

The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

2015-2016 Annual Report



The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

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Message from the Chairperson

On behalf of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, I am pleased to present the *Annual Report* for 2015-2016. As Indigenous business and community leaders, we view economic development as critical to improving Indigenous well-being, working towards reconciliation, and the renewal of the nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Progress can be achieved when supported by strong Indigenous-led governance structures, sufficient financial investments, and innovative policy development in partnership with Indigenous communities.

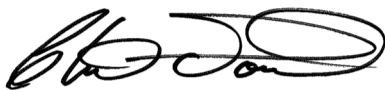
As Chairperson for the Board, I am proud of the important milestones we achieved in 2015 which have contributed to ensuring that federal policies and programs are working for Indigenous peoples to support their wealth and well-being, including:

- The release of our studies:
 - ***The Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015***
 - ***Discussion Paper: Roundtable on Northern Infrastructure and Economic Development***
 - ***The Business Case for a Northern Economic Infrastructure System***
 - ***Recommendations on Northern Infrastructure to Support Economic Development***
- Presentations of the Northern recommendations at the Northern Lights Conference 2016 and to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs;
- Advice to the federal government on amendments to the *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*; and,
- Engagement with international partners in Germany, France, and Australia on Indigenous economic development.

We are also pleased to see additional investment by the Government of Canada in Indigenous economic development with resources announced in Budget 2016 to support economic development for the Métis Nation and First Nation management of fiscal resources. These investments are a step in the right direction but fall well short of the investment required to begin to close the social and economic gaps between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians. We look forward to continued and positive collaboration with governments in closing these gaps.

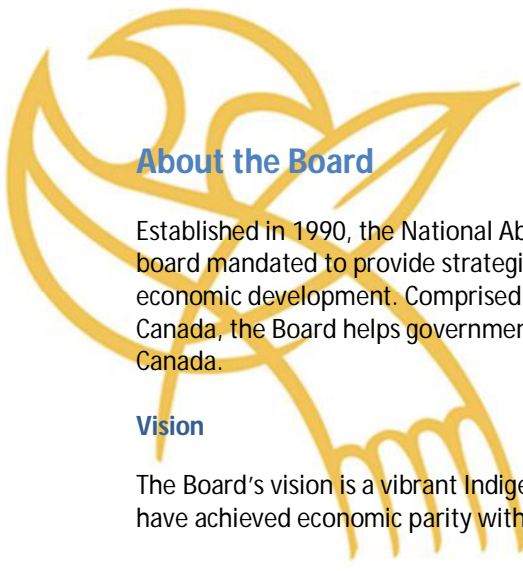
We would like to thank the number of people we met from communities, industry, government and academia over the course of 2015 in Canada and abroad for their input, time and perspectives in helping us shape our advice on Indigenous economic development. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members for their leadership and their commitment to closing the gap between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians in economic development.

Sincerely,



Chief Clarence Louie
Chairperson





About the Board

Established in 1990, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board is a Governor in Council appointed board mandated to provide strategic policy advice to the federal government on issues related to Indigenous economic development. Comprised of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis business and community leaders from across Canada, the Board helps governments to respond to the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Vision

The Board's vision is a vibrant Indigenous economy, where Indigenous peoples are economically self-sufficient and have achieved economic parity with Canadian society.

Mission Statement

To provide advice and guidance to the federal government on issues related to Indigenous economic opportunities that enable the Indigenous peoples of Canada to have a voice in government policy.

Mandate

To advise the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and other federal Ministers on policies, programs, and program coordination as they relate to Indigenous economic development.

Members

In 2015-2016, the Board had ten members from regions across Canada. Each member contributed valuable business, community, operational, and strategic expertise to the Board's work. We extend our sincere thanks to outgoing Board member James Ross for his contribution and welcomed a new member, Darlene Bernard.





