall strategic direction for the corporation to follow, and the corporation is ultimately accountable to the First Nation, the corporation's board of directors oversees day-to-day decision-making. As a result, the political administration's involvement in business activities is limited.

Separating business and politics prevents business objectives from being overly influenced by political priorities. The **Harvard Project on American Indian Development** found that keeping "governments focused on strategic issues and out of the day-to-day affairs of reservation businesses is one of the keys to sustainable development," a best practice that also applies to non-

Indigenous governments and businesses. In its survey of 73 Indigenous community-owned businesses in the United States, the Harvard Project found that businesses that were separated from community politics were significantly more likely to be profitable than those that were not.

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business's report **"Community and Commerce: A Survey of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations"** provides insights on economic development corporations' successes, challenges and strategies. The Industry Council for Aboriginal Business's "Economic Development Toolkit" has First Nations-specific information on corporations, such as a list of duties and responsibilities for a corporation's board of directors (pages 9-10).

You can also find information on benefits and implications of incorporation and the legal requirements for creating and maintaining a corporation on the **Government of Ontario's webpage on incorporation** and on the **Government of Canada's Corporations Canada webpage**.

*"A lot of communities don't like economic development corporations, but to be successful you must keep politics separate from economic development. It is important that you build trust with the community by reporting often to the community and Council; this way economic development is not micromanaged. We have our Wikwemikong Development Commission to do this work. You need a separate body to do economic development."* **Mary Lynn Odjig, General Manager/Economic Development Officer, Enaadmaagehjik Wikwemikong Development Commission, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory**

*"It should be noted that the Economic Development Board is totally separate from the Band operations and political function of the First Nation. Every member of the Board is first nominated and then elected. They represent a broad range of people with traditional knowledge and business acumen."* **Shawn Williams, Economic Development Coordinator, Curve Lake First Nation**

## Building an economic development workforce

Whether they work in the economic development department or the community economic development entity, knowledgeable economic development staff are the engine that makes the community's economic development efforts run.

Hiring or contracting community members to work in economic development positions may be your community's first choice. To work in these economic development positions, members may require additional training, certification or mentorship.

*"We decided that in order to accomplish our new goals – that is, to get out of the dependence on government, [and] the Department of Indian Affairs in particular – we needed to utilize the people that we had in the community."* **Chief Terence Paul, Membertou First Nation**

There are a number of organizations that provide training and support that can assist new and experienced First Nations economic development professionals.

The **Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association** (OFNEDA) provides networking and training opportunities for its membership, which includes economic development officers and other First Nations economic development professionals. OFNEDA also conducts and shares research on First Nations economic development.

The **Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers** (CANDO) is a national Indigenous organization that provides programs and services, such as courses and custom training options, to Indigenous economic development officers. CANDO also offers an economic development officer guidebook entitled "**Orientation to the Occupation of Aboriginal Economic Development Officer**," as well as certifications for Indigenous economic development professionals.

**AFOA Canada**, formerly the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada, offers two professional designations for Indigenous financial professionals: the Certified Aboriginal Professional Administrator designation and the Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager designation. AFOA Canada also offers professional development workshops and courses.

Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) across the province provide financing and support services to Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs, promote regional economic development and provide support for communities and their economic development staff. Visit the **National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association website** for more information on AFIs.

The **Economic Development Council of Ontario** provides networking and training opportunities for economic development professionals across Ontario.

Training, employment supports and skills development are available through provincial and federal government initiatives including **Employment Ontario**, the **Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Strategy** and the **Youth Employment Strategy**.

While the ultimate goal may be to train and employ community members, at times you may need to bring in outside expertise. This may be because you need very specific, technical knowledge, the work is only required for a short time or perhaps you decide to bring in someone to mentor or train a community member to take on that job over time.

*"Because there was no existing business development capacity within the community, a very experienced and highly recommended consultant was brought on to develop and manage the project. This person helped navigate all the legal and financial needs required and also interpreted the highly technical language so it was accessible to all members. Because of the magnitude of the project and potential for grave liabilities, the investment in this consultant was essential for the preliminary and current success of the project."* **Randy Restoule, Community and Economic Development Officer, Dokis First Nation**

*“The capacity building never stops for projects like renewable energy; you always have to be learning about the legislation and practices [and] the technologies of this industry. You need to get the expertise to do the due diligence for the health and safety of the community. Even when the wind farm is running, there are a number of contracts to keep up, regulations to keep going and the partnership to upkeep for the operation and maintenance.”* **Grant Taibossigai, Project Manager, Mother Earth Renewable Energy**

## Additional opportunities to build economic development capacity

### Tools and institutions under the *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*

The federal *First Nations Fiscal Management Act* (FNFMA) is optional federal legislation that provides First Nations with increased authority over financial management, property taxation, local revenues and financing for infrastructure and economic development. The FNFMA is designed to provide tools and institutions that support First Nations governments with economic and community development and fiscal management, and contribute to greater self-determination of First Nations.

If a First Nation wishes to participate in the FNFMA, they can submit a Band Council Resolution to the federal government requesting they be added to the schedule of the FNFMA. Once added, a First Nation may work with any or all of the First Nations institutions established under the FNFMA:

- ◆ The **First Nations Tax Commission** helps First Nation governments build and maintain fair and efficient property tax regimes to ensure First Nations communities and their taxpayers receive the maximum benefit from these systems.
- ◆ The **First Nations Financial Management Board** provides financial management tools and services for First Nations governments to strengthen their financial management and reporting systems to support economic and community development.
- ◆ The **First Nations Finance Authority** provides investment options, capital planning advice and access to long-term loans with preferable interest rates to First Nations governments.

## Financial certifications

Obtaining certain certifications from independent bodies can help First Nations build internal economic development capacity and demonstrates financial health, credibility and readiness for economic development to members, investors and capital providers.

The First Nations Financial Management Board offers two financial certification services: the **Financial Performance Certification** and the **Financial Management System Certification**. To receive the Financial Performance Certification, a First Nation must develop a Financial Administration Law that sets out good governance and finance practices for Council and staff. With this certification, First Nations are eligible to access loans from the First Nations Finance Authority. If a First Nation has received the Financial Performance Certification and is successfully following its Financial Administration Law, the First Nation can request Financial Management System Certification. Before awarding this certification, the First Nations Financial Management Board will test your community's use of the practices in its Financial Administration Law.

*"First Nations should get certification through the First Nations Financial Management Board and get over that hurdle. To get certified, communities have to create financial laws, policies and procedures as well as an annual financial plan. Once Chief and Council approve the financial plan, the financial officer implements that plan. Once you have the certification, you can borrow money from the First Nations Finance Authority. This is critical if you want to get into large-scale projects." **Allen Kanerva, Senior Economic Advisor, Wahgoshig First Nation***

## Recap

- ◆ Building capacity means ensuring your community has the economic development institutions, tools and staff it needs to achieve its community economic development goals.
- ◆ Community economic development departments and economic development entities, such as economic development corporations, can be established to oversee and manage economic development and business management activities.
- ◆ Community economic development institutions need knowledgeable economic development staff to succeed. There a number of organizations that can help you find training and support for economic development staff.



## Links from this chapter

### **Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, Harvard University**

<https://www.hpaied.org/>

### **“Community and Commerce: A Survey of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations,” Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business**

<http://www.nadf.org/upload/documents/community-and-commerce-final-report.pdf>

### **“Economic Development Toolkit,” Industry Council for Aboriginal Business**

<http://www.sauder.ubc.ca/Programs/Chnook/Students/~media/Files/Chnook/ICAB.ashx>

### **Government of Ontario webpage on incorporation**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/incorporating-business-corporation>

### **Corporations Canada**

<https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/home>

### **Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association**

<https://www.ofneda.com/>

### **Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers**

<http://www.edo.ca/>

### **“Orientation to the Occupation of Aboriginal Economic Development Officer,” Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers**

<http://www.edo.ca/downloads/orientation-to-the-occupation-of-edo.pdf>

### **AFOA Canada**

<http://www.afoa.ca/>

### **More information on Aboriginal Financial Institutions, National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association**

<http://www.nacca.ca/aboriginal-financial-institutions/>

### **Economic Development Council of Ontario**

<https://www.edco.on.ca/>

### **Employment Ontario, Government of Ontario**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>

### **Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Strategy, Government of Canada**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/indigenous/asets.html>

### **Youth Employment Strategy, Government of Canada**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/youth-employment-strategy.html>

### **More information on the *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1393512745390/1393512934976>

### **First Nations Tax Commission**

<http://www.fntc.ca/>

### **First Nations Financial Management Board**

<http://www.fnfmb.com/home/>

### **First Nations Finance Authority**

<http://www.fnfa.ca/>

### **Financial Performance Certification, First Nations Financial Management Board**

<https://www.fnfmb.com/what-we-do/financial-performance-certification>

### **Financial Management System Certification, First Nations Financial Management Board**

<https://www.fnfmb.com/what-we-do/financial-management-system-certification>

# Chapter 3: Identifying and pursuing economic development projects

Your community has built a strong foundation for economic development: you have plans that provide strategic direction, clear economic development goals and objectives, and the capacity to manage economic development initiatives. Now, you are ready to take on a new project. This chapter will look at the process of generating ideas for economic development projects, evaluating those ideas and then moving a project forward, while engaging community members along the way.

