



The  
**Purdy Crawford Chair**  
In Aboriginal Business Studies

**Partnering for Successful Economic Development:  
Lessons Learned and Best Practices**

OCTOBER 25-26, 2012

CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY

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The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies was established at Cape Breton University in 2010 in response to Aboriginal community leaders' expression of the need for entrepreneurship, business investment, and corporate skills training for the purpose of creating a model of self-reliance. Named in honour of Canadian lawyer and corporate boardroom leader, Mr. Purdy Crawford, the Chair aims to promote interest among Canada's Aboriginal people in the study of business at the post-secondary level.

The Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies focuses its work in four areas:

- Research on what “drives” success in Aboriginal business
- National student recruitment in the area of post-secondary Aboriginal business education
- Enhancement of post-secondary Aboriginal business curriculum
- Mentorship at high school and post-secondary levels

Cape Breton University is uniquely positioned to engage in such community-based research, as it holds a memorandum of understanding with the First Nation community of Membertou and is Atlantic Canada's leader in Aboriginal post-secondary education with more than 500 Aboriginal graduates holding Cape Breton University degrees.

The Chair is currently held by Dr. Keith G. Brown, Vice President, International and Aboriginal Affairs at Cape Breton University. Mary Beth Doucette is the Associate Chair.

## Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies

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Report edited by Janice Esther Tulk, 2014. Assistance provided by Project Manager Allan MacKenzie and student researcher Nicole Johnson.

## Executive Summary

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The valuable role of partnerships for successful Aboriginal economic development has been noted by many, but discussion of how to forge and sustain partnerships has been more peripheral than central to studies. As partnerships become increasingly important, particularly in relation to natural resource development, focus on lessons learned and best practices in the establishment of partnerships is critical. The *Partnering for Successful Economic Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices* workshop held at Cape Breton University in October 2012 encouraged dialogue between local practitioners and national and international experts to identify key practices and concerns, and share experiences and knowledge.

Through a case study of St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino, participants learned about the importance of rooting development in community and culture, ensuring environmental sustainability of development initiatives, and fostering strong relationships at all levels. Discussion of the construction of a pedway between the Hampton Inn Membertou and the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre revealed the importance of reputation and credibility (transparency, accountability, and ISO certification) for attracting partnerships, as well as the role of a strong business case and regional value proposition for solidifying partnerships. Strong leadership, detailed reporting to partners, and commitment to shared principles were identified as key factors in the success of the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office and its collaborative approach to economic development. In addition to selecting partners with shared principles, the case of the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program demonstrated that partnerships should benefit and develop capacity for all involved, and that taking the time to do things in a good way will ensure significant and lasting impacts of partnerships. The case of Eskasoni Cultural Journeys reinforced many of these key factors for success, but also pointed to the need to be strategic in selecting partners to ensure they have the ability to meet project deliverables and to consult the community to ensure a strong foundation for development.

Small group discussions between participants focused on issues related to the establishment of partnerships in general and research partnerships in particular, working with consultants, building capacity through partnerships, communication in partnerships, and engagement of the broader community in partnerships. It became clear that working with consultants is an area where more work is needed to ensure productive and respectful partnerships. Of all the recommendations (54) made throughout the two-day workshop, the following are some of those ranked by participants as being the most important:

- Look at the strengths and needs of the community before establishing partnerships
- Ensure that research directions are community-driven
- Learn and use community protocols in research partnerships
- Document everything when working with consultants
- Build job shadowing into contracts with consultants to build local capacity
- Take time to build trust and respect before entering into partnerships
- Lead by example
- Encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in communities

Commitment to putting the recommendations shared by practitioners and scholars into practice will usher in a future of collaboration to the benefit of Aboriginal peoples.

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## Introduction: Partnering for Successful Economic Development

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Janice Esther Tulk

On October 25-26, 2012, the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies hosted a two-day workshop at Cape Breton University funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants representing a variety of sectors and stakeholder positions from across Canada and the United States gathered to engage with the question:

**“How do we create and maintain successful partnerships for Aboriginal economic development?”**

Over the past decade, workshops focused on Aboriginal economic development have brought to light case studies of successful approaches across Canada and identified barriers to development in relation to governance, law, land, resources, the tourism industry, and urban populations (see, for example, Halseth et al. 2011; *Summit* 2008; Calliou 2007; Dobell 2006). In the proceedings of these events, the discussion of partnerships - between Aboriginal governments and their municipal, provincial, and federal counterparts, between Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal corporations, and between different Aboriginal communities - invariably has emerged as a significant factor in economic development. The *Partnering for Successful Economic Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices* workshop shifted the discussion of partnerships from the periphery to the centre, focussing specifically on the experiences and strategies of Aboriginal communities as they “attempt to rewrite the parameters for discussion and collaboration” (Christen 2009, 3) while moving toward self-governance.

The workshop brought together researchers who have worked with successful Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal consultants, and a variety of other participants - economic development officers, business people, policy-makers, undergraduate and graduate students, and members of Aboriginal communities - to probe the nature of partnerships and alliance-making in Aboriginal communities for the purpose of economic development. Specifically, it mobilized a collaborative forum to investigate 1) the types of partnerships into which Aboriginal individuals, companies, and communities enter, 2) the process of negotiation that occurs to facilitate the establishment of partnerships, 3) the factors that contribute to a successful partnership, 4) the benefits and drawbacks of partnerships, and 5) lessons learned regarding successful collaborations. In particular, participants were encouraged to share successful (and less so) strategies, processes, experiences, and outcomes for two purposes: by participating in this dialogue, researchers and community members gave and received new strategies for future endeavours in Aboriginal communities (identifying challenges to the same) and by reflecting upon and analysing these experiences in a systematic way, participants helped advance knowledge of, and posit best practices surrounding, partnerships.

