

# The National Indigenous Economic Development Board 2019-2021 Multiannual Report



**The National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB)**

NIEDB Secretariat

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## Message from the Chairperson

On behalf of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board, I am pleased to present our Multiannual Report for 2019–2022. The Board has been involved in a variety of projects since 2019, and has continued to work on Indigenous economic development initiatives throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Board's previous Chair, Chief Clarence Louie. In 2021, after more than 20 years of service, Chief Clarence Louie retired from his position as Chairperson of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board. Chief Clarence Louie's tenure as Chairperson has been highlighted by his innovative approach to advancing and taking control of Indigenous economic development initiatives at the community level. He continues to be an inspiration to many Indigenous communities and leaders across the country.

Over the past three years, our Board has reached a full roster of 13 notable Indigenous industry leaders and change makers. I would like to acknowledge Victoria LaBillois in her new role as Vice-Chairperson as well as our five new Board members: Danielle Levine, Andy Moorhouse, Michael Bonshor, Bob Dickson, and Dana Soonias. The National Board is constantly looking to expand and grow in all areas of expertise.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequities for Indigenous communities in Canada. It created an urgency on reconciliatory responses from the Canadian government, and despite the persistent challenges, many Indigenous communities adapted to the pandemic in innovative and dynamic ways. We appreciated that federal support was provided for the urgent needs of communities and to the network of Indigenous Financial Institutions, and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, to help Indigenous businesses make it through the pandemic, which has helped tremendously in keeping Indigenous businesses operational today. There is still much work to do to help these businesses through this next phase of economic recovery.

The National Board has also worked collaboratively with other national Indigenous organizations to advance economic reconciliation and development opportunities for communities and businesses. In 2019, we began the laborious work with our counterparts from these national Indigenous organizations on the development of the 2022 National Indigenous Economic Strategy for Canada. Together, we are now advancing this strategy as a path toward ensuring socio-economic parity for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. We continue to collaborate on many topics such as opening doors for Indigenous business procurement opportunities, trade, activating the economic components of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, broadband connectivity, among others.

The advancement of Indigenous people in the fields of business, finance and economic development is the solution to rebuilding our economies, advancing sustainable development, and securing our rightful place in Canada's economy. I am proud of the important milestones we have achieved in 2019, 2020 and 2021, all of which have contributed to ensuring that federal policies and programs are fully inclusive and effective, including:





**The release of the following reports and plans:**

- 2019 *Recommendations on Northern Sustainable Food Systems*
- 2019 *Indigenous Economic Progress Report*
- 2019 *Indigenous Economic Reconciliation: Recommendations of Reconciliation and Inclusive Economic Growth for Indigenous Peoples and Canada* report
- 2020-2023 NIEDB Strategic Plan

**Special events and milestones:**

- Collaboration with the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on their first-ever report on Indigenous economic development “Linking Indigenous Communities to Regional Development”
- Hosting a UN Permanent Forum Side Event to discuss activating the economic components of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Board has also provided significant input into various departmental strategies and program development over the time period of this report. With three decades of experience providing policy advice to the federal government and as we are deeply embedded in Indigenous economic development networks as well as tables at all levels of the Canadian government, we continue to help guide the path forward.

As Indigenous practitioners of economic and business development at the community level, we fully understand that achieving true reconciliation will not be possible without vibrant Indigenous economies, characterized by economic self-sufficiency and socio-economic equality with the rest of Canada. Studies demonstrate that when Indigenous communities prosper, so do the regions around them. Through meaningful collaboration, co-development, innovation, and partnership, along with building our own institutional capacity, we can transform Indigenous economies across Canada. The National Board looks forward to a future full of new advances and exciting opportunities.



Dawn Madahbee Leach  
Chairperson

## Appointment of Dawn Madahbee Leach as Chairperson of the National Board

The role of Indigenous women in traditional life has long been one of leadership and strength. The tenacity and determination of Indigenous women today stands as a powerful testament to their role in preserving traditions and culture. Dawn Madahbee Leach, the National Board's first female Chairperson, was appointed on April 30, 2021. She is an Anishinabe-kwe and member of the Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation and has been the General Manager for the [Waubetek Business Development Corporation](#) since 1988.



Dawn Madahbee Leach has been recognized as one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women, and she is the first Indigenous woman in Canada to head up a regional financial lending institution. Waubetek provides financial services to Indigenous entrepreneurs and 27 First Nation communities in Northeastern Ontario. At Waubetek, Dawn Madahbee Leach has been instrumental in the establishment of major regional initiatives as well as \$130 million in investments in Indigenous businesses and economic projects. Nationally, she has helped design programs that meet the capital needs for Indigenous businesses and First Nation communities.

In addition to her work with the National Board and Waubetek, Dawn Madahbee Leach also serves on the Boards of Peace Hills Trust and NioBay Metals Inc. and is the owner of Indigenous Business International, a company that provides advisory and strategic planning services. She has spoken and promoted Indigenous business and economic development internationally in regions such as Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. She also received the Indspire Award for Business and Commerce in 2020 and the Lifetime Business Achievement Award in 2023 from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. She also earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Laurentian University, with a major in political science and minor in law.

A leader in entrepreneurship and business, Dawn Madahbee Leach has been fiercely committed to advancing Indigenous economic development in Canada. She is a politically and nationally engaged businesswoman and has contributed greatly to guiding and growing Indigenous economies. Her work has made a difference across the country, and empowers others to do the same.

***“Full reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples will not happen without economic reconciliation. It is not only the fair and right thing to do, but there is a strong and compelling business case for all Canadians.”***

## Appointment of Victoria LaBillois as Vice-Chairperson of the National Board



Victoria LaBillois is a Mi'gmaq entrepreneur from Listuguj, in the traditional territory of Gespe'gewa'gi; the seventh and largest district of the Mi'gmaq. In addition to being the President of [Wejuseg Construction](#), Victoria LaBillois is also the owner/President of Wejipeg Excavation Inc. Wejipeg opened in 2011 to assist in the excavation needs of the wind park development across the territory. On June 17, 2021, she was appointed as the National Board's new Vice-Chairperson.