## Generating an idea

Inspiration for a potential economic development project, such as a new community-owned business, can come from many sources:

- ◆ Council or community planning may provide direction on potential economic development projects to explore.
- ◆ Economic development staff may identify ideas for economic development projects through research or their economic development networks.
- ◆ Community members may share ideas for economic development projects.
- ◆ The community could be purchasing a good or service outside the community that it could make, provide or grow locally.
- ◆ Existing businesses may be looking for a supplier.
- ◆ Community members may be looking for a good or service they need, and cannot find it.
- ◆ Another community may have a good or service your community does not have yet.
- ◆ Someone in the community may be very good at making or doing something that people would buy, who could be encouraged to start a business or help manage a community-owned business.

Other communities or industry may also propose economic development projects to your community, such as entering into a joint venture agreement to pursue a project in collaboration. Chapter 4 of the guide discusses these kinds of projects in more detail.

## Case Study

*Read about how six First Nations communities identified an opportunity within the local economy and ultimately launched the Manitoulin Hotel and Conference Centre, in the case study on page 42 of the guide.*

## Leakage studies

Leakage studies are one tool economic development staff can use to find potential economic development opportunities. Leakage studies identify the level and type of spending occurring outside the community by community members – the money that is “leaking” out of the local economy by being spent elsewhere. These findings can point towards a good or service that may be able to be provided locally to recapture some of this economic leakage.

Leakage studies can also answer questions on the total level of economic activity generated by the community and the community’s overall spending patterns, as in the goods and services that the community is purchasing.

*“We did a leakage study that looked at the spending habits of our members, how much money was leaving the reserve, what people [were] buying off reserve, how much they were buying on the reserve and where the gaps were. As part of the leakage study, we also incorporated a community needs door-to-door survey. That study showed us that opening a dollar store was the number one business identified and that would work in Wikwemikong.”*

**Mary Lynn Odjig, General Manager/Economic Development Officer, Enaadmaagehjik Wikwemikong Development Commission, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory**



## Evaluating an idea

Your community has generated some ideas for economic development projects and is considering its next steps. Before investing significant community resources to pursue an economic development opportunity, it is vital to evaluate the costs, benefits and risks of proposed projects to determine which projects represent a sound business decision for your community.

If a project would involve collaborating with an external partner, such as another community or industry, doing your due diligence on your potential partner can help to ensure they are a good fit for your community and the project under consideration. This may require getting to know the potential partner and understanding their values and principles, their contribution to the project, their track record on similar projects, and their reputation with previous partners or customers.

Another aspect of evaluating an idea is to consider how the idea fits with the community's vision, objectives and values. One way to do this is compare a project with the community's strategic plan, comprehensive community plan or economic development plan. You can also engage community members for their feedback on the idea. Later on in this chapter there is more information on methods for community engagement.

## Feasibility studies

One way to evaluate a project under consideration is through a feasibility study. Feasibility studies assess whether an idea, project or business is likely to be successful in a particular community or market, and can help you make an evidence-based decision on whether or not to proceed with a project.

Feasibility studies often analyze:

- ◆ market issues, such as current or projected market demand, target markets, the supply of inputs in your area, potential competition
- ◆ organizational and technical issues, such as community capacity to manage the project, management and staffing requirements, legal and scheduling considerations, technological/equipment needs and associated costs
- ◆ financial issues, such as start-up costs, operating costs, revenue projections, sources of financing, profitability

Chapter 2 ("Is there a business opportunity?") of the Government of Ontario's "**Indigenous Business Development Toolkit**" provides additional guidance and exercises that can help you assess the potential of a business idea. This toolkit is intended for Indigenous individuals thinking about starting or expanding a private business, but can also be used to inform community economic development.

*"A feasibility study was conducted in the pre-construction phase of the hydro project, which took into account factors such as water flows and the number of megawatts that the river may be able to produce." **Randy Restoule, Community and Economic Development Officer, Dokis First Nation***

## Pursuing a project

### Business plans

Your community has completed its due diligence on an economic development project and concluded that it is viable to move forward. For many projects, developing a business plan is an important next step.

A business plan is the blueprint for how a business will be organized, how it will operate and how it will succeed. As a planning tool, a business plan will help you consider and confirm key elements of the business, such as the business structure, location and facility requirements, management and staffing needs, equipment and information technology, financing, marketing strategies, pricing and profitability. A business plan could also contain performance measures the community can use to track the business's contribution to community economic development goals.

Business plans are an essential tool for presenting a potential business to economic development decision makers, such as the board of directors of an economic development corporation, and potential funders, such as outside investors, Aboriginal Financial Institutions, banks and government.

The **Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs**, Aboriginal Financial Institutions and other Canadian banks can provide you with online and in-person assistance on all aspects of business planning and start-up. Chapter 3 ("Planning your business") of the Government of Ontario's "**Indigenous Business Development Toolkit**" walks through different elements of a business plan. Other online resources that can help you in creating a business plan include AFOA Canada's "**Developing Business Plans and Funding Proposals**" guide and the **Business Development Bank of Canada webpage on business planning**.

## Moving from a plan to reality

At this stage, you are ready to begin your economic development project. If your economic development project is a business, there are a number of steps that need to be taken to get the business running. This may include registering the business, opening business accounts, hiring staff, marketing, and developing an approach to managing the business's operations, finances, human resources and legal requirements. Your community's economic development staff may have experience from setting up and managing other community businesses that can be drawn on. Chapter 4 ("Getting from a plan to a business") of the "**Indigenous Business Development Toolkit**" walks through the process of opening a business and discusses elements of managing a business.

### Monitoring a project

As time goes on, you may wish to monitor the project to ensure it is successfully contributing to community economic development goals and still aligned with the community's vision, plans and the current economic climate. New investments or approaches may be necessary to renew the project, or to expand the project if there is a viable opportunity for growth.

In a business context, Chapter 5 ("Transitions") of the "**Indigenous Business Development Toolkit**" provides guidance on the business life cycle and transitions related to growth, expansion and winding down a business when required.

## Funding Supports

*Activities such as leakage studies, feasibility studies and business plans may be eligible for funding support from provincial and federal government economic development programs. See the "Additional resources" section for more information on programs that may support your work.*

## Engaging community members

Effective community engagement occurs at all stages of a project's development, helping leadership make decisions that reflect the values and desires of the community, ensuring the community can understand how and why decisions have been made, and informing community members on how their input has been included in decision-making. Economic development projects that are supported by community members are better positioned to succeed.

There are a number of methods of engaging community members. Effective community engagement generally uses methods that are accessible to the entire community and are responsive to how the community wishes to be engaged.

The Government of Canada's "**CCP Handbook**" contains a section on community engagement and support that may be informative to your engagement activities.

*"You have to look at whether the economic development opportunities are contextually culturally appropriate. This means it fits with the culture at Wahgoshig and our particular context. We looked into investing into a pharmaceutical/therapeutic company, alternative energy and heavy equipment, for example. Looking at heavy equipment, we were already in this business, we have lots of operators in the community [and] it's a natural market so it was appropriate to expand that business."* **Allen Kanerva, Senior Economic Advisor, Wahgoshig First Nation**

*"During our community consultations we heard clearly from the community they wanted to own the project 100% themselves. This meant that rather than going with a 10-megawatt project, which would have meant we needed an investor, we chose to go with a smaller system, a four-megawatt operation that we would own and be able to sustain ourselves without outside partners. To achieve ownership for ourselves, the loan came from the community as well. The interest from the loan that was generated was then reinvested into the community."* **Grant Taibossigai, Project Manager, Mother Earth Renewable Energy**

## Surveys

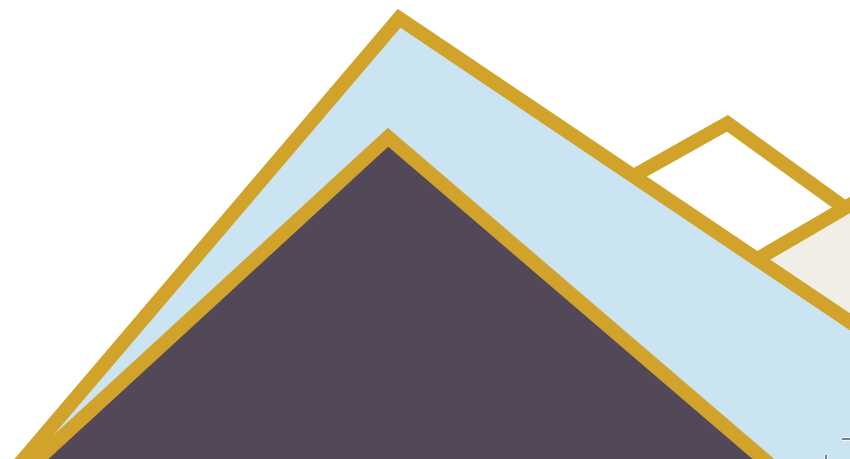
Community surveys can be a useful tool for engaging community members in community economic development. Surveys are suitable for canvassing members for ideas for potential economic development projects, or for gauging their support for a proposed project.

You can conduct surveys on paper or through online survey tools. If you wish to reach out to off-reserve members, consider conducting the survey online or by mail. Some communities offer incentives for the completion of surveys.

*"An initial idea was to perhaps run a commercial fishery out of the French River. In order to collect community data regarding this potential endeavour, a door-to-door survey was conducted in the community. The question – "Would you support a commercial fishery?" – was met with a resounding "NO!" (75%). The prevailing sentiment was that this sort of operation went against traditional values and therefore the project did not move forward. This process demonstrates the importance of gathering community-based knowledge throughout your whole economic development venture."*

**Randy Restoule, Community and Economic Development Officer, Dokis First Nation**

*"If you do a community survey, make sure that you have all the facts and you present them accurately. Don't put out questions that will cause confusion or uncertainty. Make sure your message is clear and concise."* **Stan Kapashesit, Director of Economic Development, Moose Cree First Nation**



## Community meetings

Community meetings can provide a useful venue to share information on economic development initiatives with community members and to receive feedback.

