

**National Aboriginal  
Economic Development Board**



**Conseil national de  
développement économique  
des Autochtones**

# **Strategic Plan 2012-15**

**National Aboriginal Economic Development Board  
(NAEDB)**

**Release Date: June 2012**

## Message from the Chairperson

On behalf of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB), I am proud to present the NAEDB's 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.

The NAEDB is mandated through Order in Council to advise the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and ministers of other federal departments with regards to policy, programming, and program coordination as these relate to Aboriginal economic development. In fulfilling this mandate, the NAEDB has provided advice and recommendations regarding a number of federal initiatives, including the Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development (the Framework) and the renewal of the federal government's suite of Aboriginal economic development programs.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said "*The first priority is economic development. This is obviously the most essential step to improving the lives of Aboriginal people and their families.*" The NAEDB shares this sentiment and believes that economic development is the single most important key to self-reliance.

As Aboriginal business and community leaders, we strongly believe that economic development is key to improving the well being of Aboriginal people and communities. Every day in our communities, we witness first hand the benefits of economic development where young people can gain the necessary education and skills to become a part of Canada's work force, families can accumulate greater personal wealth, and communities are able to alleviate poverty and stimulate economic growth. However, improved socio-economic outcomes can only be achieved if Aboriginal Canadians are afforded the same opportunities for employment, income and wealth creation as other Canadians.

In 2009, the Government released the Framework, which sets the stage for a fundamental transformation in the way that the federal government works to help Aboriginal Canadians to become full participants in the economy. Its objectives can only be realized by focusing on opportunities and removing obstacles to Aboriginal Canadians in sharing in Canada's economic prosperity.

The priorities of the NAEDB, as set out in our Strategic Plan, will allow us to provide the federal government with concrete strategic advice on priority policy, program and service areas as they relate to Aboriginal economic development. To this end, our strategic plan will help focus the Board's efforts to advise the federal government in achieving tangible progress in the promotion of Aboriginal economic development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clarence Louie', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Chief Clarence Louie  
Chairperson  
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

# National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

Established in 1990, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB) is an Order-in-Council board mandated to provide policy and program advice to the federal government on Aboriginal economic development. Comprised of First Nations, Inuit and Métis community and business leaders from across Canada, the Board plays an important role in helping the federal government develop and implement policies and programs that respond to the unique needs and circumstances of Aboriginal Canadians. The Board also provides a vital link between policy makers, federal departments and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business and community leaders.

Recent key deliverables of the NAEDB include:

- Pre-Budget submissions to Budgets 2011 and 2012;
- *Recommendations on Financing First Nations Infrastructure*, advice to inform the federal government's comprehensive review ;
- Recommendations for the renovation of the federal government's Aboriginal economic development programs;
- *Recommendations For a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development*;
- *Building on Success: Strategies for Promoting Economic Development in the North*, Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development;

## Mandate

Advising the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and ministers of other federal departments with regard to policy, programming, and program coordination as these relate to Aboriginal economic development.

## Mission Statement

The NAEDB will advise and engage the federal government on policies, programs to secure the necessary funds to support business, employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people throughout Canada.

The NAEDB will continue to advocate for:

- Increasing the level of Aboriginal economic development program funding to 10% of total federal Aboriginal spending;
- Categorizing federal Aboriginal economic development program funding as non-discretionary; and
- Aboriginal economic development as a means to reduce social spending and increased self-reliance.

## Vision

The NAEDB vision is that Aboriginal people are healthy, well-educated, economically self-sufficient and full participants in the Canadian economy.

## Key Activities

The NAEDB commits to fulfilling its mandate and implementing the long-term priorities established within this strategic plan by undertaking the following activities:

- Meeting four to six times per year to provide input into the development and implementation of federal policies and programs;
- Conducting research and developing case studies on specific Aboriginal economic development issues;
- Engaging federal, provincial and national Aboriginal organizations to facilitate information sharing on Aboriginal economic development issues;
- Providing ongoing advice to federal departments and agencies to help promote Aboriginal economic development;
- Assuming leadership roles in national and international fora to help promote Aboriginal economic development initiatives;
- Meeting with ministers and parliamentary committees to discuss matters of interest as they relate to Aboriginal economic development;
- Reporting the activities and performance of the Board to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development;
- Measuring and monitoring the Aboriginal economic progress in Canada; and
- Developing written recommendations pieces and reports to the federal government on Aboriginal economic development.