Victoria LaBillois holds both a Bachelor of Arts degree and M.B.A. from the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton. She also holds a contractor's license from the Régie du bâtiment du Québec.

Through her vision, she has created innovative employment opportunities for the Mi'gmaq workforce and has helped bridge race relations. She also served as co-chair for a national Steering Committee with the Canadian Construction Association, overseeing development of an Aboriginal Engagement Guide for small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Victoria LaBillois has served as a mentor in the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program at the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University and in the JEDI Aboriginal Business Accelerator Program. She mentors young women in the Women's Executive Network (WXN) mentorship program, which she says is a way to give back after being named a WXN Canada's Most Powerful Women Top 100 Award Winner in both 2019 and 2020. She also teaches financial literacy to Indigenous youth.

***"We were never destined to live in poverty on our traditional territories - these lands and waters have and can continue to sustain us."***

## REPORTS

### 2019 Recommendations on Northern Sustainable Food Systems

Northern sustainable food systems are a critical component of economic development in the North. Sustainable food systems support food security, leading to healthier communities, and individuals who are better able to participate in the workforce. With a healthier workforce, the economic climate is more favourable to attract and retain businesses. Improvements in employment, educational opportunities and increased incomes in turn allow for greater food security. Northern sustainable food systems both drive economic development and benefit from the economic growth associated with new business opportunities.

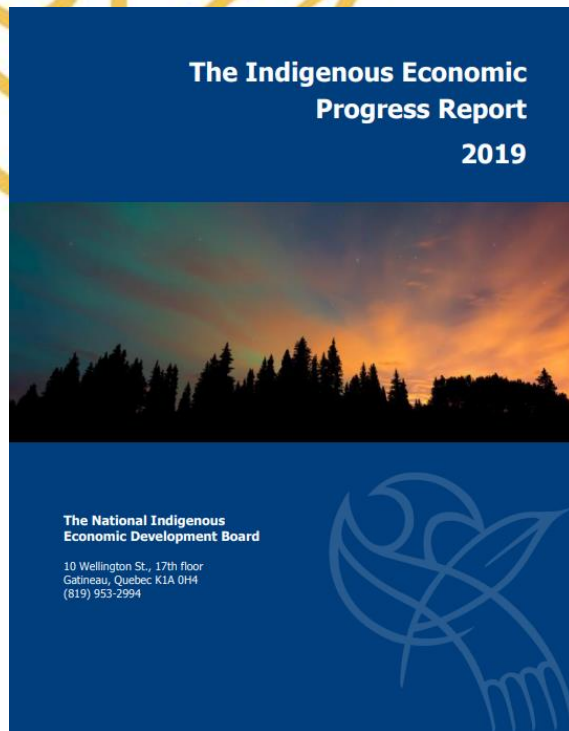


NIEDB Northern Food Systems Recommendations 2019 - Infographic

Based on internal and external research, along with findings from our Roundtable event held in Whitehorse, Yukon in June 2018 to discuss Northern Sustainable food systems with Northerners, the Board has made a suite of recommendations that address gaps in creating sustainable food systems. All recommendations look to further Indigenous self-determination and self-governance through a distinctions-based approach. In combination with enhanced and simplified funding for local initiatives and sharing networks of Northern solutions, the North will be better positioned to support sustainable food systems and future economic development.

Read the full report here: [Recommendations on Northern Sustainable Food Systems](#)

## 2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report



*NIEDB Indigenous Economic Progress Report 2019*

Released on June 10, 2019, the 2019 *Indigenous Economic Progress Report* concludes that while the overall economic outcomes for Indigenous Peoples are improving in Canada, this is only to varying and sometimes small degrees. Given the pace of improvements, outcomes were not on track to meet the 2022 targets of economic parity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

This report presents a thorough, in-depth analysis of the economic realities of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Using 13 measures, it assesses three core indicators: employment, income and community well-being. Using 19 additional measures, it also examines five underlying indicators of economic success: education, entrepreneurship and business development, governance, lands and resources, and infrastructure.

Eleven new measures were introduced to this report, such as workforce representation, enhanced income and educational attainment measures, crowding and condition of housing, and community financial certification. It also presents the results of gender analysis and introduces two new composite indices on economic development and infrastructure.

The 2019 report is the second progress report issued by the National Board since its foundational *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report* which was published in 2012. The benchmarking report set bold targets on which to track the economic progress of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Canada. This includes the target to achieve economic outcome parity by 2022.

Among its recommendations, the National Board advises that policies and programming should target Indigenous populations in the areas of infrastructure, employment and education. It also recommends the development of youth-focused educational supports to help Indigenous Peoples finish high school and continue on to post-secondary education, as well as skills development programs to help Indigenous employees of high-wage industries increase their earning potential in higher-paying roles.

Read the full report here: [The Indigenous Economic Progress Report 2019](#)



## 2019 Indigenous Economic Reconciliation Report

To inform a path forward on addressing the socio-economic gap for Indigenous Peoples in the context of reconciliation, the Board hosted a three-part series, in 2017 and 2018, on economic reconciliation and inclusive growth in Canada. The series was called “*Expanding the Circle: What Reconciliation and Inclusive Economic Growth Can Mean for Indigenous Peoples and Canada?*” These events were organized in partnership with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA), the Public Policy Forum (PPF), and the former Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

The interest in the Expanding the Circle series stems from the Board’s 2016 research which indicated that if all opportunities were equal and the Indigenous labour force was fully mobilized, it could lead to a \$27.7 billion annual contribution to the Canadian GDP.