Promoting your community meetings can help ensure you are being inclusive and transparent. You likely already have practices in place to advise members of events and meetings, such as a community website, social media, or posters and flyers. There may be legal requirements to provide advance notice of meetings if a ratification vote is required (for example, for the creation of an economic development corporation).

## Other ways to engage

It may be useful to undertake interviews or targeted engagement sessions to reach specific community groups, including those that may not be reached through general engagement, such as Elders, youth or off-reserve members. For example, you could make in-school presentations to youth to inform them of economic development projects, obtain their feedback and make them aware of career paths that align with community economic development projects.

You could also engage your community by holding an event such as an economic development conference, a trade show or a showcase of economic development opportunities in the community. Members could attend to learn more about particular projects and provide their opinions and insight on different ventures.

*"We host annual economic awareness days. This is an important way to inform the community about what we're doing. We discuss economic development, employment and training. It's a two-day forum where we present and report on the projects that we are working on. Community members have the opportunity to ask questions and we answer their questions or follow up by preparing reports." **Mary Lynn Odjig, General Manager/ Economic Development Officer, Enaadmaagehjik Wikwemikong Development Commission, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory***

## Case Study

**Find out about how Nipissing First Nation involved community members in economic decisionmaking through its Business Licensing Bylaw by reading the case study on page 38 of this guide.**

## Case Study

**A number of First Nations are pursuing renewable energy projects because they feel renewable energy fits with traditional First Nations values of sustainable development. There are two case studies on Piikani Nation and Kluane First Nation's experiences with renewable energy projects in "Ontario First Nations and Renewable Energy," a report published by the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, that may be informative if your community is considering a renewable energy project. See the "Additional resources" section at the end of this guide for a link to that report.**

## Voting and ratification

In some cases, community members may need to vote to ratify economic development plans or the establishment of an economic development corporation. Your community may have its own way of conducting votes and may be established and codified in a manner consistent with community by-laws and/or individual community protocols.

*"It is important to set up the process so that it is impartial. Make sure there is an abundance of information so that people can make an informed decision. The information has to be simple so that it is easier to understand. However, it is important that people have all the information, regardless of its technical or legal language and nature."* **Shawn Williams, Economic Development Coordinator, Curve Lake First Nation**

## Recap

- ◆ Ideas for economic development projects can come from many sources. Leakage studies are one tool that can help identify potential opportunities for economic development projects.
- ◆ It is vital to carefully evaluate any project under consideration. This means evaluating and understanding a project's potential costs, benefits and risks before deciding whether or not to move forward. Feasibility studies and community engagement are valuable tools in evaluating a proposed project.
- ◆ If a proposed project is found to be viable for the community, a sound business decision can be made to move the project forward to the business plan stage, if appropriate, and then into implementation.

## Case Study

**One way that First Nations support economic development is by supporting member-owned businesses. For ideas about what other First Nations and Tribal Councils are doing in this area, see the examples in the document called "Minding Our Own Businesses: how to create support in First Nations communities for Aboriginal Businesses." See page 46 under "Additional resources" at the end of this guide for a link to the report.**

## Case Study

**Find out about how Moose Cree First Nation is pursuing economic development opportunities while addressing a social need by developing a community heliport, in the case study on page 36 of this guide.**

## Links from this chapter

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### **“Indigenous Business Development Toolkit,” Government of Ontario**

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/indigenous-business-development-toolkit>

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### **Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs**

<https://www.onebusiness.ca>

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### **“Developing Business Plans and Funding Proposals,” AFOA Canada**

[https://www.afoa.ca/afoadocs/L3/L3a%20-%20Developing\\_a\\_Business\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.afoa.ca/afoadocs/L3/L3a%20-%20Developing_a_Business_Plan.pdf)

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### **Business Development Bank of Canada webpage on business planning**

<https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/start-buy-business/start-business/pages/create-effective-business-plan.aspx?cald=tabs-2>

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### **“CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia,” Government of Canada**

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1377629855838/1377632394645>

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# Chapter 4: Collaborating in economic development

Collaborating with other communities or industry can provide advantages for your community's economic development efforts. This chapter will discuss the potential benefits of working in collaboration with external partners, and how economic development relationships and collaborations can be structured and formalized.

## Collaborating with other communities

Building relationships with economic development staff at other First Nations or in municipalities creates a network for sharing information and promising economic development practices. Many communities with experience in economic development are willing to assist and mentor growing communities in earlier stages of development.

*"We have relationships with other First Nations with an open door policy whereby people give us information and we share information with other First Nations on projects... We would go to other First Nations for advice and we've been mentored when we were working on a project."<sup>2</sup>*

**Vaughn Sunday, former Director of Economic Development, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne**

Beyond information sharing, it can be advantageous for multiple communities to collaborate on economic development projects. This could mean initiating new projects together or aligning existing projects through business agreements. Pooling communities' financial and human resources, unique skills and expertise, and access to different markets can create new opportunities that would not be feasible for individual communities working alone. Working in collaboration can also create cost advantages. For example, multiple communities

working together may be able to obtain better purchase prices from suppliers, lower their costs per item, share administrative costs such as advertising and jointly invest in costly technology and research and development. Additionally, working with other communities may improve communities' ability to access and leverage new funding to support a project.

First Nations at all levels of development can reap the benefits of collaboration, from high-capacity communities looking to take on large-scale, regional projects to smaller communities that may not yet have the capacity to move an economic development project forward individually.

Lac Seul First Nation and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug partnered with the municipality of Sioux Lookout to work towards the development of a Regional Distribution Centre (RDC) through the First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (a joint initiative of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers). The RDC, which would operate as a non-profit social enterprise, is intended to serve as a central distribution point for fresh foods and consumer goods for up to 31 northern communities, and help address the limited access to fresh and nutritious foods and other basic goods faced by communities in the region. The RDC is anticipated to be operating at full capacity in spring 2018. Find out more about the initiative on the **Federation of Canadian Municipalities webpage**.

The collaborative relationship between First Nations in the region and the municipality of Sioux Lookout is supported by the **Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord**, a principle-based relationship agreement originally signed between Lac Seul First Nation, Slate Falls First Nation and Sioux Lookout. The Friendship Accord has since expanded to include Cat Lake First Nation and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. The Friendship Accord, which the First Nations and Sioux Lookout developed through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Community Infrastructure Partnership Program, provides a framework for agreements and partnerships between the First Nations governments and the municipality.

**“Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships,”** released by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, is a comprehensive resource that includes stories and lessons learned about joint First Nations-municipal community economic development. The Government of Ontario document **“Municipal-Aboriginal Relationships: Case Studies”** provides five case studies of successful relationship building between Indigenous communities and municipalities.

*“With multiple partners, it is extremely important to ensure that the scope of the project and roles of the various partners are clearly understood so they all own it and are accountable to each other, and the sense of ownership and responsibility is shared.”* **Kevin Eshkawkogan, CEO, Great Spirit Circle Trail**

## Case Study

**To discover how eight First Nations worked together to create a successful regional tourism company called the Great Spirit Circle Trail, see the case study on page 40 of this guide.**

## Collaborating with industry

Communities may also build relationships and collaborate with businesses, from those in the community to regional, national and international business partners. Collaborating with industry can provide similar benefits as collaborating with other communities: sharing of knowledge and resources, creating new, mutually-beneficial economic opportunities, accessing new markets and obtaining cost advantages.

*“We have a very effective relationship with Glencore. We share our local knowledge of the environment with them and they share their technical expertise with us, so we can enhance our skills and expand our business beyond our watershed. We view our relationship as a tool for economic development of our human resources, rather than just simply our natural resources.”<sup>3</sup>*

**Cheryl Recollet, Director of Sustainable Development, Wahnapiitae First Nation**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, doing your due diligence on any potential partner, whether it is another community or industry, before formalizing any relationship or collaboration on an economic development project can help you make an informed decision on whether they are right for your community and the project under consideration. Due diligence can include building a relationship with the potential partner and getting a sense of their values, principles, business philosophy and business practices and what value they can bring to the project. You may also want to find out more about past projects they have been involved in, including projects similar to the opportunity under consideration; learn about their environmental record; ask to speak to their past business partners, customers or staff; ask to review financial statements or have a lawyer review any legal matters.