While case studies were drawn primarily from Unama’ki, national and international experiences and perspectives were shared by session respondents and participants. Participants shared their research and experiences in roundtable and break-out session formats before engaging in a facilitated discussion to allow for deeper analysis of the lessons learned through these diverse experiences and possible emerging best practices. The hope was that those present would gain knowledge and strategies that they could bring back to their own communities, while also contributing to a larger dialogue on best practices in Aboriginal economic development.

The workshop responded to the federal *Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* published by the Government of Canada. While calling for increased capacity among Aboriginal communities and the development of Aboriginal business initiatives, it listed “forging new and effective partnerships” with provincial governments and the private sector as one of four strategic priorities (2009, 12). Such partnerships are widely recognized as an important piece of the Aboriginal economic development

puzzle, both by cultural outsiders and Aboriginal community members alike. As observed by Hindle et al, “Recognizing the challenges they face in attempting to compete in the global economy on their own terms, Indigenous people are increasingly developing enterprises in the form of *partnerships* of all types among themselves and with non-Indigenous enterprises” (2005, 1). Indeed, such partnerships were identified by Williams (2011, 51) as one of seven key factors that determined success in Aboriginal economic development among the communities surveyed in British Columbia. Though such partnerships are often conceived of as large scale and between Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal corporations in energy and natural resource sectors, it is important to note that alliance-making between Indigenous individuals and communities is just as essential for small scale development, as in the mobilization of arts and crafts as tourism products (see Henry 2011).

Despite this recognition of the role of alliance-making in economic development, few have attempted to define what constitutes a successful or effective partnership, nor the factors that contribute to one. The issue is not one to be taken lightly, for as Sayers has observed, “The right partner can give everything we need to make the project a success: resources, capacity-building, financing, expertise, and a shared vision and commitment. The wrong partner can just make everything miserable” (2006, 21). The purpose of the *Partnering for Successful Economic Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices* workshop was to probe the nature of alliance-making, identifying the parameters contributing to success and the barriers to be overcome, so that Aboriginal communities can respond to the federal government’s call for new and effective partnerships. Among the barriers that have been identified are fear of approaching Aboriginal people as business partners due to history and politics, and uncertainty in how to locate and establish partnerships (see Halseth et al. 2011). By focussing on successful alliance-making in Aboriginal communities, strategies for overcoming such barriers emerged and will improve access to and success of partnerships for economic development.

*Partnering for Successful Economic Development: Lessons Learned and Best Practices* took place in the traditional territory of the Mi’kmaq. Our appreciation is extended to Michael R. Denny, who opened the event with the Mi’kmaw Honour Song, and Louis Joe Bernard, who closed the event by sharing stories of his own involvement in economic development and a Mi’kmaw prayer. Thank you to all participants for sharing their experiences and expertise.

A video overview of the two days is available on [YouTube](#).



**JANICE ESTHER TULK** is the senior research associate for the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies. Her current research is focused on the Membertou model for economic development, the Unama’ki economic partnership model, and best practices in Aboriginal economic development. She holds a Bachelor of Music (Hons) from Memorial University (2001), a Master of Arts in Music from University of Alberta (2003), and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Ethnomusicology from Memorial University (2008). Tulk is the recipient of a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship (2008-2010) and a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship (Doctoral), and is a Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

## St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino

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### Margaret Froh

Despite their linguistic, cultural, and demographic differences, the Ktunaxa Nation (British Columbia), the Chippewas of Rama First Nation (Ontario), and the Samson Cree Nation (Alberta) have come together in a business partnership known as the [St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino of the Rockies](#). Located on the St. Mary's River near Cranbrook, BC, St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino was established at the former site of St. Eugene Mission School, a residential school that operated for sixty years until 1971. In the 1990s, the property was returned to the Ktunaxa, who decided to convert this site, which represented a dark and negative time in their history, into something positive for their community members. The community decided to establish the property as a world class resort.

In 2000, the Ktunaxa opened the 18-hole golf course, which was named one of Canada's top three courses by *Golf Digest* magazine the following year. The hotel and casino were completed in 2003. The hotel features 100 rooms in the newer lodge and 25 deluxe rooms in the historic mission building. There are four restaurants and lounges, 4,000 square feet of meeting rooms, and a year round pavilion that holds up to 300 people. Amenities include a heated outdoor swimming pool, hot tub, and fitness centre with sauna. The 20,000 square foot casino has 234 slot machines, a wide variety of table games, and off-track betting, and is British Columbia's only Aboriginal-owned Casino.

As a result of several factors, including construction cost over-runs and a decline in tourism, the resort experienced financial difficulties in 2004. The Ktunaxa sought partners to help finance the resort and ensure its success. Later that year, Samson Cree Nation and the Chippewas of Rama First Nation partnered with the Ktunaxa in the joint venture, each nation owning one-third of the resort. Since then, there has been a complete turnaround in terms of the financial stability of the resort as a result of the leadership of the First Nation partners, the board of directors, and the senior management team and staff.

Three key factors that have contributed to the success of St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino are:

1. Commitment to community and culture
2. Focus on environmental sustainability
3. Development of strong relationships

At St. Eugene Resort, the Ktunaxa history, language, and culture are a central focus and reflected throughout the resort and are featured in its interpretive centre. There is also a commitment to the development of First Nations people, both in terms of revenue production to further strengthen the First Nation partner communities and human capacity development through training and employment opportunities. Over 17% of their staff have Aboriginal heritage and they are always looking to increase that number by recruiting and maintaining skilled Aboriginal employees at all levels.