## NAEDB Strategic Priorities

The NAEDB has developed the *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report*, the first comprehensive document of its kind to assemble indicators and establish benchmarks to measure the social and economic well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The objective of the report is to assess the state of Aboriginal economy in Canada across a number of key indicators, and track their progress over time.

The Board will align its work under the Strategic Priorities with the goal of ensuring that these indicators move in a positive direction over time. These indicators, which were selected as the most important areas to measure both actual and capacity future progress, include:

- Employment, Income and Wealth and Well-Being – these are Core Indicators that track the economic progress of Aboriginal Canadians over time;
- Education, Entrepreneurship and Business Development, Governance, Infrastructure, and Lands and Resources – these are Foundational Indicators that track the ability of Aboriginal Canadians to improve their performance on the Core Indicators.

The key findings of the *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report* indicate that: (1) **Aboriginal people in Canada have made gains** in a number of important economic measures, including employment and income; (2) **Gains have not been shared equally** among the three Aboriginal Heritage groups; and (3) **Substantial gaps remain** between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

This strategic plan was developed with the view to establish broad long-term priorities relating to Aboriginal economic development which will guide the work and activities of the NAEDB and its Secretariat over the three year period (2012-15). These priorities will be linked to relevant objectives which will assist the federal government's work to address the gaps between First Nation, Inuit and Métis, and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

For 2012-15, the NAEDB has identified the following long-term priorities:

1. Addressing Barriers to Aboriginal Economic Development
2. Increasing Aboriginal Participation in Major Projects
3. Providing Relevant and Timely Advice to the Federal Government

The NAEDB is of the view that focussing on addressing the barriers to Aboriginal economic development will create the right conditions for economic growth. Increasing Aboriginal participation in major projects will be an effective way to close the socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians by participating as entrepreneurs, employers and employees. Providing relevant and timely advice to the federal government will ensure that the Board's activities and resources are aligned with its long-term priorities.

“The contribution of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples will be important to our future prosperity. Concerted action is needed to address the barriers to social and economic participation that many Aboriginal Canadians face.” – Speech from the Throne, June 3, 2011.

## Priority 1 Addressing the Barriers to Aboriginal Economic Development

### i. Objective

To address the barriers to Aboriginal economic development by creating a solid foundation for Aboriginal people to develop their economies.

While there are a number of barriers which impact Aboriginal economic development, it must be recognized that the influence of each depends on the specific circumstances of Aboriginal people and will vary amongst First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, their communities and their regions. The Government’s *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* (2009) recognizes the following principle barriers to Aboriginal economic development: legal and regulatory environment; access to lands and resources; skilled labour; deficits in infrastructure; limited financing options; and deficits in capacity.

If we are to create the right conditions for Aboriginal economic development, these barriers must be addressed. We require an environment which allows Aboriginal people to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. To do that we must not only look at the source of barriers which inhibit economic development, but examine successful and innovative examples of Aboriginal economic development to create viable options to either remove these impediments or find creative solutions to overcome them.

### ii. Focus areas

Over the next three years, the NAEDB will provide the federal government with specific recommendations and advice to address the barriers to economic development for First Nation, Inuit and Métis. In order to do so, the NAEDB will examine the following key areas:

- Legal and Regulatory Barriers
- Land Management and Resource Development
- Governance Capacity
- Community and Commercial Infrastructure and Services
- Financing, Investment and Partnerships
- Labour Market Development

The work in these areas will inform recommendations on federal Aboriginal economic development funding, legislative and regulatory initiatives, and performance measurement.

### iii. Expected Outcomes

A level playing field: Legislative and regulatory barriers to economic development are removed and Aboriginal Canadians, their businesses and communities have access to the tools and resources they need to pursue economic opportunities on the same basis as their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

*“Increased resource development activities can also offer new opportunities for Aboriginal businesses and can generate well-paying jobs for Aboriginal peoples near their communities.” – Economic Action Plan 2012*

## Priority 2 Increasing Aboriginal Participation in Major Projects

### i. Objective

Readying Aboriginal communities and peoples to access opportunities and participate in major projects.

According to Canada’s Economic Action Plan 2012 “some \$500 billion is expected to be invested in over 500 major economic projects across Canada over the next 10 years”. Many of these investments are located in or near our communities, creating large-scale economic benefits, including offshoot business revenues and employment opportunities.