<sup>3</sup> Krackle, J. (2015, December 15). Wahnapiitae leads way in sustainable development. Anishnabek News. Retrieved from <http://anishnabeknews.ca/2015/12/15/wahnapiitae-leads-way-in-sustainable-development/#sthash.sOIBxx5.dpuf>

*“There were 22 companies at one time wanting to be partners with us. With so many opportunities, you need to be clear on what your goals are and do your due diligence on who could provide a legitimate partnership. It was a lengthy process, and the due diligence is reciprocal. The companies want to know and be assured the community has the capacity and experience. Chippewas have been in business for over 40 years; we have a mature business track record and now we do business with companies from all over the world.”* **Tom Maness, former General Manager, Chippewas of Sarnia Industrial Developments**

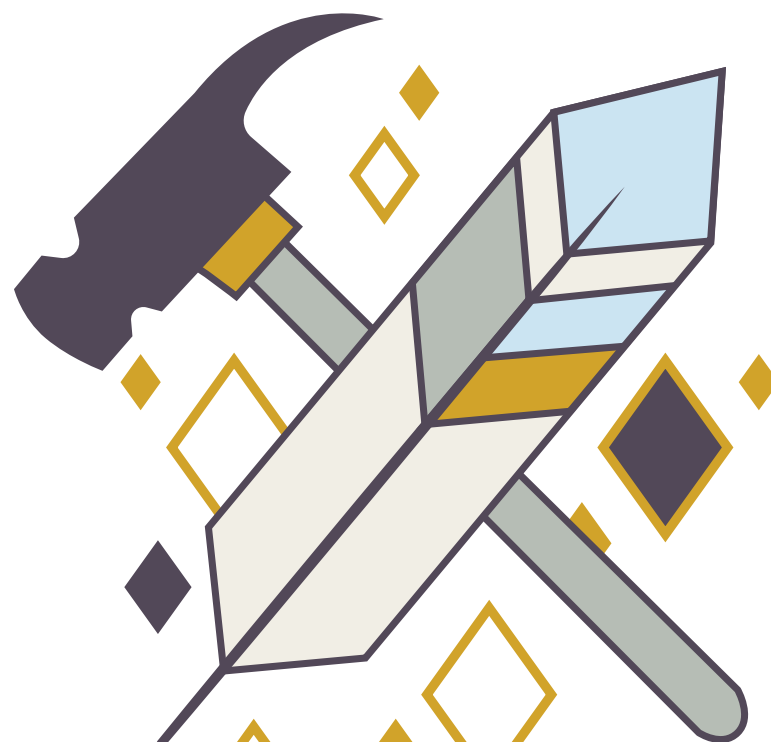
Resolute Forest Products' sawmill in Thunder Bay is situated on Fort William First Nation reserve land. **A federal regulation** made under FNCIDA sets out how 12 Ontario statutes apply to the regulation of this facility. Find out more about FNCIDA on the **Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada FNCIDA webpage**.

*“Make sure your structure and leadership is stable before entering into large development projects. Your corporate structure, momentum and legal agreement should all be in place before pursuing partnerships. If those are not in place, you risk losing out on big deals.”* **Randy Restoule, Community and Economic Development Officer, Dokis First Nation**

## Large-scale commercial and industrial projects on reserve lands: *The First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act*

Your community may be interested in engaging in large-scale commercial or industrial development projects on its reserve lands, which may involve working with outside investors and industry. A lack of regulations on reserve lands for these kind of development projects, such as environmental and health and safety regulations, can cause regulatory uncertainty that may discourage potential investors and limit these economic opportunities.

The federal *First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act (FNCIDA)* enables the federal government, at the request of participating First Nations, to produce regulations for complex commercial and industrial development projects on reserve lands. FNCIDA allows regulations to be adopted on a project-specific basis on reserve that are compatible with the existing provincial regulations off reserve. This compatibility increases certainty for the public and developers, and assists these kinds of projects in proceeding. Participating First Nations, the federal government and the province develop the regulations in co-operation. The federal government may delegate monitoring and enforcement of the regulatory regime to the province through an agreement between the participating First Nations and the federal and provincial governments.



## Structuring collaborations in economic development

There are a number of ways that economic development relationships and collaborations between your First Nation, economic development entity or community businesses and external partners can be structured. You may wish to engage legal and financial expertise when considering entering into any agreement.

### Memorandums of understanding

According to the “**Guide to Community to Community Forums in British Columbia**,” a memorandum of understanding “puts in writing the intent of communities to work together on an issue of common interest.” While memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are generally not legally binding, they can confirm a relationship and shared goals, define expectations and responsibilities, outline a process for working together and provide direction for communities’ staff – laying the groundwork for positive collaboration or a more formal relationship in the future. MOUs, which may also be called protocols or accords, can be appropriate for outlining relationships with other communities or industry. You can find a sample MOU on page 31 of the “**Guide to Community to Community Forums in British Columbia**,” or view the **Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord** as another example.

## Business agreements

Collaborating with an external partner on an economic development project may require entering into a more formal arrangement, such as a joint venture agreement or a partnership agreement. These kinds of agreements have broad definitions and can take many forms.

In a joint venture agreement, two or more parties agree to share a defined amount of financial and human resources to take on a specific project. Joint venture agreements may create a new organization jointly owned by the signatory parties, such as a corporation, or the parties may agree to conduct business together without the creation of a new organization. Joint venture agreements generally outline roles and responsibilities, project objectives, the contributions each party will make to the project, how ownership will be structured and how liabilities, expenses and profits of the project will be divided.

The Terrace Economic Development Authority created the “**First Nations Joint Venture Partnership Toolkit**” to assist British Columbia businesses interested in entering joint ventures with First Nations communities. This toolkit contains template documents that you may be able to adapt for your specific situation, including a template term sheet, which outlines terms for both parties to consider when negotiating a joint venture agreement, and a template joint venture agreement.

*"We held an economic development forum recently and had all of our Joint Venture (JV) partners, bankers and funders attend. We showcased our work. We want to diversify. We used to be heavily focused on mining, but not everyone wants to be a miner. We want our JV partners to support our other businesses, we want to maximize the gross and net profits of our JVs and, where appropriate, we are starting to convert the JVs into equity ownership. This means we invest our own money into our JVs; we have 'skin in the game.' It means we sit on the board, we make decisions [and] we get a part of the profits. This is much better than just receiving some money at the beginning of a short contract and a few possible jobs for members. Having equity ownership makes Wahgoshig Resources Inc. (the company that manages all of the agreements) a more robust company."* **Allen Kanerva, Senior Economic Advisor, Wahgoshig First Nation**

Similar to a joint venture agreement, in a "partnership" agreement, two or more parties agree to jointly own and carry on a business for profit. However, while a joint venture agreement is scoped to a specific project, a partnership agreement is broader in purpose and generally has a longer intended lifespan.

In a general partnership, each partner shares management responsibilities and can be held jointly or potentially individually responsible for any debts or liabilities owed by the partnership. In a limited partnership, there is at least one general partner and at least one "limited" partner. The general partner actively runs the business and is responsible for the partnership's debts and liabilities. The limited partner invests in the business and can share in the profits, but cannot be held personally responsible for the partnership's debts and liabilities. However, a limited partner must be a "silent partner." This means they cannot take an active role in managing the business, or they can be considered a general partner and therefore be held responsible for debts and liabilities.

*"The partner (for our hydro project) and Dokis First Nation entered into a Limited Partnership Agreement. The structure of the corporation is completely free from political influence as Chief and Council are not members of the board. This assures stability for the corporation, while attracting partners and investors into a structure of good governance."* **Randy Restoule, Economic Development Officer, Dokis First Nation**

## Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs)

According to the Gordon Foundation's **"IBA Community Toolkit,"** an IBA is "a contract made between a community and a company that provides Aboriginal consent or support for a project to proceed." These kinds of agreements, which may also be known as benefits agreements, participation agreements or resource development agreements, are generally seen in the resource development sector. If a community agrees to negotiate with a company, an agreement is reached and a project proceeds, IBAs can ensure that benefits flow to the community and negative impacts of development are minimized.

Agreements often include financial benefits and education, training and employment opportunities. Agreements can also set out how the community and company will communicate during the lifetime of the agreement, environmental management provisions, and protection or mitigation measures for cultural resources.

As an example, Mattagami First Nation, Wahgoshig First Nation, Matachewan First Nation and Flying Post First Nation have signed a resource development agreement with Goldcorp for Goldcorp's existing and future mining operations in the Timmins area. This agreement includes provisions for training, employment, business and contracting opportunities, a consultation framework for regulatory permitting, and scholarship and bursary opportunities for youth.

The Gordon Foundation's toolkit provides more information on these kinds of agreements, and their negotiation and implementation. The toolkit focuses on mining, but can be adapted for other resource development contexts.

*"We have to get out of the 'divide and conquer' mentality as First Nations. What Goldcorp did in our region was it created a regional development corporation and each of the four First Nations within the region of their operations were given 25% ownership and one seat on the board. Goldcorp funds this. It's a good model because a regional company will be on more contracts on behalf of four communities than if each of the four communities had their own company."* **Allen Kanerva, Senior Economic Advisor, Wahgoshig First Nation**

*"If there is interest for some development in or around your community, and a duty to consult, that project should fund the capacity for the community to engage third party expertise that will conduct the necessary work, but also act as a mentor for the staff of your community to learn the process along the steps of the project."* **Matt Jamieson, President and CEO, Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation**

## Recap

- ◆ Collaborating with external partners on economic development initiatives can enable sharing of knowledge, pooling of resources and expertise to open up new economic development opportunities, and securing employment and training opportunities for your community.
- ◆ Economic development initiatives can be undertaken with a variety of partners, from other First Nations, to municipalities, to businesses at the community, regional, national and international levels.
- ◆ Agreements with external partners can be formalized in a number of ways, such as Memorandums of Understanding, business agreements and benefits agreements.