There is also a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. The hotel is Audubon Green Leaf eco-rated. Given that the land on which the golf course and resort is built is home to many birds and animals, the golf course went through the [Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf](#), which helps golf courses protect the environment by preserving natural heritage within the golf course setting. It also enhances the nature areas in wildlife habitats to minimize any potential harmful impact. St. Eugene Resort is now recognized as a leader in the region on environmental management.

Finally, partners in St. Eugene Resort have focused on developing strong relationships. The initial financial difficulties experienced prior to the partnership impacted relationships with tradespeople and businesses in the region. The board and senior management team took steps to address this after the partnership with Samson Cree and Rama was established. They also had to build strong relationships with the Government of British Columbia and gaming regulatory bodies. The board of directors, made up of representatives appointed by each of the three First Nation partners, has been key to these

relationships. The board makes decisions in the best interest of the resort and communicates back to the chiefs, councils, and communities of each First Nation partner.

Each partner in St. Eugene Golf Resort and Casino entered the partnership knowing that it would end at some point in the future. When the time is right, the resort will become solely owned by the Ktunaxa. Until then, the work of the partners, the board, and the staff is focussed on making the golf resort and casino a stronger economic engine for the Ktunaxa people.



L-R: Keith G. Brown, Margaret Froh, and Mary Beth Doucette

**MARGARET FROH** is a Métis lawyer from the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan, currently based in Barrie, Ontario. Margaret is a sole practitioner and President/CEO of Turquoise Buffalo Consulting, providing governance, law, and policy support to First Nation, Métis, and Inuit organizations and communities in Canada. In addition to her legal and consulting practices, Margaret is a faculty member in the Banff Centre's Aboriginal Leadership & Management Program. Prior to establishing Turquoise Buffalo, Margaret served over eight years as part of the in-house legal counsel team for the Chippewas of Rama First Nation. In 2011, Margaret and her colleagues in Rama's General Counsel's Office received the inaugural Canadian General Counsel Award for Social Responsibility for their work with Elders and youth. Margaret has served on the boards of numerous Aboriginal non-profit and for-profit organizations, and is the President of the Indigenous Bar Association's Law Student Scholarship Foundation and Past President of the Indigenous Bar Association in Canada. In 2007, Margaret was appointed by the Chippewas of Rama First Nation as a Director (Alternate) for the St. Eugene Golf Resort & Casino near Cranbrook, BC.

## Forging Connections: The Hampton Inn Membertou

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Michael McIntyre, John Lynn, Gary Corsano, Pascal Piseгна, and Christopher Alcantara

[Membertou](#) is a Mi'kmaw community located adjacent to Sydney, Nova Scotia. Its land base is small and does not include water access, and as a result it has limited resources. Its proximity to Sydney - the centre for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality - is a key factor in its successful economic development. Twenty years ago, jobs were scarce. Membertou was tired of being debt and aspired to self-sufficiency. Achieving their goals for self-sufficiency, economic development, job creation, and capacity development would mean establishing partnerships. Leadership believed the key to forging successful partnerships would be credibility.

To become more transparent and accountable, Chief Terry Paul put the community's financial statements online. It showed there were no secrets in Membertou and gave them credibility with the government. They then partnered with Indian Affairs to engage in a three-year process to document their already existing policies and procedures. This formalized their operations and led to Membertou becoming the first Indigenous government in Canada with ISO 9000 certification. They also reduced their deficit and paid off debt. As a result, everyone wanted to do business with Membertou, but they knew they had to choose the right partners.

Membertou started building an economic base with businesses like the Membertou Market, Membertou Gaming Commission, and others that created new revenue streams. They also developed the [Membertou Trade and Convention Centre](#). After that initiative, the long term goal was to build a hotel. In 2008, they began the search for a partner. Danny Murphy of DP Murphy, Inc. asked for a feasibility study. Because the endeavour made good business sense and Membertou was seen to be a credible business partner, they entered a partnership. The [Hampton Inn Membertou](#) was built adjacent to the existing Membertou Trade and Convention Centre.

Important to the establishment of the hotel was Membertou's relationship with the CBRM, and in particular, in its planning and engineering departments. It is a relationship built on mutual respect. They worked together to determine what bylaws would need to be passed to facilitate the development of the hotel, which is located on fee-simple land, not reserve land. Recognition by CBRM within its own bylaws of what can be done with roads attached to Membertou roads was groundbreaking in terms of facilitating development. The waterline and services for the hotel go through Membertou reserve land. An agreement with the CBRM and AANDC meant that a new waterline to service the hotel (at a cost of about \$500,000) was not necessary. Membertou's relationship with the CBRM also facilitated the zoning change required, because the area had been zoned for residential use.

To maximize the appeal of the hotel and convention centre to consumers, a pedway would be needed to connect the two buildings. The pedway would cross an unseen border and connect a First Nations business on reserve land to a business created through partnership with a non-Aboriginal company located on municipal land (and responsible for paying municipal taxes). Because it was seen that the initiative would be of benefit to all of Cape Breton and not just Membertou - it would improve the ability of the region to attract large conventions - Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation joined as a strategic partner and provided funding to leverage other sources (bank financing) to construct the pedway.

The pedway, however, was not a straight-forward build. The key issue was that the constructing the pedway, which fell under Section 28(2) of the Indian Act because it crossed reserve land, required ministerial approval. Then, a permit was created between the Minister and Membertou Hotel Properties in order to have right of way over the pedway. Good relationships with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), as well as other regulators, were key to this success.