Looking Back

In the 2012 *Benchmarking Report*, the Board set a ten-year target: that Indigenous peoples have economic opportunities and outcomes on par with other Canadians by 2022. The Board's strategic plan for 2012-2015 identified broad, long-term priorities to address the gaps that exist between First Nation, Inuit, and Métis and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Strategic Priorities for 2012-2015

- 1) **Addressing Barriers to Aboriginal Economic Development**, as the Board is of the view that this will create the right conditions for economic growth;
- 2) **Increasing Aboriginal Participation in Major Projects**, as this will be an effective way to close the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians by participating as entrepreneurs, employers and employees; and
- 3) **Providing Relevant and Timely Advice to the Federal Government**, as this will use the Board's voice to impact change and ensure that the Board's activities and resources are aligned with its long-term priorities.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report with 94 recommendations on Indigenous child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice, and call on the government, business, and educational institutes to adopt the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*, among others. In October 2015, the newly elected Liberal government committed to implementing all 94 recommendations of the TRC and to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The Board sees these commitments to action as a positive step towards a true nation to nation relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous economic development activities in Canada continue to present exciting opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada. The Board, through continued consultation with Indigenous peoples and the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, continues to address the key priorities it sees as fundamental to improving opportunities for economic success for Indigenous people.

In 2015, the NAEDB celebrated 25 years as a board. Key achievements include:

- *2009 Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development*
- *Input into development and renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)*
- *Input into the First Nation Land Management Act and the Community Opportunity Readiness Program*
- *Contributions to INAC's Consultation and Accommodation Training*

Addressing Barriers to Aboriginal Economic Development

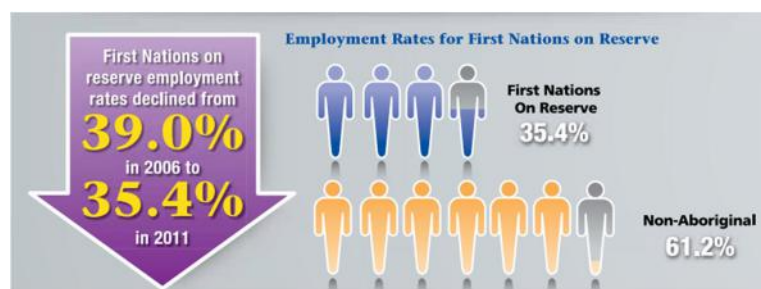
National Release of the Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report on Residential Schools generated hundreds of media reports and helped focus attention on the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a key milestone with immense symbolic importance, it will have no lasting effect unless we provide the economic tools that our communities need to fully participate in the Canadian economy.

This year, the Board published its first update to their *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report 2012: The Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015*. The Progress Report is our report card on the state of the Indigenous economy; it tracked and assessed the progress of Indigenous peoples in Canada against the initial benchmarks set by the Board in 2012 using census data from 2006 and 2011. Tracking these core indicators essential to economic development—employment, income, wealth, and well-being—over time, the Board will work to measure the changing economic landscape for Indigenous peoples and to track progress and indicate key areas for improvement and focus.



Chief Louie and Dawn Madahbee Presenting the *Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015* in Osoyoos, B.C.



In 2012, the Board set the bold target of closing the gap in economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples by 2022. The *Progress Report 2015* analyzed updated census data and found that while Indigenous peoples in Canada have made slight gains between 2006 and 2011, but significant gaps remain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians—especially for First

Nations living on reserve. Gaps between First Nations living on reserve and non-Indigenous Canadians actually increased in terms of employment rate, reliance on government transfers, college and trades completion rates, university completion rates, and crowded housing conditions.

In addition, the *Progress Report 2015* identified areas where improved policies, programs and services are needed to support Indigenous Canadians. We must provide communities with the economic tools they need to fully participate in the Canadian economy. The barriers to Indigenous economic development that still persist, including legal and regulatory barriers, access to lands and resources, deficits in skilled labour, deficits in infrastructure, limited financing options, and deficits in capacity.

These barriers need to be addressed in a meaningful way to facilitate improvement in the areas identified in the Board's *Progress Report 2015*. To address these barriers and create ideal conditions for economic development in Indigenous communities, the Board recommended specific strategies for First Nations on reserves, education, employment and skills training, community and business development, youth and data collection in order to strengthen policy making.