The Indigenous Economic Reconciliation Report and its recommendations are the result of what the Board heard during these forums and is informed by the Board’s 2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report which indicates that economic outcomes have been improving overall for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, but are not on track to meet 2022 targets of economic parity. The report

concludes that the Government of Canada must take immediate, significant, and clear steps towards closing the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is not a partisan issue; it is a matter of The Honour of the Crown, based on the existing Aboriginal rights upheld and recognized in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Yet, reconciliation is not solely the government’s responsibility; all Canadians must be involved.

**Read the full report here:** [2019 Indigenous Economic Reconciliation Report](#)



*Elder Claudette Commanda - Opening Prayer (2019)*

## 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

In 2012, the National Board set out a bold 10-year target: that Indigenous Peoples should have economic opportunities and outcomes on par with non-Indigenous Canadians by 2022. The Board's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan identified long-term priorities to address the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, focused on five key priorities: Enhancing Indigenous Community Readiness for Economic Opportunities; Access to Capital: Building Stable Revenues; Building the Economic Potential of Our Lands and Minimizing Environmental Impacts; Supporting Indigenous Businesses; and, Promoting the Importance of Indigenous Economic Development.

Indigenous communities, organizations and business entities across Canada have been increasingly focused on rebuilding Nations, empowering Indigenous people, and discussing the importance of regaining control of economic affairs as part of self-determination. As we work on the advancement of economic reconciliation, the National Board has identified the value in having a dialogue with key Indigenous organizations and leaders, in order to help develop a clear vision of an economic future that will continue to foster economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for every Indigenous person.

The Board's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan consists of four priority areas that build upon the work within the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan; either as a continuation of major projects or work on addressing the key findings from partnerships and research. Within each priority we have developed goals to guide our work over the next three years. Each objective consists of targeted and strategic deliverables that aim to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

This plan will expedite the provision of NIEDB advice to federal departments and agencies on pivotal Indigenous policy and program areas as they relate to economic development. In order to achieve the



NIEDB 2020-2023 Strategic Plan Priority Areas - Infographic

National Board's vision of economic equality between Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the rest of Canada, concrete and sustainable efforts must be made immediately.

Read the full plan here: [The National Indigenous Economic Development Board 2020-2023 Strategic Plan](#)



## COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

### Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada

Dawn Madahbee Leach co-authored the 2019 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Report on “*Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development*” which examines how public policy and public investments can be better leveraged to support Indigenous economic development. The recommendations contained in this report examine how public policy and public investments can be better leveraged to properly support Indigenous economic development.


Key recommendations include the following:

- Need to improve the quality of data about Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurship. Without better data, Indigenous economies will not be visible and will continue to be marginalized. It is important that this work be Indigenous-led and that it follow the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®). An agreed-upon national definition of an Indigenous business is needed.
- Recognition of land and water rights are fundamental to community and economic development and self-determination. Rights to land and water can increase autonomy and create economic opportunities. Acceptance of legally recognized and inherent rights puts Indigenous Peoples and communities in a stronger position to protect their interests. Rights to land and water sustain current and future generations and are a core part of spiritual beliefs, traditional knowledge and teachings, and cultural reproduction. Expanding the land base and adding reserve land in more urban areas has proven to be a good strategy to support community economic development. Indigenous Peoples need to be included in decisions about their traditional territories.
- More needs to be done to enable Indigenous entrepreneurship and community economic development, especially given the vast majority of Indigenous businesses are micro-enterprises. Indigenous entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas, is unique in terms of: common rights to land and resources; close kinship relations; the importance of traditional knowledge and cultural practices including an emphasis on collectivism; and, regulatory and taxation arrangements including the lack of transferability of land and tax exemptions for economic activities on reserve land. Without the right infrastructure in place, including high-quality broadband, entrepreneurship cannot thrive.
- Improving governance and policies for place-based Indigenous economic development is essential. A place-based approach to Indigenous economic development succeeds where there is a strong vision for community economic development with mechanisms to prioritize investment that matters for day to-day-life and wellbeing – from infrastructure and services to skills development, mentorship and access to capital. From all levels of government, this means real investment in understanding communities’ ambitions and needs and building meaningful relations.

Read the full report here: [Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada](#)

### Vancouver Island University (VIU)

On March 12, 2019, VIU and the NIEDB hosted an Indigenous Economic Lecture, featuring VIU President Dr. Deborah Saucier, NIEDB Board members Dr. Ruth Williams and Ms. Sandra Sutter, Indigenous



Navigator at VIU and PhD candidate Tasha Brooks, and a representative from the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The general scope of the lecture identified the links between Indigenous economic participation and the role Canadian academic institutions play in facilitating participation through their governance and infrastructure models.

On November 25, 2019 three NIEDB members (Hilda Broomfield Letemplier, Sandra Sutter, Dr. Marie Delorme) participated in a panel discussion moderated by Nahlah Ayed of CBC and hosted by the University's Office of Aboriginal Education and Engagement and University President Deborah Saucier.

The National Board believes that strengthening partnerships with academic institutions will yield multiple benefits, such as raising awareness across academia about research to address critical gaps in knowledge about barriers to Indigenous economic participation.



## ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

As the mandate of the National Board is to provide advice and guidance to the Government of Canada, this section provides a list of different topics, outlined in letters, that the NIEDB has brought forward to organizations and Ministers.

### 2019

#### **2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report**

Following the launch of the report, the NIEDB sent out physical copies to every Minister in the Government of Canada.

#### **National Indigenous Economic Strategy**

In April and May of 2019, the NIEDB wrote to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada regarding the Board's desire to help develop a National Indigenous Economic Strategy. There was recognition that the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development, introduced in 2009, was out of date, and that a new national strategy was needed to provide a cohesive and modern approach to Indigenous economic development.