Key factors that have contributed to the success of this partnership are:

1. Transparency
2. Accountability
3. Formalization of processes and procedures (ISO) for credibility
4. Business case for partnership
5. Regional value proposition
6. Good formal and informal relationships

In response to this presentation, Alcantara observed that the Indian Act creates a variety of obstacles for Aboriginal economic development, but partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can help to overcome some of these obstacles to create better economic health for all. Such cooperation is constrained or enabled by many factors, including geography, institutional autonomy, and power asymmetry. The most important factors, however, are leadership and relationships.



L-R: Rachel Starks (back),  
Michael McIntyre, and  
Margaret Froh

**MICHAEL MCINTYRE** is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Membertou Band, advising the CEO and management team on a wide range of topics including project financing, business planning, and identifying and managing new economic development opportunities. He is responsible for: managing projects, liaising with government and the business community, implementing ISO 9000, and preparing year-end consolidated financial statements and reports. Michael was a key player in the creation of the Membertou Market, the Membertou Gaming Commission, the Membertou Fisheries, and the Membertou Trade & Convention Centre. Michael has a BBA from Cape Breton University and earned his Chartered Accountant designation in 1993.

**JOHN K. LYNN** is the Chief Executive Officer of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. Mr. Lynn holds degrees from St. Francis Xavier and Queen's University, and has studied at the Richard Ivey School of Business at University of Western Ontario and the Rotman School of Business at University of Toronto. He is a member of the Executive Committee of ACOA and the Business Advisory Board for the Centre for Sustainability in Energy and the Environment at Cape Breton University, and serves as the current chair of the Maritime Junior Hockey League. He is a member of the Pictou County Sports Hall of Fame.

**GARY CORSANO** joined the law firm of Sampson McDougall after being admitted to the Nova Scotia Bar in 1986 and in 1991 he became a partner. Gary focuses his practice on business and property law, with a particular interest in not for profit and community based organizations and Aboriginal economic development. Gary received his Bachelor of Arts in philosophy and political science from Gonzaga University (Spokane Washington), a Master of Arts in political theory from Dalhousie University, and a Bachelor of Laws from University of New Brunswick.

**PASCAL PISEGNA** graduated from Ryerson University with a B.Com in Hospitality and Tourism. He gained experience while owning and operating high end catering services at the Moncton Golf and Country Club and performing various roles with national hotel chains Delta Beausejour, Jasper Park Lodge, Toronto Hilton, and Delta Prince Edward. In 1998, Pascal moved into management at the Holiday Inn Mactaquac and has since led teams to awards in customer excellence and employee satisfaction, while creating community partnerships. Pascal managed an \$8M brand conversion and renovation of the Lord Beaverbrook Crowne Plaza and the construction of two Hampton Inn properties for regionally owned DP Murphy Group.

**CHRISTOPHER ALCANTARA** is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Wilfrid Laurier University. He is author of *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada* (2013) and co-author of *Beyond the Indian Act: Restoring Aboriginal Property Rights* (2010), which was shortlisted for the 2010-2011 Donner Prize. He has published numerous articles in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Public Administration*, *Canadian Public Policy*, *Electoral Studies*, *Public Choice*, and *Publius: Journal of Federalism*, among others. Broadly speaking, his research interests lie in the fields of Canadian politics, public policy, and Indigenous-settler relations in Canada.

## Collaborative Approach to Economic Development: The Unama'ki Model

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Owen Fitzgerald, Alex Paul, Gary Campbell, and Ronald Trosper

Cape Breton has a long history of mining and steel production. One environmental legacy of this industrial past is known as the Tar Ponds, a hazardous waste site near the harbour and former steel mill site. In the late 1980's, the provincial government began reviewing reports of seepage into the harbour. They negotiated a Federal-Provincial agreement to study the environmental impact of the Tar Ponds and identify appropriate remediation processes (\$72 million). Upon receipt of the final report, they then negotiated another agreement to conduct the remediation (\$400 million) starting in 2007.

The [Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office](#) (UEBO) was established in Membertou as a result of the \$400 million [Sydney Tar Ponds](#) remediation project. A memorandum of understanding was signed to ensure meaningful participation of Mi'kmaq in the project. To move the MOU from intention to reality, the five Unama'ki communities partnered to negotiate set-asides and establish a business office that assessed and built capacity while providing support and training for tender and RFP processes to Mi'kmaw businesses. The office was funded by provincial and federal government partners.

The first Aboriginal set-aside was approximately \$4 million for the cooling pond. This set-aside still required a competitive, transparent process, but could only be awarded to Aboriginal companies defined under federal guidelines as 51% Aboriginal-owned. Ideally, however, UEBO wanted 75% Aboriginal employment and built strong relationships to achieve this goal. This goal of 75% Aboriginal employment was treated by the provincial government as a contracting principle, which meant that Aboriginal companies could (and some were) penalized if this goal was not met. As a result of the success of the first set-aside, additional set-asides were negotiated. Mi'kmaw companies gained valuable experience and skills, thereby enhancing confidence and capacity of workers. The end result was 85% Aboriginal employment on these set-asides and the equivalent of 45 jobs created. Additionally, some companies were successful in open tender processes that were not part of the set-asides agreement.

A key to the success of this partnership was the development of trust and confidence between partners. They met regularly at monthly meetings and openly discussed issues. They found creative work-arounds to problems, such as the issue of bonding. Many of the Aboriginal companies did not have the background to obtain a bond and bonding companies could not seize the property should a company fail to fulfill the contract. The partners worked together to overcome this challenge.