Aboriginal Economic Progress Report Release

Media	57 publications
Social Media	5,244 shares
Total Reach	42,178,164 people
Interviews	9
Website Activity	81.6% increase in new visitors

Based on the findings contained in the report, the NAEDB have come forward with the following eight specific recommendations:

1. **First Nations on Reserve:** It is strongly recommended that the development of discrete strategies for closing the gaps for First Nations on reserve be a government-wide priority.
2. **Education:** It is strongly recommended that continued and sustained efforts be made in ensuring Aboriginal people have access to and receive high quality education in every corner of the country. To address this issue, it is recommended that an Aboriginal-led Task Force on Aboriginal Education be established;
3. **Employment and Skills Training (1):** It is recommended that investments in Aboriginal skills development and training by all levels of government and industry be designed and tailored to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal people, that aligns with concrete employment opportunities;
4. **Employment and Skills Training (2):** It is recommended that federal and provincial Aboriginal labour market programming be regularly reviewed and revitalized, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal people, and that these programs and measures be sustainable over the longer term.
5. **Community Development:** It is recommended that water and waste management systems be a priority for all Aboriginal communities in Canada as a primary means to improve overall human health;
6. **Business Development:** It is recommended that the suite of Aboriginal business programming and Aboriginal Financial Institutions be supported with the necessary level of capital and expertise (human and administrative) required to build a vibrant network of Aboriginal businesses throughout Canada;
7. **Youth:** It is recommended that a national Aboriginal youth strategy, focused on improving education, business and employment outcomes, be developed by and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth; and
8. **Data Collection:** It is recommended that data collection be continuously improved and expanded, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal communities and institutions, using this report as a guide, so that economic and social progress can be tracked and improved.


Community Readiness for Economic Opportunities

The Board believes that Indigenous community readiness, including the appropriate governance structures, institutions, and adequate capacity to engage in emerging opportunities, is necessary for Indigenous participation in major projects and economic development.

To spread this message, in April 2015, Chair of the Board Chief Louie participated in Canada 2020's *Aboriginal Peoples and Economic Development Conference*. He sat on a panel about 'Removing the Barriers to Economic Development' and discussed solutions to support community readiness through collaborative business opportunities, using his own Osoyoos Band and an example. He stressed to conference participants Indigenous control over lands and resources is necessary for Indigenous economic development; that the complex and outdated regulatory regime on reserve under the *Indian Act* does not allow communities to move at the speed of business, and, that Indigenous communities need to move beyond a fiduciary relationship with the Government of Canada.



Chief Clarence Louie presenting with Donald Deranger, Donald McInnes, and Clint Davis at Canada 2020



In October 2015, Vice Chair Dawn Madahbee attended the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund's *5th Annual Mining Summit* in Thunder Bay. She presented the Board's recommendations report entitled *Enhancing Aboriginal Financial Readiness for Major Resource Development Opportunities*, discussing as an example Waubetek's Indigenous Mining Strategy for North East Ontario.

Aboriginal Financial Institutions

The *Progress Report 2015* stated that the Board strongly believes that Aboriginal Financial Institutions (AFIs) are a key mechanism for supporting the growth of the Indigenous economy across Canada. They provide business financing and support to small and medium-sized Indigenous businesses, which can be hard for Indigenous businesses to obtain. To build a vibrant network of Indigenous businesses throughout Canada, the Board recommended that the suite of Indigenous business programming and AFIs be supported with the necessary level of capital and expertise, both human and administrative, to assist Indigenous businesses in addressing the obstacles that inhibit their growth and increase Indigenous participation in major project opportunities. In the coming years, the Board will provide additional recommendations to support and strengthen AFIs as financial institutions.

Education and Skills Development

The *Progress Report 2015* revealed the low proportion of Indigenous peoples who have graduated from high school or post-secondary institutions, a key barrier to Indigenous participation in economic opportunities. Increased education and skills training will increase the amount of qualified Indigenous peoples available for employment, including employment supporting major projects, and will enhance community readiness for economic opportunities. The Board recommended that "investments in Indigenous skills development and training by all levels of government and industry be designed and tailored to meet the unique needs of Indigenous people and align with concrete employment opportunities."

