



## PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### **Celebrating the Success of Aboriginal Business 23rd Annual NADF Business Awards**

**Timmins, ON:** On Thursday, October 17, 2013, Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund (NADF) hosted the 23rd Annual NADF Business Award to celebrate Aboriginal business in northern Ontario. Eight award recipients were recognized for their achievements and contributions to local and regional economies at a gala dinner at Days Inn & Conference Centre in Timmins, ON. The event was attended by First Nation and government leaders, dignitaries, partners, clients, students and the general public.

Brian Davey, Executive Director, Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund, "Aboriginal business plays a key role in generating employment and wealth in communities across northern Ontario, particularly in First Nations. This evening's award recipients are a testimony to the hard work and effort of First Nations and individuals to participate in the economy of Northern Ontario. Our hope is that in sharing the success of tonight's award recipients they will inspire other entrepreneurs to follow their dreams."

Celebrating its 23rd year, the non-profit event also serves as a fundraiser for the Dennis Franklin Cromarty Memorial Fund: a bursary fund for post-secondary students seeking academic achievement, and the NADF Sponsorship Fund: a fund established by NADF to respond to sponsorship and donation requests, and provide humanitarian assistance to aid in disaster and crisis relief.

Awards were presented in the following categories:

- Youth Entrepreneur of the Year
- Corporation of the Year
- Businesswoman of the Year
- Executive of the Year
- Businessman of the Year
- Partnership of the Year
- Building Communities
- New Business of the Year

## **AWARD WINNERS**

### **YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR – Nolan Tozer, Moose River Tours**

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Nolan Tozer is a member of Moose Cree First Nation. He is the owner and operator of Moose River Tours. The idea behind the start-up of the business was to increase tourism and to bring to light the importance of wildlife and waterway preservation. Not only that but Nolan's love of nature and experience in guiding are instrumental in the success of the business.

The business offers a variety of tours in the Moose River and James Bay area. They also customize the tours so that their clients always come out happy and delighted with their tour. Nolan grew up in the area and learned about the land from his father who is a legendary guide in the area. He loves to tell the clients about the history and stories from the area while on tour.

While guiding and giving tours to clients, Nolan promotes other local businesses in his community. In the off season, Nolan likes to go out hunting and fishing. He enjoys giving the wild game to the elders of the community who can no longer go hunting for themselves. His wife Jenn has also been a great support to him. She occasionally assists him on his tours and even makes bannock for their clients. Recently, Nolan and his wife were blessed with their first baby girl.

### **CORPORATION AWARD – Sagatay Economic Development LP, Whitesand First Nation**

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Whitesand First Nation established Sagatay Economic Development LP in 2010 to separate the First Nation's economic development activities from its administrative activities. Since its establishment, Sagatay has made many achievements including:

- Administering an employment service agreement with Landore Resources Limited, a junior mining company doing exploration work in Whitesand traditional territory.
- Maintaining roads in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources for harvesting, hunting, fishing, and traditional land use by Whitesand First Nation members.
- Involved in the training and skills development phase within the First Nation, which provided Whitesand First Nation members with the skills required for current and upcoming projects.
- Developing partnerships with other companies to provide membership on-site training in Thunder Bay, Timmins, Nipigon and Atikokan.
- Sagatay has provided equipment and operators to construct a new multi-sheet curling club and an office building in the neighboring community of Armstrong.
- They have been involved with grubbing, road and parking area development, underground infrastructure (hydro and water), and construction.
- In 2010, Sagatay entered into an agreement with Canadian National Railway to become their primary heavy equipment contractor in the Armstrong area.

Sagatay is currently in negotiations for a Co-Gen Pellet Plant, Rock Quarry, Old Whitesand Shoreline Project and various wood harvesting contracts.

Sagatay Economic Development LP is committed to the community, regularly supporting community events and its members through donations and sponsorships and is establishing the foundation for the economic future of their traditional territory with a strong workforce for with Whitesand First Nation People and future generations.

#### **BUSINESSWOMAN AWARD – Dr. Doris Mitchell**

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Dr. Doris Mitchell, is a member of the Brunswick House First Nation and her lifelong dedication to Aboriginal health began in 1991 as a Registered Nurse. Doris returned to part-time studies and in 2005, continuing to work full time, volunteering on several boards and as a Canadian Scouts Leader, all while raising two small boys as a single mother. Doris has achieved many accomplishments while attending medical school, including participating on several committees such as the Northern Ontario School of Medicine Aboriginal Reference Group, and collaborating with the Sudbury Regional Hospital and Cancer Care Ontario to write an Aboriginal Reference and Facilitation Manual on colorectal cancer. Doris graduated with honours from the Laurentian University's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in the spring of 2010 and began her post graduate training in family medicine at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

During her final year of post graduate training Doris was elected co-chief for the Laurentian campus family medicine residency program. As co-chief, Doris took the lead role in evaluating the NOSM family medicine residency program using a CANMEDs framework as a mechanism to inform the medical school post graduate program of its strengths and challenges.

Doris is well known in the Aboriginal and medical community as a leader in the development of culturally sensitive and competent health care programming and was a founding member and president of the Aboriginal Women's Wellness group called the Traditional Women of the Awakening. She also helped open, and manage the only Aboriginal Community Health Centre (CHC) in Northern Ontario.

Doris opened her independent practice in Timmins, and she also practices medicine in the communities of Chapleau, Brunswick House, and Fox Lake First Nations.