#### **Indigenous Procurement**

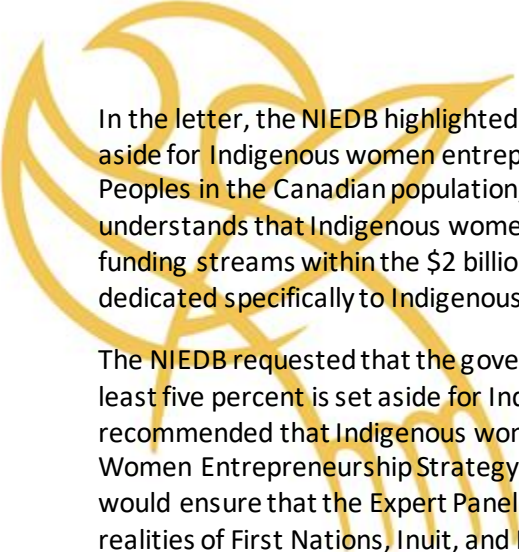
In August 2019, the NIEDB wrote the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada to underscore the importance of modernizing Indigenous procurement policies and practices. The Board has been calling for a strengthened procurement strategy in order to ensure more fair and equitable participation by Indigenous businesses and employees. The lack of benchmarking and regular reporting continues to be of particular concern to the Board, and this deficiency must be addressed moving forward, otherwise there is no mechanism for tracking and reporting on results to Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians. The Board is recommending that the government appoint a designated Champion for Indigenous procurement, an individual with political stature external to the bureaucracy, such as the Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Services, to raise the profile and enhance accountability.

In addition, the Board is identifying five policy areas that must be prioritized in the modernized Indigenous procurement strategy:

1. Mandatory set-aside 5% of contracts, with no conditions
2. Establish strong awareness of the program, address behavioral biases
3. Simplify processes and reduce barriers
4. Weight bids according to Indigenous concept of value
5. Awareness and weight for local Indigenous businesses

#### **Women Entrepreneurship Funding**

In September 2019, the NIEDB wrote the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development regarding the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy to support women entrepreneurs, and the commitment to double the number of women-owned and women-led businesses by 2025.



In the letter, the NIEDB highlighted how only \$2.5 million (less than two percent), of the \$2 billion is set aside for Indigenous women entrepreneurs. This does not reflect the representation of Indigenous Peoples in the Canadian population, which according to the 2016 Census is 4.9%. While the NIEDB understands that Indigenous women may be eligible to apply and compete for funding under several funding streams within the \$2 billion envelope, this is not the same as having an adequate set-aside dedicated specifically to Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

The NIEDB requested that the government immediately address this deficiency by ensuring funding of at least five percent is set aside for Indigenous women entrepreneurs. In addition, the National Board recommended that Indigenous women, representing First Nations and Inuit, be appointed to the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy Expert Panel, where there was only a single Métis member. This would ensure that the Expert Panel has appropriate representation to reflect the diverse needs and realities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women.

## 2020

### **Grays Bay Road and Port Project, proposed by the Kitikmeot Inuit Association**

On January 31, 2020, the NIEDB wrote the Minister of Transport Canada to express support for the Grays Bay Road and Port Project, proposed by the Kitikmeot Inuit Association. This project is a transportation system with 230 kilometers of road that would connect the port of Grays Bay to the Jericho mine, and would provide a link to the world market for the rich mineral resources of Canada's Slave Geological Province, which is located on the border of Nunavut and Northwest Territories. As well, by linking the Kitikmeot region to Yellowknife, the Grays Bay road would also create the first terrestrial connection between Nunavut and southern Canada.

### **COVID-19 Indigenous Business Supports**


In March and May 2020, the NIEDB sent letters to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau outlining the critical assistance needed to support Indigenous businesses during the pandemic. Many of the Board's recommendations were addressed through the support package for Indigenous businesses announced on April 18th, 2020, and subsequent support initiatives that, while not Indigenous-specific, were beneficial to Indigenous businesses. The Board proposed additional recommendations to support the economic sustainability of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses, as follows:

- 1) Business Continuity Plans
- 2) Training for Indigenous Entrepreneurs and Businesses
- 3) Technological Infrastructure
- 4) Flexibility in Federal Programming

### **Incident at Bank of Montreal**

The Board drafted a letter in July 2020 regarding the 2019 event in which an Indigenous man and his granddaughter at a Bank of Montreal branch in Vancouver, British Columbia were unlawfully detained. The Board emphasized the importance of having financial institutions participate in reconciliation, citing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #92.

### **Mi'kmaq Moderate Livelihood Fishery and Ongoing Conflict**



In October 2020, the NIEDB expressed support to the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs for the Mi'kmaq Moderate Livelihood Fishery. The Board recognized this as a constitutional and treaty issue that impacts Indigenous economic development. In this letter, the NIEDB called upon the federal government to uphold the rights of the Mi'kmaq as recognized and affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada through *R vs. Marshall, 1999*, the 1760 and 1761 Peace and Friendship Treaties and the *Constitution Act, 1982*. It is the duty of the federal government to work with the Mi'kmaq to determine and define “moderate livelihood” and to protect the rights of Indigenous fishers from being violated.

## 2021

### **Endorsement for First Nations Infrastructure Institute (FNII)**

In September 2021, the Board expressed their support and endorsement for the establishment of a First Nations Infrastructure Institute along with innovative funding solutions such as monetizing federal transfers to help close critical gaps and provide higher value for money for future infrastructure investments. This letter was sent to the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada.