The UEBO broadened its scope from the Tar Ponds remediation to maximize the benefit of the established relationships and began identifying other areas of need, such as environmental monitors for engineering firms, civil technicians, etc. Employers became partners, helping to identify skill sets that were in demand, develop training programs, and select participants. In return, these employers then had a pool of highly trained individuals they could draw on to fill positions. The program has attracted interest from New Page, Emera Utility Services, Bell Aliant, and Irving.

The UEBO holds meetings to report back to partners and communities. Detailed annual reports with budgets are prepared and identify partnerships established, jobs created, etc. These documents are available on the UEBO website. Newsletters are sometimes forwarded to communities and social media is becoming increasingly important.

The key factors leading to the success of UEBO are:

1. Strong leadership
2. Good relationships
3. Transparency
4. Detailed reporting to stakeholders
5. Commitment to shared principles

In response to this presentation, Ronald Trosper observed that the holistic or systems approach to the initiative, which brings in resources and support, was key to its success. But he also highlighted that the individuals involved, particularly the ones representing government, were understanding and helpful. Their level of commitment to the initiative went beyond just meeting the requirements of their jobs and this personal commitment to the project was critical for success.



L-R: John Lynn, Gary Corsano (back), Bill McIntyre, and Owen Fitzgerald (front)

**OWEN FITZGERALD** is the Executive Director of the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office in Membertou, Nova Scotia. He has an MBA in CED from Cape Breton University. He operated his own business in downtown Sydney for over 20 years, has published four books, and is a past president of the Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce. Owen has led a very successful First Nation model in economic development that involves taking a business approach and a collaborative approach to economic development, both by the five First Nation communities in Cape Breton, as well as partnerships with industry.

**ALEX PAUL** is the Director for the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office. Not only has he found his way back to his ancestral home, but he has found his way back to his true passion for building capacity within Aboriginal communities in terms of education, training, and employment. He is a former Board Member of the UNIA in Glace Bay and currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Cape Breton Partnership. Alex was recently appointed to the Nova Scotia Community College Board of Governors and was featured in a CBC Radio series titled *Cape Breton Leadership: The Next Generation*.

**GARY CAMPBELL** is a resources planner with 25 years of property and project management experience with the Province of Nova Scotia, where he is responsible for ensuring that private contractors deliver services in accordance with contractual obligations. His activities include major Federal-Provincial initiatives ranging from the provincial chair of the \$200 million Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Development Fund to his present role as President of Nova Scotia Lands Inc. as the provincial lead on the \$400 million Federal-Provincial Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Remediation Agreement. He is also President of Harbourside Commercial Park, the crown corporation established to redevelop the former Sydney Steel site.

**RONALD TROSPER** is Head, American Indian Studies Program, University of Arizona. Prior to 2011, he was Professor of Aboriginal Forestry, Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia. He moved to UBC in 2004 from the School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University, where he was Professor and Director of the Native American Forestry Program. At UA, he teaches courses on Indigenous economic theory and traditional ecological knowledge. He is an enrolled member of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana. He worked there as a tribal economist from 1983-1989. He received a PhD in economics from Harvard University in 1974.

## Research Partnerships: Land Management in Membertou

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Gillian Austin, Cheryl Knockwood, Rachel Starks, and Tamara Young

The [Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program](#) (AAEDIRP) of the Atlantic Policy Congress (APC) based in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia is a collaborative research program based in partnerships that serve Aboriginal interests in the Atlantic Provinces. AAEDIRP conducts and funds research projects, develops research capacity, maintains a database on Aboriginal economic development (ASK-ECDEV), and hosts workshops to share best practices throughout the region. The development of research capacity is an important focus and pertains to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, who each build new skills and foster new relationships through community-based projects. While AAEDIRP's primary focus is economic development, its work dovetails with many areas of community development, including health, culture and language, and social issues. Among the research projects funded by AAEDIRP is one on land management in Membertou.

The partners working on the land management project in Membertou include researchers from [Membertou](#), the [Native Nations Institute](#), and the [Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies](#) at Cape Breton University. An independent legal advisor, John Borrows, also provided expert feedback on research design and analysis. The purpose of the research project was identify best practices for land management and use these best practices to help the community develop their own land management code. It is a two phased project. The first phase involves approaching communities across Canada that manage their own land to learn from their experiences and identify best practices. The preliminary findings indicate that participation in the [First Nations Land Management Act](#) (FNLMA) could significantly speed up the timeline for land transactions, which is important for economic development in the community. The second phase involves interviewing members of the Membertou community to determine their priorities and expectations in terms of land management, as well as traditional land use and methods for passing on property. Then, the two phases of research will be synthesized to provide recommendations for the development of the land code. The researchers are guided by a governance committee with 50 members, 10-15 of whom consistently attend meetings. They also consult with Membertou Elders, who offer advice on how to engage the community.

The best practices emerging from this partnership are:

1. Selecting strong partners with valuable experience
2. Persevering through challenges
3. Taking the time necessary to do things right
4. Ensuring all partners benefit from the relationship
5. Developing capacity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers

When Membertou was looking for partners for this research initiative, they sought the assistance of the Native Nations Institute at University of Arizona, which has a long history of research into economic development of the Indigenous peoples in the United States, and the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies at Cape Breton University, which has a history of collaboration with Mi'kmaq in Cape Breton. Both universities were able to provide complementary experience upon which to draw.