## Links from this chapter

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### **More information on the Regional Distribution Centre initiative, Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

<http://www.fcm.ca/home/programs/community-economic-development-initiative/participating-communities/ontario.htm>

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### **Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord**

<http://www.siouxlookout.ca/en/your-local-government/resources/Friendship-Accord,-signed-copy.pdf>

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### **“Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships,” Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

[http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/CEDI/cedi\\_toolkit\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/CEDI/cedi_toolkit_EN.pdf)

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### **“Municipal-Aboriginal Relationships: Case Studies,” Government of Ontario**

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=6775>

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### **Fort William First Nation Sawmill Regulations**

<http://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2011-86/page-1.html>

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### **More information on the *First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act*, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033561/1100100033562>

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### **“Guide to Community to Community Forums in British Columbia,” First Nations Summit, Government of British Columbia, Government of Canada**

<http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Funding~Programs/LGPS/C2C/c2c-guide-final.pdf>

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### **“First Nations Joint Venture Partnership Toolkit,” Terrace Economic Development Authority**

<http://www.terraceinfo.ca/work/first-nations-toolkit/>

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### **“IBA Community Toolkit: Negotiation and Implementation of Impact and Benefit Agreements,” The Gordon Foundation**

<http://www.gordonfoundation.ca/resource/iba-community-toolkit/>

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# Case Studies

# Aamjiwnaang First Nation: Economic development planning and incorporating culture and tradition in economic development

In conversation with Tom Maness, former General Manager and Carole Delion, Business Development Officer, Chippewas of Sarnia Industrial Developments. Please note all quotes in this case study are from Tom Maness and Carol Delion, unless otherwise indicated.

## Background

Aamjiwnaang First Nation (formerly known as Chippewas of Sarnia) is a First Nation community of about 2,300, with a population of 850 on reserve. The First Nation is located on the St. Clair River, three miles south of the southern tip of Lake Huron in the city limits of Sarnia, Ontario. The name Aamjiwnaang, (pronounced am-JIN-nun) is commonly known as “the place at the spawning stream – where the water flows spiritually like a braid.”

## Opportunity

Aamjiwnaang First Nation has a Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) that it created in 1985 and has since updated twice. The community has had extensive input into the planning process, and so Aamjiwnaang First Nation's membership views the CCP as a community-“owned” plan. Community members have expressed the importance of integrating a cultural worldview into all aspects of planning. As a result, Aamjiwnaang First Nation has developed its CCP around the concept of a healthy tree.

*“To support cultural integration like this model you have to have champions in the community that support the vision and also invest their time into economic development. As well, in our case we had long-term staff members, like Tom, with 34 years of service, who is now mentoring.”*

## Approach

**Initiating the planning process.** In 1984, the Aamjiwnaang Band Council gave direction to create a CCP. Aamjiwnaang First Nation established a planning committee, brought in expertise via a consultant and hired a technical assistant. Aamjiwnaang First Nation also hired an Elder to assist in communications and household surveys.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation's staff coordinated with the consultants to create a Community Profile Report, with research and analysis on demographics, land use, transportation, municipal services, recreational and educational facilities, social problems and services, and band administration. This report provided background information necessary to inform the CCP.

In 1985, Aamjiwnaang First Nation finalized the CCP, which contained goals and objectives, a land use plan and community core development policies formed from the Community Profile Report and from discussions with Band staff and Council. From the goals and objectives in the CCP, the First Nation designed a set of projects for implementation. The First Nation identified each project's purpose, cost, funding source and relative priority, and created tables to guide their implementation.

**Updating the plan.** Aamjiwnaang First Nation first updated the CCP in 1996. Aamjiwnaang First Nation engaged the community in the planning process through a community profile survey and follow-up public workshops. These engagements revealed that housing was the community's most pressing concern, and so the updated

CCP addressed several housing issues. The community also expressed a desire for more community input and representation in decision-making, a clearer mandate for committees and more information on allocation of Band dollars. In response, the Band requested the process of updating the CCP include a detailed examination of the political and administrative structure, with a focus on improving communication and increasing community participation in decision-making.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation initiated the second update of the CCP in 2010. The community engagement process included a number of surveys, a workshop and conferences. There was a strong emphasis on youth needs during the engagement process, which guided the expansion of Aamjiwnaang First Nation's community centre in 2012.

#### **Weaving cultural knowledge into community planning.**

Aamjiwnaang First Nation has woven an Elder's vision of economic development into the CCP's framework that is consistent with the community's cultural values. This Elder compared the community to a healthy tree. A healthy tree is well balanced and growing. It has strong roots (knowledge and learning from the past) and nutrients (planning). The tree needs pruning at times (changing or adapting plans and strategies), and it has to withstand the elements (achieved through having well thought-out ideas and projects). The tree's seeds represent the future generation of the community, and there will only be seeds if the tree is healthy. This idea is the guiding visual for Aamjiwnaang First Nation's economic development approach.

*"The planning stage is the most important. It's key to the process. Do not get too focused on the opportunity until you plan and get community input."*

*"A comprehensive community plan should not be sitting on a shelf collecting dust. Keep it simple so that anyone can understand it!"* **Aamjiwnaang First Nation Comprehensive Community Planning Presentation (March 8 2012).**

## Results

Aamjiwnaang First Nation's economic planning process has helped the community identify its priorities and undertake a number of successful projects while remaining consistent with its cultural values. Recent major community projects include the community commercial plaza, the Chippewa Industrial Park, River Bank Erosion Control and the Band Construction Crew. Aamjiwnaang First Nation has also established partnerships with the nearby municipality of Sarnia for police, fire, water, sewer and other agreements. This has meant that non-members work for the community, but this brings tax revenue to the First Nation and these individuals contribute to the community's economic development by buying goods and services from the community.

*"A lot of companies may think they can go around good development practices or bypass environmental practices (when working with/on a First Nation). If the company is looking to just pursue a grant, we are not interested in that. Everyone in our industrial park as a partner or business has to follow all of the labour laws, and all compliances. We stand the ground here."*

## Future

Looking forward, the community is now reinvesting in renewable energy. Aamjiwnaang First Nation's industrial park and related partnerships will see an expansion of 200 acres over the next five years for future development, including multinational companies. The community's goal is to continue improving the quality of life for members through increased employment and investment revenue, in order to have a "healthy tree" long into the future.

# Moose Cree First Nation: Economic development addressing a social need

In conversation with Stan Kapashesit, Director of Economic Development, Moose Cree First Nation. Please note all quotes in this case study are from Stan Kapashesit.

## Background

Moose Cree First Nation is on an island in James Bay, across from Moose Factory, Ontario. Moose Cree First Nation is only accessible by boat in the summer, ice road in winter and helicopter service in the spring and fall months. The community has a population of approximately 3,000.

## Opportunity

Travel by helicopter is essential for Moose Cree First Nation members, particularly in spring and fall. During those seasons, helicopter transportation is required for youth attending school, tourism, delivery of groceries and other commodities, and travel between the island and the mainland for other purposes. Council passed a resolution giving direction to the economic development department to explore establishing a community-owned heliport. Currently, there are three pads on the island that helicopters can use for landing and takeoff, but no dedicated heliport facility. Two of these pads were originally intended to be temporary sites, require additional lighting and fencing and require passengers to wait outside for flights, which creates safety concerns when temperatures drop. A heliport would provide permanent, advanced infrastructure to support this essential service for the community, while at the same time laying the foundation for future economic development initiatives.

*"Know what service you really want to provide for your community. For us, it was essential services [and] transportation."*

## Approach

**Community engagement.** To gauge community support for a potential heliport project and receive feedback, the Moose Cree First Nation distributed a survey to community members. The project received unanimous support from survey respondents, who also suggested potential projects to accompany the heliport. The economic development department also set up a booth in the lobby of the First Nation's main complex and invited people to learn about the project, ask questions and provide input.

As the project has progressed, the economic development department has continued to keep the community informed through quarterly community information sessions. The department also shares information on the community website, and generates discussions by sharing information on social media.

*"When we were thinking about building a heliport (because we're on an island and there is no way to get here at certain times in the spring and fall), we wanted community input. So we set up a booth in our main Moose Cree Complex and people would stop by and ask what we were doing. We gave people a survey to ask them what they thought of the idea. Having the booth also led to other discussions with community business owners to see who might be interested in starting a helicopter company or [being] involved in other ways. Community members were very engaged."*

**Generating ideas for economic development projects.** In doing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, Moose Cree First Nation identified that owning a heliport would promote a number of additional economic development opportunities. For example, Moose Cree First Nation or a community member could start a helicopter transportation company. The company that currently serves the island is from outside the community, so a community helicopter company could help recapture some economic leakage. Other revenue sources generated by the heliport could include a café in the facility, selling aviation fuel and potentially providing a hub for commercial drones following the First Nation's partnership with Drone Delivery Canada in October 2017.

**Engaging specialists and doing due diligence.** Seeking specialized technical assistance and needing to evaluate the feasibility of the potential project, Moose Cree First Nation reached out to Transport Canada for information on consulting firms with experience in heliport design. Moose Cree First Nation then contracted a firm that had the necessary expertise and specialized knowledge of the relevant transportation regulations. At the same time, Moose Cree First Nation contracted a community member, who was a helicopter pilot, as a heliport advisor in order to add heliport-specific expertise to the economic development department.

Together, the consulting firm and the heliport advisor carried out a site assessment which looked at the feasibility of a heliport, taking into consideration potential landing areas, potential hazards, flight regulations and flight paths, as well as the findings of an airport feasibility study conducted in 2000. The site assessment ultimately recommended construction of a heliport and made recommendations about its location.

*"Our project was to build a heliport [and] we didn't have any technical knowledge about this. We brought on one First Nation Member who was involved in the aviation industry as a helicopter pilot and he is working with our team on the project. Then I got in touch with my contacts at Transport Canada and they gave me some ideas for potential aviation consultants. We ended up hiring a company from Alberta that had built heliports for other communities and they really knew what they were doing."*

**Business planning.** With the site assessment complete, Moose Cree First Nation had evidence to make an informed decision on moving the project forward to the business planning stage. In the business plan, Moose Cree First Nation selected a location for the heliport, included schematics of how the heliport would be designed and identified activities that would need to be undertaken before heliport construction could begin – such as building a roadway to the site and ensuring the site would have functional water, sewage and electricity. Creating the engineering plans and drawings to support these activities are part of what Moose Cree First Nations calls the "detailed design phase."