### **Blue Economy Strategy**

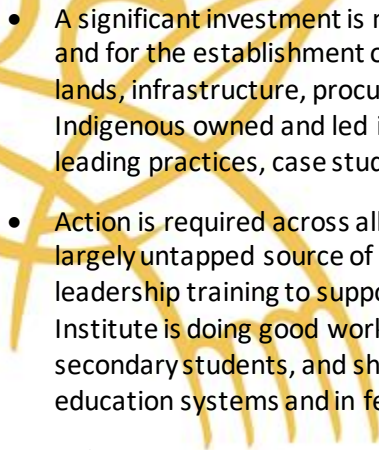
The Board drafted a letter to Fisheries and Oceans Canada in October of 2021 noting the virtual absence from the proposed Strategy of references to inland waters and the Indigenous right to a moderate livelihood. While the proposed Blue Economy Strategy focuses exclusively on Canada's three oceans, inland waters and their corresponding fisheries and aquaculture activities have a significant impact on Indigenous Peoples, both through their engagement in traditional sustenance activities and their economies. Other highlights from the letter:

- Despite the Supreme Court of Canada's Marshall decision, Indigenous fishing rights are not directly addressed in the engagement paper, and legal issues that could arise from the implementation of the strategy must be considered.
- The Supreme Court's suggesting a “moderate “livelihood” as an equivalent to “necessities” is highly discriminatory and encourages more dependence on public assistance and resources.
- As Canada's aquaculture industry continues to grow, the information and Indigenous-specific insights attained through DFO's 2020-2022 consultations and collaborative efforts with Indigenous Peoples and provincial government must inform Canada's Blue Economy Strategy and other fisheries-related policy work.

### **Canada's Economic Recovery and Budget 2022**

In a letter sent to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance in December 2021, the Board outlined economic development priorities for consideration in the 2022 budget. Recommendations:

- Funding for economic development should be increased to not less than 10% of total spending on Indigenous Peoples, in part to make up for past funding shortfalls, but also in recognition of the fact that each dollar spent on Indigenous economic and business development has the potential to leverage important community and social benefits, as well as enhance regional economies across Canada.
- Support for Indigenous Financial Institutions needs to be substantially increased and consideration should be given to allowing these lenders to retain COVID-related emergency loan fund capital to assist in the Indigenous economic recovery.

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- A significant investment is necessary in existing Indigenous-led economic/business institutions and for the establishment of new Indigenous-led institutions at the national level focused on lands, infrastructure, procurement, statistics, education, and in the various economic sectors. Indigenous owned and led institutions will act as centres of excellence for the promotion of leading practices, case studies, tools, templates, and advice to build Indigenous capacity.
  - Action is required across all sectors of the economy to mobilize and train Indigenous youth – a largely untapped source of labour for Canadian business. Providing entrepreneurship and leadership training to support this change is critical now. In particular, the Martin Family Institute is doing good work in this area by providing accredited business courses for Indigenous secondary students, and should be supported in expanding their reach within provincial education systems and in federal schools across the country.
  - Indigenous procurement opportunities should be increased. A national Indigenous Procurement Institute is being proposed to serve as an independent, external-to-government mechanism to identify and certify Indigenous businesses for the purposes of federal procurement, and could also be tasked with the development of concierge support services for Indigenous businesses and federal organizations.
  - Address the significant community infrastructure deficit, including broadband connectivity, in Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast.





## APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

2019

### **Canada-Australia Public Policy Initiative**

In January 2019, Dr. Marie Delorme represented the NIEDB on the Canada-Australia Public Policy Initiative in Sydney Australia, along with Christopher Duschenes, Director General of Economic Policy Development at Indigenous Services Canada. The focus of the CAPPI 2019 retreat was Indigenous Economic Development and Empowerment: Achieving sustainable change through Indigenous entrepreneurship.

### **2019 NIEDB Indigenous Economic Progress Report**

Following the official launch of the 2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report, Dr. Marie Delorme and Sandra Sutter presented the report to the Indigenous Services Canada Senior Management Committee in Ottawa. Various NIEDB Members also engaged in regional and national media spots that coincided with the release of the Report.

Additionally, members of the NIEDB Secretariat presented the 2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report to the Network for Sharing Indigenous Information and Research (NSIIR). The NSIIR is a network of professionals from Indigenous organizations, federal government and academic institutions.

### **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report**

Dawn Madahbee Leach participated in several events regarding her work on the release of the OECD's paper on Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development. She attended events in Paris and Geneva in the summer of 2019 for the report release, and presented to delegates at the World Indigenous Business Forum in October as part of support for the OECD study.

### **Canadian-Australia Public Policy Initiative (CAPPI)**

The Lands and Economic Development Sector of Indigenous Services Canada hosted an Australian delegate as part of the Canadian-Australia Public Policy Initiative in the fall of 2019. The focus of the visit was Indigenous Economic Development and the delegate was Sarah Burr, an Indigenous woman who leads the Women's Safety and Leadership team in the National Indigenous Australians Agency. During her six weeks in Canada, Sarah met with five members of the National Board as well as visiting the communities of Membertou and Osoyoos.

### **Economic Reconciliation**

The NIEDB presented the following recommendations specific to economic reconciliation to the Deputy Minister's Taskforce on Reconciliation (DMTF), on December 10, 2019:

1. Procurement: recommendations focus on establishing a comprehensive and easy to access directory of Indigenous businesses (similar to Australia's Supply Nation), and providing meaningful funding to Indigenous businesses to increase awareness and readiness for procurement opportunities.
2. Access to capital: recommendations focus on adequately funding Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) and devolving economic development programming to AFIs.



Recommendations also call for loan loss protections for AFIs to enable Indigenous businesses to access other conventional forms of capital.

3. Capacity development: recommendations focus on putting in place incentives, including funding, internships and scholarships to increase Indigenous participation in business training and certification, and to encourage post-secondary education institutions to increase access to these programs for Indigenous learners.
4. Wealth sharing: recommendations focus on strategies and innovative options to increase equity positions and involvement of Indigenous Peoples in resource development, and to support growth of traditional economies and participation in environmental stewardship.

## 2020

### **Indigenous Procurement**

The NIEDB was invited to speak at an Indigenous Procurement Policy Dialogue, organized by the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute (NIFI), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG). Victoria LaBillois and Danielle Levine spoke to the Board's procurement priorities.