While an international partnership has its benefits, it can also be challenging. For example, it can take partners a longer time to develop working relationships and become comfortable interacting via technology (conference calls, email, etc) if they haven't met in person first. Similarly, research itself is time-consuming when one needs to develop respectful relationships with communities. A willingness to take the time necessary and persevere through challenges is key.

It is also important to ensure that all partners benefit from the arrangement. In this case, for example, Membertou benefitted from enhanced research capacity provided by partners, and Native Nations Institute benefitted from the opportunity to learn about a Canadian First Nation's experience that they can compare to the American context with which they are more familiar.

Finally, as emphasized by AAEDIRP's mandate, it is critical to focus on capacity development. The Aboriginal research assistant was provided with training in ethics, governance, library research strategies, and reference management software. She developed skills in public speaking, transcription, and interview techniques. The research partners learned more about community protocols and Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge. So, capacity development works in both directions and benefits all partners into the future.

*Note: Since this session, the final report for this project, titled [Managing Land, Governing for the Future: Finding the Path Forward for Membertou](#), has been published on the AAEDIRP website.*



L-R: Lois Duke and Margaret Donahue

**GILLIAN AUSTIN** has been the Research Coordinator of the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Research Program since 2007. She has fifteen years' experience as a consultant, providing coordination, research and writing, communication and organizational skills to environmental and Native non-profit organizations. Gillian has a BA in English Literature from McGill University (1989) and a Master of Environmental Studies from York University (1996), which focussed on cultural and Native issues.

**CHERYL KNOCKWOOD** is a proud member of the Mi'kmaw Nation and a band member of the Indian Island Band in New Brunswick. She received her BA from University of New Brunswick (1993), a Law degree from University of British Columbia (1996), and a Master of Laws from University of Arizona (2004). She articulated with the Halifax law firm Burchell Hayman Parish and was called to the Nova Scotia Bar in 2009. Since 2010, she has been working for Membertou as Governance Coordinator, assisting with the community engagement process to develop land management and citizenship laws.

**RACHEL STARKS** is Senior Researcher and Research Coordinator for the Native Nations Institute and has ten years of experience studying Native governance and social and economic development. She manages research projects and research teams, and presents NNI work in academic and public meetings. She has most recently published *Native Nations and U.S. Borders: Responding to Challenges to Indigenous Culture, Citizenship, and Security*. She has a BA in Sociology (2000) from Wheaton College, IL and an MA in Sociology (2002) from the University of Arizona, where she wrote her thesis on institutional form and economic development in the New Mexico Pueblos.

**TAMARA YOUNG** is from Pictou Landing First Nation, NS and currently lives in Waycobah, NS. Tamara has completed the requirements for a BA in Mi'kmaq Studies (3 year) and is currently completing the requirements for the 4 year program in Mi'kmaq Studies and Sociology. She works as a student intern on a collaborative project between Membertou, the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies, and the Native Nations Institute at University of Arizona that is exploring land management practices in First Nation communities across Canada. She is one of the first recipients of an Irving Shipbuilding Award for Aboriginal students at Cape Breton University.

## Cultural Tourism: Eskasoni Cultural Journeys

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Tracy Menge, Sandra MacDonald, Rodney Chaisson, and Keith Henry

[Eskasoni First Nation](#) is located in Cape Breton, approximately 40km from Sydney, NS. It is the largest Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia, with a population of approximately 3500. In recent years, the community has been making strides in community development. Through a strategic planning process, the economic development division of Eskasoni First Nation identified that the creation of an appropriate tourism offering would be crucial to their long-term vision. The community decided to develop Goat Island and create the Eskasoni Cultural Journeys tourism product. Ideally, the initiative would: produce a sustainable, market-ready tourism product, create employment for community members, establish lasting partnerships outside of the community, have direct and indirect impact on existing businesses in Eskasoni.

[Eskasoni Cultural Journeys](#) (ECJ) features a 2.2km walking trail on Goat Island, accessible by a causeway. Along the trail are a number of interpretive panels and structures, such as a wigwam and sweatlodge. Heritage interpreters guide tourists through the site and provide cultural performances and demonstrations. The highway leading to Eskasoni has recently been upgraded and there is parking available at the site for tour buses. ECJ is now working with the cruise ship industry to market and sell this authentic Mi'kmaw experience to visitors.

Key factors that have contributed to the success of Eskasoni Cultural Journeys are:

1. Consulting and involving community as the foundation for development
2. Developing partnerships that increase human resource capacity
3. Selecting partners that can help meet project deliverables
4. Selecting partners with shared principles and values
5. Choosing partners that can make a long-term commitment
6. Ensuring that each partner benefits from the arrangement

A primary concern for the establishment of ECJ was community buy-in and the support of Elders in particular. Community members provided direction as to how their community should be represented and what elements of cultural knowledge were appropriate for sharing. The development of cultural tourism draws on existing skill sets and expertise in the community. Refining these assets, however, required the assistance of partners who could help shape a market-ready product.

Heritage interpreters were trained through the [Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia](#) (TIANS). Rodney Chaisson of the nearby [Highland Village Museum](#) also mentored individuals and provided training. Because the Highland Village is a well-established tourist destination, the staff had already worked through many challenges and opportunities of the cultural tourism industry in Cape Breton and were able to share their lessons learned. Now, they are working together to create and market tourism packages. Partnerships with [Destination Cape Breton Association](#) and the Visitor Information Centres have helped promote awareness of Eskasoni Cultural Journeys. Marketing initiatives and familiarization tours have been developed in collaboration with other organizations, such as [Celtic Colours International Festival](#) and [Bike Fest](#).