#### **EXECUTIVE AWARD – Lucie Edwards, Chief Executive Officer, Five Nations Energy Inc.**

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Lucie Edwards is a proud member of Fort Albany First Nation. She began her journey in 1997 when she moved back to Fort Albany as Health Director of Peetabeck Health Services. From there Lucie served several management positions in Timmins and in Fort Albany. In 2011, Lucie accepted the position as the new Chief Executive Officer with Five Nations Energy Inc.

Five Nations Energy Inc. (FNEI) owns and operates a 138 kV electricity transmission line that connects the remote First Nation communities of Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Kashechewan to the main Ontario electrical transmission grid at Moosonee travelling along the western coast of James Bay. The corporation is a licensed transmitter, providing a high voltage connection to its customers. FNEI is equally owned by the three community Local Distribution Companies.

Lucie also facilitated numerous workshops in Fort Albany and other communities which focus on youth. "I believe if we need to train them at a young age so they can flourish in this world we live in," quoted by Lucie Edwards.

Lucie is a take charge person who leads her staff with passion and commitment for the betterment of her First Nation. She also has a strong belief that bettering an organization involves every single individual and that partnerships, commitments and responsibilities is key to and organization operating to its fullest capacity.

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#### **BUSINESSMAN AWARD – Dan Bannon, Dan Bannon Contracting**

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Dan Bannon is a member of Fort William First Nation and he owns and operates Dan Bannon Contracting. Dan spent many years as a police officer and about 20 years ago he saw an opportunity to venture into the construction sector. Building has always been a passion for Dan and being able to own his own company has been a gratifying experience.

Dan believes in building capacity in individuals who share his passion for building. Over the past 20 years, Dan has utilized employment training programs and has trained 10 individuals in the field of construction. Some are still working with him and others have moved on and they are doing great in their field. Dan is proud to have been a major influence in their successes through his training and guidance.

Outside of work, Dan lives with his partner Evelyn, and they have 6 grown children and 5 grandsons. Dan enjoys watching hockey and he is a die-hard Leafs fan and he gives back to the community by sponsoring kids who play hockey. Over the past 20 years He has sponsored approximately 200 kids who play in all levels of hockey. He has chosen to sponsor many youth in the sport of hockey because he believes in the game and the life skills it brings to the youth.

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#### **PARTNERSHIP AWARD – Bannon Family Council, J&W Confectionary**

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J & W Confectionary is a family operated business that began in the mid 1970's. The arcade/confectionary store was started in the mid 70's in the garage of Howard and Jessie Bannon. The business grew bigger than Howard and Jessie ever thought it would. In 1992, Howard retired and decided to open a gas bar to keep him occupied. He soon found out that it was an enormous business opportunity.

Today the operation is owned by a family council with 10 members. The operation includes a confectionary, a gas bar and a restaurant called Charlie's Pizza & Grill. The sales for the past 2 years have exceeded 14 million dollars.

The store prides itself by supporting the local athletes and they are proud to sponsor their own in their pursuit of post-secondary education.

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#### **BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARD – William Quachegan, WQ Carpentry**

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WQ Carpentry is owned and operated by William Quachegan. This company specializes in carpentry and construction work. William has over 20 years of experience in this field and was able to start his own business in 2011 and he has had much success in the Timmins area.

William is a member of Moose Cree First Nation. His experience and education has played a great role in leading him to this point in his career. In his 20 years of experience, he has held many roles that made him successful in operating his own business. Mr. Quachegan's career started in an apprenticeship program in 1994. He then continued to build homes

and eventually became a construction supervisor. The experience he had in the supervisory role has given him the knowledge and confidence to grow his company into a successful business.

William's thoughtfulness is not only shown in the quality of work he provides for his clients, he also extends this to Aboriginal youth, recently sponsoring a youth from a Midget Hockey team as well as an Aboriginal youth hockey camp.

William's commitment to delivering the finest finishing and construction services to his clients has been rewarded by the success of his business.

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### **NEW BUSINESS – Jason Blakely, Blakely Trucking**

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Jason Blakely, a band member of Pic Mobert First Nation worked with staff of the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund late in 2010 to develop a business plan and began his trucking business in 2011.

The company is based in Thunder Bay where Jason hauls from the regional woodland areas and delivers to various mills including to Bowater sawmill and Fort Frances mill. During his first year he rented a trailer to haul logs and as of last October he was able to purchase and now owns his own trailer. The impact of Jason's small business on the local economy comes not only from working with local woodlands contracts but with its purchase of fuel, tools, supplies and parts. Last year Jason supported the community in a new way when he became involved in the annual Parade of Lights, decorating his truck to be part of the fund raising efforts for children with special needs.

Jason continuously maintains his license, truck requirements and certifications committed to exceeding all safety standard requirements for the industry. Jason is thankful to his wife for her support of his efforts through maintenance of his bookkeeping and expanding their knowledge through online courses in bookkeeping and spreadsheet software to ensure accurate records.

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### **ABOUT NADF**

*Incorporated in 1984, Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund is an Aboriginal owned non-profit economic development agency providing financial assistance (commercial loans, equipment leasing, and grants), resource sector support and business counseling services to Aboriginal businesses, on and off-reserve, across northern Ontario (Treaty #9, #3, #5 (Ontario portion), and Robinson-Superior 1850 Treaties). NADF's goal is to empower and support northern Ontario's growing Aboriginal population through entrepreneurship and business development.*

*For all inquiries, please contact Brian Davey, Executive Director T: (807) 623-5397 ext. 17 or [bdavey@nadf.org](mailto:bdavey@nadf.org).*

*For more information about NADF and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual NADF Business Awards, visit [www.nadf.org](http://www.nadf.org)*