In Budget 2016, the government announced \$15 million over two years to launch a pilot project through the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), which is administered by Employment and Social Development Canada, to enhance training that aligns with community needs, including in housing, construction, and other areas. In addition, since then the Government has announced new funding for ASETS, with a total value of \$50 million for the Skills and Partnerships Fund. The Government also committed to engage with Indigenous partners to renew and improve ASETS and continue the program beyond 2017.

Increasing Aboriginal Participation in Major Projects

Closing the Gap in Northern Infrastructure

Increased spending on infrastructure can't come soon enough for Northern and Indigenous communities, where infrastructure endowment is among the poorest in country. The lack of adequate infrastructure in the North – including port facilities, runways, roads, bridges, telecommunications, housing and energy infrastructure – creates what is arguably the most significant barrier to community and economic development in the region. In 2015, the Board took a closer look at Northern infrastructure in order to develop strategies and recommendations that can begin to close the gap and facilitate Northerners access to increase economic opportunities.



Hilda Broomfield Letemplier with the Honourable Dwight Ball, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador

on June 26, 2015 to consult representatives of Indigenous governments and organizations, industry, federal and territorial governments, and experts from across the North on the topic of Northern infrastructure and its connection to Indigenous economic development. This roundtable assisted the Board in gaining additional insight into Northern infrastructure, as participants provided input on mechanisms for infrastructure investment through developing partnership strategies, discussing innovative financing mechanisms, and examining the role of governance in infrastructure investment.

Recommendations on Northern Infrastructure to Support Economic Development

Building from this roundtable and earlier research the Board developed and released its report *Recommendations on Northern Infrastructure to Support Economic Development*. The Board believes that new approaches and renewed investment in infrastructure are needed – across the country in Indigenous communities and particularly in the North. The recommendations from this report address significant infrastructure deficits in Canada's North, which act as the predominant barrier to economic and business development in the region. The conclusions in our report are echoed by others: in a survey conducted by GE Canada which involved Northern business and community leaders, 70% of respondents ranked infrastructure as “the single most important criteria” for attracting investment and facilitating business development in remote communities.

To address the challenges of infrastructure development in the North, the Board released seven specific recommendations for the Government of Canada in the following three areas:

Business Case for a Northern Economic Infrastructure System

In June 2015, the Board released their study *Business Case for a Northern Economic Infrastructure System*, prepared by Fiscal Realities Economists. The study used information from eight proposed major resource projects in the North and found that each dollar spent on Northern economic infrastructure has the potential, if invested wisely, to generate \$11 of economic benefits for individuals and \$11 of fiscal benefits for governments. The potential benefits to Northerners provide a strong economic and fiscal rationale for public investment in Northern infrastructure.

Roundtable on Northern Infrastructure and Economic Development

To further explore the issue of gaps in northern infrastructure, the Board convened a roundtable



A. Coordinate investments in economic development infrastructure

1. Create a system to identify priority investment areas and coordinate investment
2. Use infrastructure development as an investment opportunity for Indigenous governments

B. Increase infrastructure funding and financing

3. Create a dedicated northern infrastructure investment fund
4. Address challenges in implementing private investment models in the North
5. Create tax structures to encourage infrastructure development in the North

C. Support community capacity

6. Develop resource centers to share best practices
7. Support comprehensive economic development planning

For the launch of the report, Board member Hilda Broomfield Letemplier held a workshop at the 2016 Northern Lights Conference, and met with Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Dwight Ball. Following up on interest in the report, Hilda also presented the recommendations to the Ad Hoc Committee of Deputy Ministers on the Arctic, to Transport Canada’s Steering Committee on the Arctic, and to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples – Northern Housing Study.

Following this work, in Budget 2016, the federal government announced \$40 million over two years to strengthen northern economic development programs delivered by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). In addition, the government announced funding for the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program in the North, providing an additional \$6.4 million in funding for the North for community and cultural infrastructure delivered by CanNor.