In selecting partners, Eskasoni Cultural Journeys focused on deliverables and shared principles, but also willingness to make a long-term commitment to the project. Further, it is important that partnerships benefit all parties. For the Highland Village, the establishment of Eskasoni Cultural Journeys would bring more tourists to the area, but also enable new stories to be told about the ways in which Gaelic and Mi'kmaw peoples interacted through history.

In response, Keith Henry noted how important it is for all levels of government to understand that tourism is one of the largest economic drivers for Aboriginal communities. Moving a marketing message through various layers of organizations and interest groups can be challenging. Identifying your visitors and how best to connect with them is key. Visitors may be free independent travellers or they may be

tourists targeted through the travel trade (trade shows), local tour operators, or by working with travel agencies directly. A business plan that outlines the consumer base will have implications for product pricing. Key principles for success, in his opinion, are authenticity, quality assurance, and fair prices for Aboriginal tourism products which are too often undervalued.



L-R: Keith Henry, Ronald Trosper, Darlene Johnson, and Elaine Kwandibens

**TRACY MENGE** is the Director of Community Economic Development for Eskasoni First Nation. She holds a BBA from Cape Breton University and is currently pursuing an MBA in CED. She is co-chair of the Unamaki Economic Benefits Office and represents Unama'ki First Nations as a board member of Destination Cape Breton. She has served as a mentor for E-Spirit, volunteered with Junior Achievement, and has developed and delivered entrepreneurship summer camps and programs for Mi'kmaw youth. She is currently a mentor in the [Business Network for Aboriginal Youth](#).

**SANDRA MACDONALD** has 24 years' experience in the tourism industry on Cape Breton Island, having worked in such positions as General Manager of Destination Cape Breton Association, Manager of Visitor Services for Tourism Cape Breton, Project Manager for the Fortress Louisbourg Association, and Manager of the Tourism Distribution Centre for Cape Breton Island. She has served on numerous not for profit boards and is a past member of the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council. Sandra has delivered tourism training programs and TIANS certification programs to various hospitality groups. Most recently she has been tourism consultant on the Goat Island Project. Sandra is a graduate of Cape Breton University.

**RODNEY CHAISSON** is Director of the Highland Village Museum/An Clachan Gàidhealach in Iona, an outdoor museum and Gaelic folk life centre focused on the story of Nova Scotia Gaels. Rodney is a graduate of Cape Breton University (BACS), Dalhousie University's Certificate in Non-Profit Management, and most recently, the Museum Leadership Institute of the Getty Leadership Institute at Claremont Graduate University. He currently serves on the board of the Celtic Colours International Festival Society and is the chair of the Celtic Heart of North America Marketing Cooperative.

**KEITH HENRY** is a Métis person born in Thompson, Manitoba and raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He has a BEd from University of Saskatchewan (1995) and is the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia where he supports the continued implementation of the Aboriginal Tourism Cultural Blueprint Strategy. He serves on a number of boards and committees, including the Minister's Council on Tourism, the Native Education College, the Industry Council for Aboriginal Business, the Hummingbird Aboriginal Student Futures program, the Aboriginal Tourism Marketing Circle, and the Vancouver Board of Trade Aboriginal Opportunities Committee.

## Small Group Discussions

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In addition to presentations of local case studies, participants engaged in small group discussions on issues related to the establishment of partnerships in general and research partnerships in particular, working with consultants, building capacity through partnerships, communication in partnerships, and engagement of the broader community in partnerships. Discussions were guided by a facilitator and groups were invited to prepare lists of their recommendations for best practices (listed below).

### Establishing Partnerships

- Look at the strengths and needs of the community
- Identify and prioritize opportunities/gaps
- Research partners and let them know you're interested
- Choose partners to help fill needs
- Recognize shared risk on both sides
- Clarify roles and document relationships
- Know what each partner can bring to the partnership
- Respect and education required to recognize how each partner benefits

### Research Partnerships

- Ensure research will be useful to community
- Ideas should be community-driven
- Learn and use protocols of community
- Complete community ethics reviews (like Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch)
- Cite Elders as source of knowledge
- Employ sharing circles, especially with youth
- Share findings with community
- Know what has already been studied to avoid Elder fatigue

### Working with Consultants

- Provide budget guidelines in RFP
- Write expectations into contract - details!
- Update band policies around hiring consultants
- Share broader community vision
- Share who else is working as a consultant for community
- Employ clear reporting structure
- Satisfy expectations and document future avenues
- Consistent, timely communication
- Document everything! (meeting notes, emails, etc)
- Provide itemized budgets to community partner
- Establish directory of consultants
- Interview consultants before hiring
- Build in job shadowing
- Use appropriate timeline for RFP, review, and interview process
- Establish community procurement policy
- Employ community-established work plan and schedule

## Capacity Building

- Ensure real opportunity following training
- Job shadowing and mentoring is needed
- Write job shadowing into contracts with consultants
- Recognize transferable skills and build on them
- Engage Elders in learning
- Ask Elders what role they can play
- Advisory committees to guide
- Bring university to community
- Create place and space for conversations to begin/occur

## Communication

- Know history of community
- Do the research before proposing a partnership
- Take time to build trust and respect
- Consistent reporting
- Be flexible in delivery to community
- Timely and transparent reporting
- Have consequences if reporting requirements not met
- Be open to all modes of communication, especially social media
- Establish liaison office
- Establish communication plan