### **National Indigenous Economic Strategy**

The NIEDB met with representatives from national Indigenous economic development organizations on February 28th in Ottawa to discuss the development of an Indigenous-led national strategy. NIEDB members Dawn Madahbee Leach, Victoria LaBillois, Sandra Sutter, and Dr. Marie Delorme engaged as part of a core group that drafted the Strategy. NIEDB members participated in nineteen meetings of the core group and participated in dozens of subgroup meetings to draft Strategy content. The meetings, which continued into 2021, helped develop a National Indigenous Economic Strategy that would focus on four pillars: Land, People, Finance and Infrastructure.

## 2021


### **Bank of Canada**

The Board recognizes the value of having a dialogue with financial institutions such as the Bank of Canada. To that end, the NIEDB met with the Bank of Canada on June 28, 2021. The role and work of the NIEDB was presented, and a fruitful discussion of the vital role of banks and financial institutions in Indigenous economic reconciliation.

Indigenous Peoples, communities, and businesses access Canada's financial institutions for every-day banking, community partnerships, and business loans. To ensure these interactions are beneficial and equitable, it is important for financial institutions and banks to train employees in cultural competency and provide culturally safe services to address systemic racism throughout their organizations.

### **Martin Family Institute**

In August, the NIEDB reached out to the Martin Family Institute (MFI) regarding their 2020 Annual Report. The NIEDB, like the MFI, believes that everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Despite the pandemic, Martin Family Institute programming was able to expand its reach to more schools and communities. The NIEDB extended a virtual invitation to meet and to learn more about the institute, their Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program (AYEP) and their Indigenous Entrepreneurship Course (IEC) which is co-developed by Indigenous Elders, educators and families. MFI accepted the NIEDB's



invitation and met with the Board virtually in September. MFI reiterated the importance of connecting and sharing knowledge with provincial governments across the country.

### **Blue Economy Strategy**

In October, Dawn Madahbee Leach met with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) on the Blue Economy Strategy. Dawn emphasized that key Supreme Court rulings must be recognized and supported via explicit inclusion in the Blue Economy. Oversight and monitoring of aquaculture, for example, is taking place in traditional territories already.

In terms of business development, the NIEDB indicated there are huge benefits to urban-Indigenous training programs and programs that target Indigenous youth. All attending agreed Clearwater was a great example of a success, and DFO representatives were eager to hear about more examples of Government of Canada Indigenous economic development programs or program suites that could be considered best practices. Dawn noted that particularly in Western Canada, there is some good programs focusing on urban Indigenous individuals. In this context, Dawn mentioned the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute (NIFI), which could become a centre of excellence and expertise, with a database of tools, templates and case studies.

### **Economic Benefits of Investing in Community Infrastructure**

In November, the NIEDB presented to the Acting Director General of Community Infrastructure at Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and recommended ISC review the Board's 2016 report, entitled *Recommendations on Northern Infrastructure to Support Economic Development*, which addresses the significant infrastructure deficit in Canada's North that acts as the predominant barrier to economic and business development in the region, and to improvement in the quality of life in northern Indigenous communities. Additionally, the NIEDB encouraged the federal government to consider Indigenous definitions of community wealth and well-being when discussing and measuring "wealth creation."

## About the Board

Established in 1990, the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB) is a non-partisan, national organization mandated to advise the Government of Canada on all matters related to Indigenous economic development. Comprised of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community and business leaders from coast to coast, the Board plays an important role in helping the federal government develop policies and programs that respond to the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous communities. The Board is a vital link between policy makers, federal departments, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous business and community leaders.

## Members

From 2019 to the end of 2021, the National Board has evolved into a full roster of 13 members from regions across Canada. Each member has contributed valuable business, community, operational, and strategic expertise to the National Board's work.

Throughout the pandemic, the NIEDB has developed areas of focus in; benchmarking economic progress, infrastructure and connectivity, international issues, procurement, GBA+ and women's economic policy, among others.

### Chief Terrance Paul, Member-at-Large, Nova Scotia



Terry Paul is the Chief of Membertou, a position he has held for the past 38 years. During that time, Paul has guided his community and administration into one of the most efficient and economically flourishing Indigenous communities in the country.

Chief Paul started his career with the Boston Indian Council where he received his background training in finance and management. Returning home to Membertou, Chief Paul joined the Membertou Band Council in the role of Economic Development Officer and progressed to the position of Band Manager before he was elected as Chief in 1984.

Chief Paul has achieved many notable accomplishments in his current role, as Chief and CEO of Membertou, including being named to one of Canada's highest honours. In 2017, Chief Paul was appointed to the Order of Canada. He is also an inductee of the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame, and recipient of the Frank McKenna Leadership Award. Chief Paul holds an honorary doctorate from Cape Breton University and Mount Allison University, and in 2019 led his organization to being named as a Canada's Best Managed Company. In January 2020, Chief Paul received the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business Lifetime Achievement Award.

Chief Paul is credited with tripling the land base for the Membertou Reserve and increasing the employment rate within Membertou to 80% in the community. In November 2020, Chief Paul led the single largest investment made by an Indigenous group in Canada, with the acquisition of Clearwater Seafoods.

The Membertou motto of “Welcoming the World” is undoubtedly the most accurate representation of the open and progressive Indigenous community that Membertou has become under the leadership of Chief Terry Paul.

*Financial sustainability, family, community, culture and a commitment to preserve his people’s language and history are top priorities for Chief Paul, as well as the desire to build a promising future for youth in his community.*

**Hilda Broomfield Letemplier**, Member, Newfoundland and Labrador



Hilda Broomfield Letemplier is the President and Chief Financial Officer of Pressure Pipe Steel Fabrication Limited and Northern Oxygen Ltd. Mining suppliers that services some of the largest resource development projects in Labrador. Her companies are 100% Inuit/Indigenous and woman-owned businesses that were created by herself and her husband, Lionel, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. To keep up with the diversity of her business endeavor, she completed a project management fundamentals course to boost her leadership, project planning, and management skills as well as monitoring and control at the College of the North Atlantic.