*"Work your networks along the way at various conferences and events. That way, you can pull together or remember or find a person who could have the expertise you need. Especially remember funding sources. I look at my stack of business cards I get along the way [and] remember what it was they offered. Even for advisory services, keeping a strong network and going back to that network is fundamental in ensuring the project's success."*

## Results

Moose Cree First Nation is currently applying for funding from various federal and provincial programs to support heliport's construction. The goal is to construct the heliport and have it fully operational in the next few years. The heliport would be owned directly by Moose Cree First Nation, operating under the Economic Development Department.

# Nipissing First Nation: Community decision-making in economic development

In conversation with Thomas Lambert, Economic Development Officer, Nipissing First Nation. Please note all quotes in this case study are from Thomas Lambert.

## Background

Nipissing First Nation is located near North Bay, Ontario. The population is approximately 2,500 members, of which about 900 reside in the community. The First Nation is divided into two separate communities along Highway 17. Nipissing is one of a handful of First Nations in Ontario operating under its own Land Management Code under the First Nations Land Management Regime. This means the community has opted out of more than 32 sections of the *Indian Act* related to land management and replaced them with their own laws. One of the laws is Nipissing First Nation's Business Licensing Bylaw.

## Opportunity

Nipissing First Nation's Couchie Industrial Park, where various businesses and companies operated in an area near the First Nation, reached capacity. Nipissing wanted to create a new industrial park to attract and support new businesses. Through its Business Licensing Bylaw, Nipissing First Nation created a process that directly engaged community members in decision-making around development of the new industrial park, which is known as Bineshii Light Industrial / Commercial Park.

## Approach

**Community consultations.** Nipissing First Nation held community consultations to inform members about the proposed new industrial park and to gather members' input on the proposal. As the new park site was located only four kilometres west of North Bay, and First Nation member businesses were already developing in the area, the community supported the location and the park as smart business investments.

**Business Licensing Bylaw and community decision-making model.** Through the First Nations Land Management Regime, Nipissing First Nation created a Business Licensing Bylaw that ensured community membership would play a central role in determining which businesses would enter the new industrial park.

The bylaw requires anyone wishing to establish a business on Nipissing First Nation land to submit a business license application and a business plan. The economic development department summarizes each application with the type of business and the desired location, without names attached, and then sends the summary to community members, who have 30 days to review the summary and send in written feedback. The department addresses community members' comments on the application as necessary. Then, the business applicant completes an environmental assessment as needed for their business. Next, the department submits a briefing to Council with a recommendation, based on community feedback and the due diligence completed to date, to either support or decline the motion for the business. If Council approves the application, it refers the applicant to the lands department to acquire the land. The applicant then signs a lease agreement and agrees to follow the provincial and federal guidelines to establish their business, monitored by the lands department.

**Supporting community members and businesses.** A key consideration during the community decision-making process is how the business will provide employment opportunities for members. Community members are not just looking at revenue generation from the lease, but short- and long-term employment opportunities for members. Creating jobs and opportunity for community members benefits both the individuals and the community as whole, as members spend earnings on more products and services and boost the collective local economy.

In order to support community members and local business growth, Nipissing First Nation member businesses do not pay to lease the land. Non-member businesses sign 25-year leases, reviewed every five years with an opportunity to renew at the end of the lease term.

**Responsible development.** Nipissing First Nation and its membership prioritizes protecting the land, the environment, natural resources and wildlife. The lands and environment departments therefore work in adherence of federal and provincial guidelines and oversee all necessary environmental assessments to ensure that economic development projects, such as the industrial park, do not have a negative impact on the land.

*"Make sure [communities] do their due diligence with whoever they partner with to make sure they get the end result they are seeking. A major component is the team and team effort in their community. No matter what project they are working on, everyone has input and has a role across the departments – lands, economic development, employment and training, the management and Chief and Council all need to support the project."*

*"To get information out to community members, we use a strategy to send documents by mail-out and post to the website weeks in advance of a meeting or in the business approval process, so members have time to read ahead of time about what the business proposal is, and then they have an opportunity to provide feedback or raise questions. This is also a strategy used for community meetings to gather input on development issues."*

## Results

Bineshii Light Industrial / Commercial Park allows for light commercial and professional office space. It currently houses five businesses and one Indigenous organization. Community members own three of the businesses, and the spouse of a community member and a member of another community own the other two businesses.

## Future

Nipissing First Nation is working towards upgrading the park's infrastructure to attract investment from larger, manufacturing-type businesses.

# Great Spirit Circle Trail: A collaborative approach to tourism

In conversation with Kevin Eshkawkogan, CEO of Great Spirit Circle Trail. Please note all quotes in this case study are from Kevin Eshkawkogan.

## Background

Great Spirit Circle Trail (GSCT) is a tourism experience company on Manitoulin Island that is 100% owned by eight First Nation partners: Sheshegwaning First Nation, Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, Whitefish River First Nation, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Sheguiandah First Nation, Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation and Zhiibaahaasing First Nation.

## Opportunity

The eight First Nation communities determined that they could and should take a greater role in the regional tourism industry. As the original tour guides of the region, the communities were capable of providing the authentic experience that tourists look for, and so the region's growing tourism business presented a strong economic opportunity. The communities also shared concerns that non-Indigenous tourism operators were inaccurately representing Anishnabek culture, and the communities wanted to share their story on their own terms.

They had a number of goals:

- ◆ create a collective, proactive approach for increasing the communities' involvement in the regional tourism industry
- ◆ build a regional tourism model that would more accurately reflect their culture, traditions and histories and be delivered in a respectful way
- ◆ offer economic and employment opportunities to their community members

*"When you incorporate the ideas of others and they see it, they will buy in because they see how their ideas are contributing to the business."*

*"With more partners, there is more informal and formal politics that you have to address as issues come up. You need to educate people and counter negativity with information. Communication with the membership is always a priority."*

## Approach

### Establishing a partnership and a common vision.

The economic development officers in the region came together with Elders to form an initial working group. Multiple times over three years, the GSCT team met with communities and leaders in the Indigenous tourism industry in the region to hold brainstorming sessions, including on what each community could bring to the partnership. To engage the communities, the GSCT team created an inventory of the tourism products currently offered by the communities, and a list of tourism products that could potentially be developed.

After reviewing the ideas that communities shared, the team advised the communities on which ideas were viable and how they might align to create a plan for the partnership, including possible short- and long-term goals and a possible shared vision for the partnership. Since members of all the communities had been engaged and allowed to share their ideas, community members took ownership of the vision for the GSCT more readily.

**The benefits of collaboration.** Acting together has enabled the communities to accomplish much more than had they remained separate. The communities can speak in one regional voice and create region-based tourism products and experiences. Collaboration also promotes efficiency, allowing pooling of knowledge and resources and preventing communities from duplicating or competing with each other's work.

For example, GSCT and other Manitoulin businesses have attended international trade shows to attract international business and showcase the region. Without the ability to pool resources, it is unlikely that any of the individual businesses would have been able to attend such events.

**Cultural infusion into operations.** An integral approach to GSCT's operations is to always work in a respectful way, integrating culture in all that they do. In fact, one of the first things GSCT did was develop cultural integrity guidelines in collaboration with Elders. GSCT reviews these guidelines annually. As smudging is a common daily cultural practice, all visitor engagement sessions begin with a smudge. At the groundbreaking sunrise ceremony for a new construction project, Elders conducted a ceremony and blessing of the grounds before they disturbed the land with construction equipment.

**Engaging community members.** At different times, as GSCT continues to develop products and services, it encourages all community members to raise questions and provide input and ideas. When a new product is developed, they ask the Elders for feedback if they are unsure about cultural protocols.

*"You have to know the community. If they are simply not interested, don't force it; you can't push your ideas with a top-down approach. That's not working with the communal good in mind – that's working with personal motivations in mind. You have to learn and identify the community passion, by learning to know the community, their plans, their vision, their dreams and their aspirations. You can then formulate comprehensive community plans and collect the necessary data, and then you can truly work for the communal good."*

*"Equally important to celebrating the successes is recognizing the failures. It is important to understand what you did to achieve the successes so you can do it again, but at the same time, you need to be able to identify the failures and learn from those failures as well."*

**Human resources.** GSCT has built a team capable of implementing GSCT's plan for the next five to fifteen years as part of its vision for success. As one of GSCT's goals is to create economic opportunities for community members, and it prides itself on being 100 percent authentic to the region, all of GSCT's employees are Indigenous. GSCT hires workers of all ages from the communities. Employees take tourism-specific training, which is standard in the industry.

Employment with GSCT has allowed youth to become more engaged in their culture through the work they take on as guides and interpreters. Post-secondary students seek summer employment with GSCT as an opportunity to learn about themselves, their culture and their community.

## Results

GSCT has evolved over the past 20 years and one of their biggest projects, the Manitoulin Hotel and Conference Centre, is now entering its sixth summer of operations (read about the Hotel and Conference Centre project in the next case study). GSCT's for-profit tour company has consistently seen double-digit percentage increases in revenue. They do not compete with community businesses, but rather partner with, promote and support them. GSCT's not-for-profit entity allows them to access government funds for project-based initiatives such as training and skills development that support industry and economic growth in the communities.

## Future

GSCT is now looking at developing its goals for the next decade, which will include establishing an entity to help businesses and communities across Ontario improve socio-economic conditions for Indigenous people through the tourism industry. One of the key goals is to increase sustainability of both the for-profit companies and the not-for-profit entities. The for-profit entity is seeing continued growth, but maintaining a not-for-profit on project-based funding is very challenging and they are exploring changes to their business model to address this.