Media Response to *Recommendations on Northern Infrastructure Report*

Media	115 publications
Social Media	894 shares
Total Reach	12,938,931 people
Interviews	9
Website Activity	70% increase in new visitors



Providing Relevant and Timely Advice

Working with Indigenous Communities and Organizations

The Board continued to collaborate with national, regional and local Indigenous organizations and communities in 2015. These connections with organizations and communities provide the Board with important perspectives that help shape advice to the Government of Canada. A full listing of organizations, communities and governments that the Board engaged with during 2015-16 can be found in Annex A.



The NAEDB with Minister Bennett, Minister Tootoo, and Minister Wilson-Raybould

Working With Our Federal Partners

The full Board was pleased to meet with Ministers Carolyn Bennett, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Hunter Tootoo on February 24th, 2016, to promote increased investment in Indigenous economic development. They discussed shared priorities for increasing the socio-economic outcomes of Indigenous peoples through “a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.” The Board is looking forward to continuing to work with the Ministers to achieve this goal and increase the economic development opportunities for Indigenous peoples.

International Collaboration

In June 2015, Chief Louie addressed audiences at six events in Germany about “Aboriginal Entrepreneurship – Building Sustainable Businesses and Communities”. He discussed Indigenous business success stories and illustrated his commitment to Indigenous




Chief Louie with Catherine Coutelle and Sandrine Battistel, Chairs of the Canada-France Inter-Parliamentary Relations

economic development in Canada. In addition, Chief Louie travelled to France as a keynote speaker for “2015 Canada Week”, organized by the Embassy of Canada to France. His presentation promoted Indigenous economic development and culture, and provided a better understanding of Indigenous socio-cultural realities.



Dawn Madahbee with Warren Mundine, Chair of the Australian Prime Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Council

Dawn Madahbee attended the Roundtable on Indigenous Economic Development in Darwin, Australia in September, 2015, at the invitation of the Canadian High Commission in Australia. She also attended meetings with several Indigenous organizations in Sydney, including Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships, Yarn’n Aboriginal Employment Service, Reconciliation Australia, the Australian Prime Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Council, the Consul General for Canada, Indigenous Business Australia, and the Batchelor Institute. Dawn Madahbee wrote a report on her mission to Australia with concrete recommendations to the Deputy Minister of Indigenous and



Northern Affairs Canada, entitled *Report on Canada-Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Economic Development and Mission to Australia*, on increasing partnerships with Indigenous peoples and supporting successful initiatives to support Indigenous growth and development.

Working With Our Municipal Partners

In May and June 2015, Chief Terrance Paul presented *Benefits of Additions to Reserves: Partnerships for Shared Economic Success* at the Annual Conference of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Chief Paul presented the findings that Additions to Reserve are flowing jobs and money to their surrounding regions and economic development is benefitting not only the First Nations but the nearby communities as well.



Looking Ahead

The Board's *Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015* showed that Indigenous peoples in Canada are not on track to achieve social and economic parity with non-Indigenous Canadians by 2022. As gaps between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous populations continue to grow wider in areas such as employment rates, economic participation and university completion, the Board is focusing its strategic priorities on supporting initiatives that are improving these outcomes.

The Board's meeting with Ministers Carolyn Bennett, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Hunter Tootoo was a promising start to working at renewing the nation to nation relationship. The Board looks forward to working with the Ministers to encourage a whole of government approach to addressing Indigenous economic development.