Access to skilled labour will be crucial in supporting existing resource development projects as well as realizing future opportunities. Labour shortages will impact economic growth and the pace of resource development, therefore increasing participation levels among under-represented groups is key to addressing labour shortages. Improving Aboriginal participation has significant potential for addressing labour market challenges.

Aboriginal people and communities must be prepared to participate in major projects so that they may have the capacity to maximize potential economic development opportunities. Given the scale and importance of major projects across Canada, Aboriginal people cannot afford to watch while resources are extracted from their traditional territories in ways that limit their economic benefit and participation, and negatively impact their way of life.

### ii. Focus Areas

In order to prepare Aboriginal communities and people to fully participate in major projects, the NAEDB will explore ways which will enable Aboriginal people to participate as providers of goods and services, employees and equity owners in development in the following areas:

- Engagement and Negotiations
- Equity and Revenue Sharing
- Skills Development and Training
- Infrastructure Development
- Business Opportunity Development

Over the next three years, the NAEDB will provide the federal government specific recommendations and advice on how to increase First Nation, Inuit and Métis participation in major projects.

### iii. Expected Outcomes

The federal government will work with Aboriginal communities and the private sector to ensure they have the knowledge and resources to proactively take advantage of, and derive benefits from, current and emerging major project development opportunities.

*"Canada's New Government is working to create a more coherent and practical approach to increasing Aboriginal participation in the economy, capitalizing on a range of economic opportunities. As an arms-length, private-sector body representing the economic development interests of all Aboriginal people, the NAEDB is well positioned to play a key role as this work unfolds." – Hon. Jim Prentice P.C., Q.C, July 2007*

## Priority 3 Providing Relevant and Timely Advice to the Federal Government

### i. Objective

Improving NAEDB governance and processes to fulfil the Board's mandate to provide strategic advice to the federal government.

The *Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* priority "Focusing the Role of the Federal Government" committed to strengthening the role of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board.

In support of this commitment, in 2011-12 the Board undertook a review of its current governance structure to identify its strengths and weaknesses, and to enhance the organization by ensuring continued improvement and effectiveness of the Board.

### ii. Focus Areas

To ensure that the NAEDB fulfils its mandate, during 2012-15 the Board has committed to undertake the following work:

- Increase collaboration and linkages among federal, provincial and national Aboriginal organizations;
- Improve and maintain good governance structure and practices;
- Improve planning, coordination and reporting; and
- Enhance awareness of the NAEDB and its work.

As a part of this work, the NAEDB will release its *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report* in 2012-13. By 2013, we will release an annex to the report, which will identify socio-economic measures such as training, resources and social development. By 2015, the NAEDB will release the *Aboriginal Economic Progress Report*, which will track the progress of Aboriginal Canadians across all of the measures listed in the Report.

The NAEDB and its Secretariat have already taken proactive measures to improve its governance and will continue to work diligently to provide strategic value to ministers and government as a whole.

### iii. Expected Outcomes

The Board has an increased profile and recognized credibility that serve to influence the policy direction of the federal government with respect to Aboriginal economic development.



## Conclusion

The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board asserts that it is in the interest of all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians to ensure that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people are full participants in the economy and are able to make a meaningful contribution to Canada's economic prosperity. Aboriginal Canadians should be positioned to take unprecedented steps towards becoming full participants in the Canadian economy as entrepreneurs, land managers, employers and employees.

We look forward to continuing our work with the federal government on advancing Aboriginal economic development and realizing the long-term priorities of the Board with the hopes of improving the conditions of Aboriginal Canadians.

## NAEDB Membership

**Chief Clarence Louie** (Chair), British Columbia  
Chief, Osoyoos Indian Band

**Dawn Madahbee** (Vice-Chair), Ontario  
General Manager, Waubetek Business Development Corporation

**Pita Aatami** (Member-At-Large), Québec  
Past-President, Makivik Corporation

**Richard Francis**, New Brunswick  
Past-Director of Economic Development, Kingsclear First Nation

**John Michael Keyuk**, Saskatchewan  
Vice-President, G. Raymond Contracting Ltd.

**Matthew Mukash**, Québec  
Grand Chief, Grand Council of the Crees

**Chief Terrance Paul**, Nova Scotia  
Chief, Membertou First Nation

**James Ross**, Northwest Territories  
President, Aura Ross Resources Limited

**Chief Sharon Stinson Henry**, Ontario  
Chief, Rama Mnjikaning First Nation