# The Manitoulin Hotel and Conference Centre: Collaboratively pursuing an economic development project

In conversation with Kevin Eshkawkogan, CEO of Great Spirit Circle Trail. Please note all quotes in this case study are from Kevin Eshkawkogan.

## Background

The Manitoulin Hotel and Conference Centre is located in Little Current, Ontario. Six First Nations communities – Sheshegwaning First Nation, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Whitefish River First Nation and Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation – and Great Spirit Circle Trail collectively own the Hotel and Conference Centre. The Hotel and Conference Centre is one of the Great Spirit Circle Trail's largest projects.

## Opportunity

The communities identified and evaluated the opportunity for a hotel and conference centre project through a number of methods. They conducted a leakage study that found one of the region's biggest leakages was meetings and conferences, as there was no venue in the region suitable for these kinds of events. They spoke with others who had knowledge of the market. One of their clients, who led group tours, told them that four guests loved visiting Manitoulin Island but had difficulty finding suitable accommodation. Finally, market data that Aundeck Omni Kaning had previously collected for a potential hotel project in Little Current supported this business concept.

*"If you don't have a good plan and aren't willing to stick to the plan, don't start. Having the patience to allow the business to get off the ground is just as important as having the perseverance to make it happen in the first place. When you are running a business, it takes time to grow. Trust among partners, suppliers and others has to be developed – it doesn't just happen. Nurturing those relationships and communicating with all is critical."*

## Approach

### Understanding the opportunity in the market.

After performing the necessary due diligence to confirm a hotel and conference centre project on Manitoulin Island was feasible, the communities continued to refine the project to meet the market's needs. The communities knew their primary customers for accommodation would be tourists on motor coach tours. Reasoning that they could expect to accommodate two motor coaches at a time, with each likely holding approximately 25-30 couples, they designed the hotel to have 58 rooms. Though the conference centre would host First Nations conferences with high attendance, they knew that most attendees would be from local communities and not need accommodation, so it was unnecessary to build the hotel to accommodate hundreds of guests.

**Communication between partners.** Having multiple partners collaborate on a major construction project like a hotel requires strong communication practices. Over 50 to 60 different decision makers were involved among the various First Nation partners, as well as seven different financing agreements with three different commercial lenders and three different government agencies. The Great Spirit Circle Trail (GSCT) team did a great deal of work, continually engaging the

various communities involved in or with an interest in the project. Open communication has been vital throughout the project, from the early stages when the GSCT team presented the business plan to the various communities to achieve buy-in, through to the construction and operation stages.

**Mentoring and training community members.** The communities identified that they lacked expertise in hotel management and engaged an external management group for hotel operations. They made a long-term plan of having the management group mentor and train community members to eventually assume management roles. There is a conscious strategy to promote consistency and build a sustainable workplace where employees will stay for the long term.

Senior management decided it is important to “pass the torch” after milestones are met, so that senior managers are not in their jobs for 20 or 25 years. They determined that “fresh blood and energy” are needed to evolve GSCT's direction, so they developed a transition/succession plan for staff, in order to address that need.

*“You need to acknowledge the people that came before you in the planning and groundwork of such a long-term project. You need to applaud and show the respect for those that laid the foundation. Then, it is your turn to grow things to pass on in the future.”*

## Results

In 2018, the Manitoulin Hotel and Conference Centre will be entering its sixth summer of operations. They have seen an increase in visitors while following GSCT's goals of remaining culturally authentic, taking a regional approach to marketing and development of tourism products and creating economic opportunity for local community members.



# Additional resources

# Economic development resources

## **“Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Business Planning Guide: Checklist for Success,” Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia**

<http://cms.spincaster.com/siteFiles/85/files/ACTBPG.pdf>

A handbook to assist First Nation communities in developing tourism-based enterprises.

## **“BC First Nations Land Use Planning: Effective Practices,” New Relationship Trust:**

<http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/land-use-planning-report.pdf>

A guide that outlines a land use planning process that can provide guidance for your community's land use planning process in Ontario.

## **“CCP Handbook – Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia,” Government of Canada**

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1377629855838/1377632394645>

A handbook to assist communities in British Columbia with the comprehensive community planning process that you can adapt for your needs in Ontario.

## **“Community and Commerce: A Survey of Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations in Ontario, Research Report Spring 2013,” Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business**

<https://www.ccab.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CCAB-EcoDevel-Report2013-FA-web.pdf>

Research findings on Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations in Ontario.

## **“Developing Business Plans and Funding Proposals,” AFOA Canada**

[https://www.afoa.ca/afoadocs/L3/L3a%20-%20Developing\\_a\\_Business\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.afoa.ca/afoadocs/L3/L3a%20-%20Developing_a_Business_Plan.pdf)

A paper intended to help readers better understand the business planning process and the key elements of an effective business plan.

## **“Economic Development Toolkit for First Nations Economic Development Officers, Chiefs and Councils and Community Members – Basic Information and Guide,” Industry Council for Aboriginal Business**

<http://www.sauder.ubc.ca/Programs/Chnook/Students/~media/Files/Chnook/ICAB.ashx>

An economic development toolkit that covers topics such as economic development and business structures, roles for Chief and Council and Economic Development Officers and economic development strategies.

## **First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act, Government of Canada**

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/28005/317418.pdf>

More information on the federal *First Nations Commercial and Industrial Development Act*.

## **“First Nations Economic Development Readiness Questionnaire,” Government of Ontario**

<http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org/sites/default/files/files/FINAL%20English%20ISBN%20987-1-4435-9481-3.pdf>

A questionnaire that First Nations communities can use to understand their economic development capacity and inform their planning initiatives.

## **First Nations Fiscal Management Act, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1393512745390/1393512934976#chp3>

More information on the federal *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*, as well as the First Nations Finance Authority, the First Nations Financial Management Board and the First Nations Tax Commission.

## **First Nations Land Management Regime, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1327090675492/1327090738973>

More information on the First Nations Land Management Regime.

**“Gaining Momentum: Sharing 96 Best Practices of First Nations Comprehensive Community Planning,” New Relationship Trust**

<http://www.newrelationshiptrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/comprehensive-community-planning-long-version.pdf>

A guide that supports and guides First Nations' efforts in comprehensive community planning.

**Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, Harvard University**

<http://www.hpaied.org/>

A study of social and economic development on American Indian reservations, including what works, where and why.

**“IBA Community Toolkit: Negotiation and Implementation of Impact and Benefit Agreements,” The Gordon Foundation**

<http://www.gordonfoundation.ca/resource/iba-community-toolkit/>

A toolkit designed for communities engaged in negotiating Impact and Benefit Agreements with mining companies.

**Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada Governance Tools for Communities, Government of Canada**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013910/1100100013911>

This webpage provides links to a number of tools that may assist Indigenous communities with core governance functions.

**“Indigenous Business Development Toolkit,” Government of Ontario**

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/indigenous-business-development-toolkit>

A toolkit developed for Indigenous people who are starting or expanding a business.

**“Journey to Success: Aboriginal Women’s Business Planning Guide,” Government of Canada**

<http://www.equaywuk.ca/HomeBusiness/Journey%20to%20Success%20-%20Aboriginal%20Women%27s%20Business.pdf>

A guide to assist Indigenous women in finding success in the world of business.

**“Measuring Up! Performance Measurement for Economic Development,” Government of Ontario**

Request a copy by calling the Agricultural Contact Information Centre, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at 1-877-424-1300

A resource for economic development professionals that outlines performance measurement concepts and processes and helps develop the skills required to integrate performance measurement into an economic planning process.

**“Minding Our Own Businesses: how to create support in First Nations communities for Aboriginal Business,” The Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University**

<http://www.sauder.ubc.ca/Programs/Chnook/Students/~media/Files/Chnook/Minding%20Our%20Own%20Businesses.ashx>

An investigation into First Nations initiatives to support small business operators.

**“Municipal-Aboriginal Relationships: Case Studies,” Government of Ontario**

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=6775>

Case studies providing examples of Indigenous communities and municipalities building strong, respectful relationships.

**“Ontario First Nations and Renewable Energy – Context, Opportunities and Case Studies,” Ontario Sustainable Energy Association**

<http://www.turtleisland.org/resources/renewenergy.pdf>

A guide designed by the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association to assist First Nations in pursuing renewable energy projects.

**“Orientation to the Occupation of Aboriginal Economic Development Officer,” Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers**

<http://www.edo.ca/downloads/orientation-to-the-occupation-of-edo.pdf>

A guidebook with information about the occupation of Aboriginal Economic Development Officer.

**“Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships,” Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

[https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/CEDI/cedi\\_toolkit\\_EN.pdf](https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/CEDI/cedi_toolkit_EN.pdf)

A resource with stories and lessons learned from joint First Nations-municipal community economic development.

**“The Anishinabek Nation Economy: Our Economic Blueprint,” Anishinabek Nation**

[http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FINAL-Consolidated-ANEB\\_PDF-sm.pdf](http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FINAL-Consolidated-ANEB_PDF-sm.pdf)

The Anishinabek Nation's basic steps, recommendations and examples for how Anishinabek Nation communities can achieve economic success.

**“The Community Strategic Planning Toolkit,” Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund**

<http://www.nadf.org/upload/documents/community-strategic-planning-toolkit2005-with-appendices.pdf>

Guidance and exercises to support community strategic planning.

## Economic development organizations

### **AFOA Canada**

<https://www.foa.ca/>

AFOA Canada supports capacity development and day-to-day needs of Indigenous finance, management, band administration, leadership and program management professionals.