With the completion of the Board's 2012-2015 Strategic Plan and the publication of the 2015 *Progress Report*, the Board developed new priorities to guide their work for 2016-2019:

- 1) **Enhancing Indigenous Community Readiness for Economic Opportunities**, as Indigenous community readiness with appropriate governance structures, institutions, and adequate capacity to engage in emerging opportunities is necessary for Indigenous economic development;
- 2) **Access to Capital: Building Stable Revenues**, as many Indigenous communities require additional financial management expertise, necessary resources, and adequate financial systems;
- 3) **Building the Economic Potential of Our Lands and Minimizing Environmental Impacts**, as lands and natural resources are valuable assets held by Indigenous peoples and the sustainable use of these lands is critical for economic development;
- 4) **Supporting Indigenous Businesses**, as the creation and growth of Indigenous businesses is inhibited by limited access to commercial capital, reliance on own source revenue to develop start-up, and the remoteness of some communities; and
- 5) **Promoting the Importance of Indigenous Economic Development**, as there are remarkable success stories, despite the gaps identified in our *2015 Aboriginal Economic Progress Report*, that can be used to inspire others to participate in economic development opportunities.

This year marked an end as well as new beginnings as the Board moves forward in the direction set out by its new priorities. The Board will continue providing timely research, strategic advice, and bold recommendations to ensure Indigenous peoples are in a position to contribute to and benefit from one of the world's wealthiest economies.



Annex A: Our Partners

National and International Engagements

In 2015-2016, the Board members promoted the merits of Indigenous economic development at a number of national and international events.

National Events

- Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA) Conference
- Métis Economic Development Symposium III (MEDS)
- Evaluation of the Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Development Program
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund Mining Summit

International Events

Germany

- Meeting with Marie Gervais-Vidricaire, Ambassador of Canada in Germany
- Presentation on *Aboriginal Entrepreneurship – Building Sustainable Businesses and Communities* to the German Canadian Business Club in Munich
- Participation at a round table discussion on Transatlantic Relations with professors and students at the Transatlantic Relations Seminar at the Ludwig Maximilian University
- Presentation to Annual Meeting and Canada Day Event of German-Canadian Society (DKG) in collaboration with Embassy of Canada

France

- Keynote speech during the Canada Week Activities in Paris
- Meeting with Lawrence Cannon, Ambassador of Canada to France
- Meeting with French Parliamentaries at French National Assembly
- Meeting with UNESCO's Natural Sciences Sector in Paris
- Meeting at Canada Tourism Synergique with French Tour Operators
- Meeting at Quai Branly Museum featuring Indigenous art and cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas

Australia

- Canada-Australia Roundtable on Indigenous Economic Development in Darwin
- Meeting with Mr. Warren Mundine, Chair of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council and Executive Chairman of the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce
- Meeting with Chris Fry, CEO of Indigenous Business Australia
- Meeting with Karyn Baylis, CEO of Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships
- Meeting with Deborah Nelson, Director at Yarn'n Aboriginal Employment Service
- Meeting with Karen Mundine, Deputy CEO of Reconciliation Australia
- Meeting with Ms. Jasmin Herro, CEO at JHerro Pty Ltd, Teter Mek Foundation and Outback Global Australia
- Meeting with Consul General Mario Ste-Marie, Consulate General of Canada in Sydney



Engagements during Board Meetings

In 2015-2016, the NAEDB held three Board Meetings in Osoyoos (British Columbia), Whitehorse (Yukon), and Ottawa (Ontario) where the Members heard from a number of experts and engaged with Indigenous and non-Indigenous business and community leaders, policy makers, legislators, and government departments to provide counsel, receive advice, and collaborate on matters pertaining to Indigenous economic development. These presentations were aligned with the Board's 2012-2015 Strategic Priorities.

Indigenous Organizations and Governments

- Aboriginal Human Resource Council
- Assembly of First Nations
- Chippewas of Sarnia Industrial Developments
- Council of Yukon First Nations
- Dakwakada Capital Investments (Champagne & Asihihik First Nations)
- First Nations Financial Management Board
- First Nations Tax Commission
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Inuvialuit Development Corporation
- KaLoNa group
- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation
- Métis Infinity Investments
- Métis National Council
- National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association
- Reconciliation Canada
- Six Nations Development Corporation
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation

Provincial and Territorial

- Government of Nunavut
- Government of Yukon
- Nunavut Housing Corporation

Federal Government and Related Organizations

- Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
- Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
- Department of Employment and Social Development Canada
- Department of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard
- Department of Justice Canada
- Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada



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