Hilda served with the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE) as the Labrador Regional Director from 2005-2018. In her last four years with NLOWE, she served as Chair and President. Through this work, she was able to enhance the needs of women entrepreneurs in the province to access quality information, provide valuable connections, and exciting opportunities for business development and growth. In 2022, Hilda was awarded the NLOWE Entrepreneur of the Year Award and Celebrating Women in Business Leadership Award.

Hilda is also served as part of the Indigenous Women’s Circle. This circle is committed to providing strategic guidance and expertise to inform federal efforts to address the systemic inequalities that Indigenous Women experience, particularly related to issues of Gender Based Violence, economic insecurity, and Indigenous leadership.

*Hiring people for good jobs and getting them the necessary training is Hilda’s passion. “When you see the pride people have in their work, the self-esteem and self-confidence that they get from prospering and achieving their goals, this is what economic development is all about for me — helping people”.*

**Dr. Marie Delorme, Member, Alberta**



Dr. Marie Delorme is CEO of The Imagination Group of Companies, an Indigenous corporation comprised of three entities, each providing services to industry, governments, and Indigenous groups in the areas of brand management, business consulting, and ceremonial tobacco.

She serves on the publicly traded boards of Canadian Western Bank and Premium Brands Holding, the board of the Donner Canadian Foundation, and Indigenous Advisory Councils to the Canadian Energy Regulator and CN.

Dr. Delorme is a Member of the Order of Canada. She has received the Inspire Award in Business and Commerce; and was named as one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women. Other awards include: the University of Calgary Dr. Douglas Cardinal Award; Alberta Chamber of Commerce Business Award of Distinction; Calgary Chamber of Commerce Salute to Excellence Award, and Métis Nation Entrepreneurial Leadership Award.

Dr. Delorme holds a Bachelor of Science degree, a Master of Business Administration from Queen's University, and both a PhD and an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Calgary.

**Ruth Williams, Member, Chair of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Committee, British Columbia**



Ruth Williams is from High Bar First Nation in British Columbia. In 2022, she was appointed to the Order of B.C., and in 2011 she received the Aboriginal Business Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ruth Williams has over 45 years of involvement with Indigenous communities, ranging from service provision to advisory committees, and over 30 years of leadership experience as a founding member, past CEO, and President of All Nations Trust Company. Ruth Williams remains the driving force behind Pathways to Technology, an initiative to bring affordable and reliable high-speed internet to all 203 First Nations in British Columbia.

With a \$40.5 million unconditional grant from the Province of British Columbia and Health Canada, and \$28 million in grants from Indigenous Services Canada, Ruth Williams is a notable advocate and leader for connectivity for Indigenous communities in Canada. In addition, she manages the contract and led the creation of the Housing Resources Technical Services.

Ruth Williams has over 27 years of experience in financial, risk management, program, and human resource management. Through the ANTCO, she has overseen the management of agreements with a value of up to \$75 Million.

For 11 years, Ruth Williams was Vice-President of the First Nations Market Housing Fund and a founding member of the Kamloops Indigenous Housing Society since 1987. She also serves as an advisor to Employment and Social Development Canada. Historically, Ruth Williams was a member of the original

National Indigenous Economic Development Board in 1984, and continues to be an active member to this day.

*“Indigenous Peoples have a role to play in ensuring Canada’s future growth respects both the environment and human rights. Ensuring our proper place in Canadian society will require increased educational opportunities and an increased recognition of the importance of experiential learning. And the National Board helps focus on such issues.”*

**Sandra Sutter**, Member, Chair of the Women’s Economic Policy Committee and the Communications Committee, Alberta



Sandra Sutter, a Cree Métis woman from the Prairies, is the Indigenous Partnerships Manager for Pyramid, Tarpon and Warwick (PTW) Energy and Clark, Gisborne and Tarpon (CGT) Industrial, and the President for the Circle for Aboriginal Relations (CFAR) Society. She has been involved in the financial, utility, non-profit, accounting and oil and gas sectors in her professional and volunteer life since moving to Calgary in 1988.

Sandra currently serves on the Board of Directors for Careers – Take On the Future, the Canadian Forces Liaison Council and is co-Chair of the Métis Women’s Economic Security Council for the Province of Alberta. She was honored to receive a Métis Entrepreneurial Business Award for service to the local Métis business community from Métis Nation Alberta Region 3 in 2014 and a 2019 WXN Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada Award.

Sandra is a life-long learner with a deep passion for Indigenous community and received a Citation in Indigenous Community Engagement from the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension in June 2017.

Sandra also enjoys a concurrent career as an independent self-managed award-winning recording artist and filmmaker with a focus on truth and reconciliation receiving more than 40 Industry awards in the last five years. She is proud to serve as an Artist Ambassador to the Downie Wenjack Fund. In 2019 Sandra was also honoured with an Esquao Award and an Aboriginal Role Model of Alberta Award for her work in the Arts.

*“Understanding the fundamental strength of the Inuit, Métis and First Nation cultures is at the beginning of our collective journey towards reclaiming well-being.”*

**Maxime Vollant, Member, Québec**



Maxime Vollant, the father of three daughters, is from the Innu First Nation of Pessamit. His professional career began with the creation of the Youth Council First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, then under the patronage of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador. In his professional career, he has been the director of a financial institution and the director of economic development for his community, as well as the executive director of some First Nations communities in Quebec. He is currently the head of Indigenous relations at the Rio Tinto-IOC mining company.