### **Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)**

<https://www.bdc.ca/en/pages/home.aspx>

BDC is a bank dedicated exclusively to entrepreneurs, offering consulting and financial services for Indigenous businesses.

### **Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association**

<https://www.aboriginalminerals.com/>

The Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association is an Indigenous organization that works to increase awareness of the Indigenous mining industry.

### **Canadian Centre for Community Renewal**

<http://www.communityrenewal.ca/about>

The Canadian Centre for Community Renewal is an organization that works with communities to increase their resilience and capacity, emphasizing strengthening the self-reliance of local and regional economies.

### **Canadian Executive Services Organization**

<https://www.ceso-saco.com/our-work/canada/>

The Canadian Executive Services Organization is an international economic development organization that provides communities and organizations with mentorship and advice on how to develop long-term prosperity.

### **Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business**

<https://www.ccab.com/>

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business fosters sustainable business relations between First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and Canadian business.

### **Community Future Development Corporations (CFDCs)**

<https://www.cfontario.ca/>

CFDCs offer a wide variety of programs and services supporting community economic development and small business growth.

### **Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO)**

<http://www.edo.ca/>

CANDO provides programs and services, such as courses, custom training options and certifications, to Indigenous economic development officers.

### **First Nation Finance Authority (FNFA)**

<http://www.fnfa.ca/>

The FNFA provides investment options, capital planning advice and access to long-term loans with preferable interest rates to First Nations governments.

### **First Nations Financial Management Board (FNFMB)**

<http://www.fnfmb.com/>

The FNFMB provides financial management tools and services for First Nations governments to strengthen their financial management and reporting systems to support economic and community development.

### **First Nations Land Management Resource Centre**

<https://www.labrc.com/home/>

The First Nations Land Management Resource Centre is the First Nations Lands Advisory Board's service delivery organization, and provides services and resources to support First Nations implementing land governance over their reserve lands through the First Nation Land Management Regime.

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**First Nations Tax Commission (FNTC)**

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<http://www.fntc.ca/>

The FNTC helps First Nation governments build and maintain fair and efficient property tax regimes to ensure First Nations communities and their taxpayers receive the maximum benefit from these systems.

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**First Nations Bank of Canada**

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<https://www.fnbc.ca/Business/>

The First Nations Bank of Canada provides financial services to Indigenous people and advocates for the growth of the Indigenous economy and the economic well-being of Indigenous people.

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**National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA)**

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<http://www.nacca.ca/home>

NACCA is a network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions dedicated to stimulating economic growth for Indigenous people in Canada.

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**National Aboriginal Land Managers Association (NALMA)**

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<http://www.nalma.ca/>

NALMA provides tools and resources to support First Nations Land Managers' technical and professional development. You can also find information on the Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association, which provides networking, peer support and training opportunities for First Nations Land Managers in Ontario at <http://www.nalma.ca/associations/oala>.

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**Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)**

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<http://www.ofifc.org>

OFIFC is a provincial Indigenous organization representing the collective interests of member Friendship Centres located in towns and cities across the province. OFIFC provides a number of services to Indigenous people, including access to employment and business support programs.

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**Ontario First Nations Economic Developers' Association (OFNEDA)**

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<https://www.ofneda.com/>

OFNEDA provides networking, training opportunities and research on First Nations economic development for its membership, which includes economic development officers and other First Nations economic development professionals.

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**Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC)**

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<http://www.ofntsc.org>

The OFNTSC provides technical and advisory services to all First Nations in Ontario in a variety of areas, including emergency management, engineering, environment, housing, infrastructure, operation and maintenance, and wastewater.

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## Economic development programs

### **Business Development Bank of Canada: Aboriginal Business Development Fund (ABDF)**

[https://www.bdc.ca/en/i\\_am/aboriginal\\_entrepreneur/pages/aboriginal\\_fund.aspx](https://www.bdc.ca/en/i_am/aboriginal_entrepreneur/pages/aboriginal_fund.aspx)

The BDC's ABDF provide funds and tools for Indigenous entrepreneurs who choose to start their own business.

### **Business Development Bank of Canada: Indigenous entrepreneur supports**

[https://www.bdc.ca/en/i\\_am/aboriginal\\_entrepreneur/pages/default.aspx](https://www.bdc.ca/en/i_am/aboriginal_entrepreneur/pages/default.aspx)

The BDC provides funds and tools for Indigenous entrepreneurs who choose to start their own business.

### **Capital for Aboriginal Prosperity and Entrepreneurship (CAPE) Fund**

<http://www.capecfund.ca/>

CAPE Fund's mission is to further a culture of economic independence, ownership, entrepreneurship and enterprise management among Indigenous peoples on or off reserve through the creation and growth of successful businesses.

### **Government of Canada: Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Development (ABED)**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1375201178602/1375202816581>

ABED delivers funding for Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities for business development support, through a partnership between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal Financial Institutions.

### **Government of Canada: Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario)**

<http://www.feddevontario.gc.ca/eic/site/723.nsf/eng/home>

FedDev Ontario delivers programming to help create, retain and grow businesses, cultivate partnerships and build strong communities across Southern Ontario.

### **Government of Canada: FedNor**

<http://www.fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/Intro>

FedNor works with Northern Ontario businesses and community partners to support community economic development, business growth and competitiveness and innovation.

### **Government of Canada: Community Opportunity Readiness Program**

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033414/1100100033415>

The Community Opportunity Readiness Program addresses the financial needs of Indigenous communities when they are in pursuit of, and wish to participate in, an economic opportunity.

### **Government of Canada: First Nations Infrastructure Fund**

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010656/1100100010657>

The First Nation Infrastructure Fund helps First Nation communities improve and increase public infrastructure to improve the quality of life and the environment for First Nation communities.

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**Government of Canada: Lands and Economic Development Services Program**

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<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033423/1100100033424>

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The Lands and Economic Development Services Program (LEDSP) offers different types of funding to help First Nations deliver economic development services; assume greater control of reserve lands, resources and the environment; and build capacity to effectively manage their lands in accordance with the First Nations Land Management Act.

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**Government of Canada: Professional and Institutional Development Program**

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<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013815/1100100013816>

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The Professional and Institutional Development Program funds projects that develop the capacity of First Nations to perform core functions of government such as planning and risk management, leadership, basic administration and financial management.

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**Government of Canada: Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business**

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<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032802/1100100032803>

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A federal government strategy to increase Aboriginal business access to federal contracting opportunities and the federal procurement process.

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**Government of Ontario: Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program (ALGP)**

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<https://www.ofina.on.ca/algp/>

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The ALGP facilitates First Nations equity participation in the renewable energy sector by providing guarantees in support of renewable generation (wind, hydro, solar, biomass) and transmission projects.

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**Government of Ontario: Aboriginal Participation Fund (APF)**

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<http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/en/mines-and-minerals/aboriginal-participation-fund>

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The APF supports Indigenous consultation capacity, education and relationship-building activities as they relate to mineral exploration and development.

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**Government of Ontario: Aboriginal Procurement Program**

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<https://www.ontario.ca/page/aboriginal-businesses-bidding-government-contracts>

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The Aboriginal Procurement Program promotes Indigenous economic development by increasing Government of Ontario contracting opportunities for businesses owned by First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

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**Government of Ontario: Indigenous Community Capital Grants Program (ICCGP)**

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<http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants/GrantOpportunities/PRDR015641>

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The ICCGP helps First Nations build or renovate needed community infrastructure by providing up to \$3 million annually to support approved projects.

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**Government of Ontario: Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF)/Southwestern Ontario Development Fund (SODF)**

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<https://www.ontario.ca/page/eastern-ontario-development-fund>

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<https://www.ontario.ca/page/southwestern-ontario-development-fund>

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The EODF and SODF provide funding to First Nations communities and businesses, Indigenous organizations, municipalities and other not-for-profit organizations for economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario.

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**Government of Ontario: Indigenous Economic Development Fund**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/funding-indigenous-economic-development>

The Indigenous Economic Development Fund provides grants and financing to Aboriginal businesses and Indigenous communities and organizations to promote economic development and improve socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people.

**Government of Ontario: Local Poverty Reduction Fund**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/local-poverty-reduction-fund>

The Local Poverty Reduction Fund supports innovative, community-driven projects that measurably improve the lives of those most affected by poverty. These projects may include employment and training supports.

**Government of Ontario: New Relationship Fund**

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/new-relationship-fund>

The New Relationship Fund supports First Nations, Métis communities and Indigenous organizations in building capacity to consult and engage with governments and the private sector on lands and resources matters.

**Government of Ontario: Northern Communities Investment Readiness**

<https://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/en/northern-development/community-support/northern-communities-investment-readiness-initiative>

The Northern Communities Investment Readiness program provides conditional contributions to northern communities, First Nations and economic development corporations for activities that improve investment readiness or have the potential to attract investment.

**Government of Ontario: Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC)**

<http://www.nohfc.ca/>

The NOHFC invests in northern businesses and communities through conditional contributions, forgivable performance loans, incentive term loans and loan guarantees.

**Government of Ontario: Rural Economic Development Program**

<http://www.omaf.gov.on.ca/english/rural/ruralfunding/index.html>

The Rural Economic Development program helps rural communities, including First Nations, undergo planning activities or implement projects that help remove barriers to community economic development.

**Independent Electricity System Operator funding programs**

<http://www.ieso.ca/get-involved/indigenous-relations/overview>

The Independent Electricity System Operator has multiple funding programs that support Indigenous participation in energy opportunities, including renewable energy generation.