Mr. Vollant has long worked to create employment opportunities for his people. He has also been involved in various boards of directors of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to participate in the development of First Nations at various levels. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

***“Effective Indigenous economic development that achieves the objectives of First Nations in Canada must be supported by a framework and policies based on the realities of Indigenous communities.”***

**Andy Moorhouse, Member, Québec**



Andy Moorhouse has worked in leadership for more than 20 years in various capacities. He has managed groups under a non-for-profit organization, elected in various capacities such as Mayor of the Northern Village of Inukjuak with a population of more than 1,800 as well as designed, developed and managed programs with more than \$ 10 Million in annual funding.

Currently, he is the Vice-President of Economic Development at Makivik Corporation and the Executive Director of the Inuulitsivik Health Center where he manages a central hospital in Puvirnituk as well as 6 satellite clinics on the Hudson Bay Coast from the communities of Kuujuaapik to Salluit. The team he works with is currently a combined staff of more than 1,000 and operates with a budget of more than \$ 140 Million.

Andy takes on challenges with stride and gathers possible solutions to ensure the best option is summarized and implemented. He is capable in working with others and goes the extra mile to get the job done efficiently and effectively.

He is an avid hunter and enjoys camping on the land for subsistence living. He lives partly a traditional lifestyle where country food is an important source of our diet and also ensures that he teaches his children the traditional lifestyle he was taught by his family and friends.

***“I would just like to say that I believe I am serious enough to take on any challenge but I also find it important to take care of ones self personally.”***



**Michael Bonshor, Member, Chair of the Economic Progress Report Committee, British Columbia**



Michael Bonshor, CPA, CMA is a member of the Dzawada’enuxw First Nation of Kingcome Inlet and has worked with First Nations and Indigenous organizations for the past 20 years. He is President and CEO of Visions First Nations Financial Services/Ki’ mola Indigenous Capital and Managing Director of First Nations Business Development Association.

Michael brings experience as a CPA, CMA to the National Board, as well as board governance experience as current Co-Chair of the BC First Nations Gaming Revenue Sharing Partnership as well as the Chair of Finance and Audit Committee and board member of the B.C. Infrastructure Benefits Inc. (B.C. Crown Corporation).

Michael is the past Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee and board member of the New Relationship Trust and past Chair of the BC Native Economic Development Advisory Board. Michael is also the founder and Managing Director of the B.C. First Nations Business Development Association.

**Danielle Levine, Member, British Columbia**



Danielle Levine is Métis and originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, but she now calls British Columbia’s Lower Mainland home. She is a social entrepreneur, advocate and educational designer who strives to create meaningful learning opportunities through her independent consulting practice.

She is currently working with the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) on increasing the engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the 37,000 members in the regulated profession and growing the CPA Financial Literacy program in British Columbia. Danielle is also currently working with clients on strategic planning and custom designed entrepreneurship programs for Stó:lo Community Futures.

Over the years, Danielle has helped to develop several entrepreneurship accelerator programs including the Entreprenorth program, e@UBC and the Kanuu Indigenous Innovation Society, which is an organization that she founded. She custom designed a food entrepreneurship program for Indigenous hunters and gatherers in Inuvik, NWT that incorporated food sovereignty, entrepreneurial development, and traditional indigenous knowledge.

While working at the Sauder School of Business at UBC, Danielle designed many courses including a full MBA credit for visiting Maori students from the University of Waikato Management School in New Zealand. She also co-designed the first Indigenous topics course that is now offered to all Bachelor of Commerce students at the business school.

Danielle currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Chief Joe Mathias Aboriginal Scholarship fund, the Leq’á:mel Economic Development Corporation. Danielle is a former board member of the Vancouver Native Housing Society, Co-operatives First and a founder and former board member of the Fraser River All Nations Aboriginal Society.

Danielle has a Master of Business Administration with a focus on developing and delivering Financial Literacy programming for urban Indigenous communities as well as a certificate in Community Economic Development from Simon Fraser University.

**Dana Soonias**, Member, Saskatchewan



Dana Soonias is a member of Red Pheasant First Nation in Saskatchewan. Over the past 20 years, he has held senior positions with financial, indigenous and government institutions with lead roles in retail, finance, business and economic development. I hold a Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM) designation through the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA) Canada. He also received his Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD) designation from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.

Dana worked with the federal government prior to joining the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation for a decade as business services manager, acting general manager and then board member. He was the inaugural chair of the Aboriginal Entrepreneur Program, a technical advisory committee with the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA).

He was the first Indigenous CEO of Wanuskewin Heritage Park where he served in this role and leading the organization for a decade. He took the institution from near bankruptcy to a national award winning organization completing the Thundering Ahead Campaign and addition to Canada's Tentative List of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites.

Dana is currently the Director of Economic Development and Employment Training Services at the Saskatoon Tribal Council serving over 33,000 First Nations people, both urban and rural. He is the Chair of STC Industrial Contracting and Keys Welding Service corporations, two for profit indigenous metal fabrication companies that work with national and international mining companies and crown corporations.

He has served on various boards and committees across the country including AFOA Canada (Chair), First Nations Financial Management Board, Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation Investment Management Board, to name a few.

***“Economic development is a path towards sustainable and meaningful participation in the Canadian economy for Indigenous Peoples as an equal party in nation building. Our people merit a new voice and place at all levels to recognize and identify unreconciled gaps of imbalanced economic systems in government and industry.”***



**Bob Dickson, Member, Ontario**



Bob Dickson has had many years of executive leadership in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. For the last 10 years, Bob has been the CEO of a group of companies owned by the Attawapiskat First Nation. He has also been a member of a number of Boards and has previously chaired an international non-governmental organization (NGO) Board.

Currently working out of Timmins, Ontario, and reporting to an Attawapiskat led Board of Directors, Bob has seen significant growth in the Attawapiskat-owned businesses and the future growth is significant.

Bob is a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University and is a member of the Lac Seul First Nation in Northwestern Ontario.

***“Being a member of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board is a wonderful opportunity to both learn and serve.”***