## Engagement

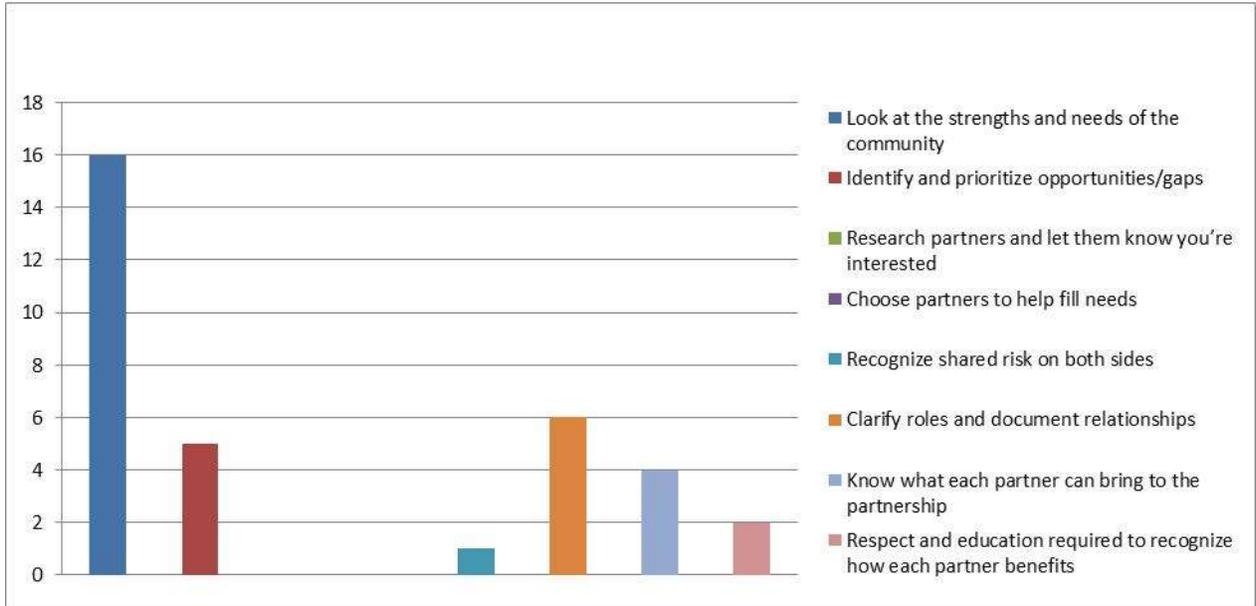
- Put on community dinner
- Lead by example
- Encourage entrepreneurial spirit

At the end of the two days, participants were invited to engage in a dotmocracy process to identify those recommendations that they felt were most important. Twenty-two individuals were each given ten dots, which could be used to identify either ten separate recommendations or fewer recommendations with higher weighting. The results of this process are represented in the following bar graphs, which identify the number of dots assigned to each recommendation.<sup>1</sup>

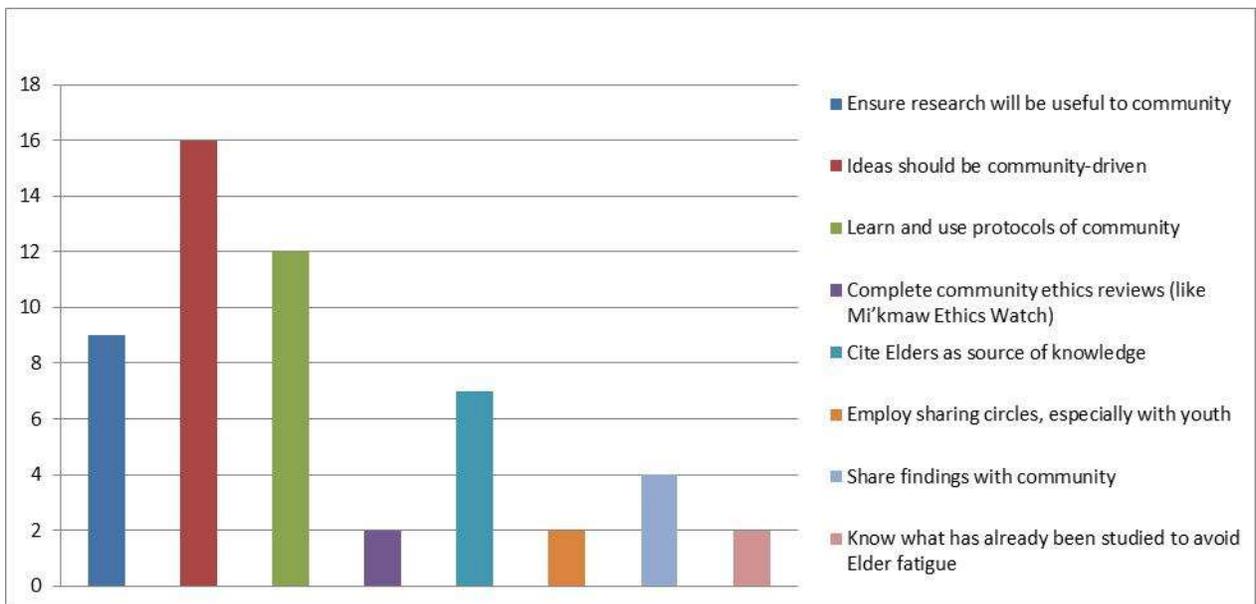
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<sup>1</sup> A total of 212 stickers were placed on the preceding recommendations. The remaining eight were placed on a “Parking Lot” question that queried “How do you engage the community to identify goals and assets?” While this question was not meant to be part of the dotmocracy process, it is clear that participants felt the issue of engaging community for this purpose was an important one.

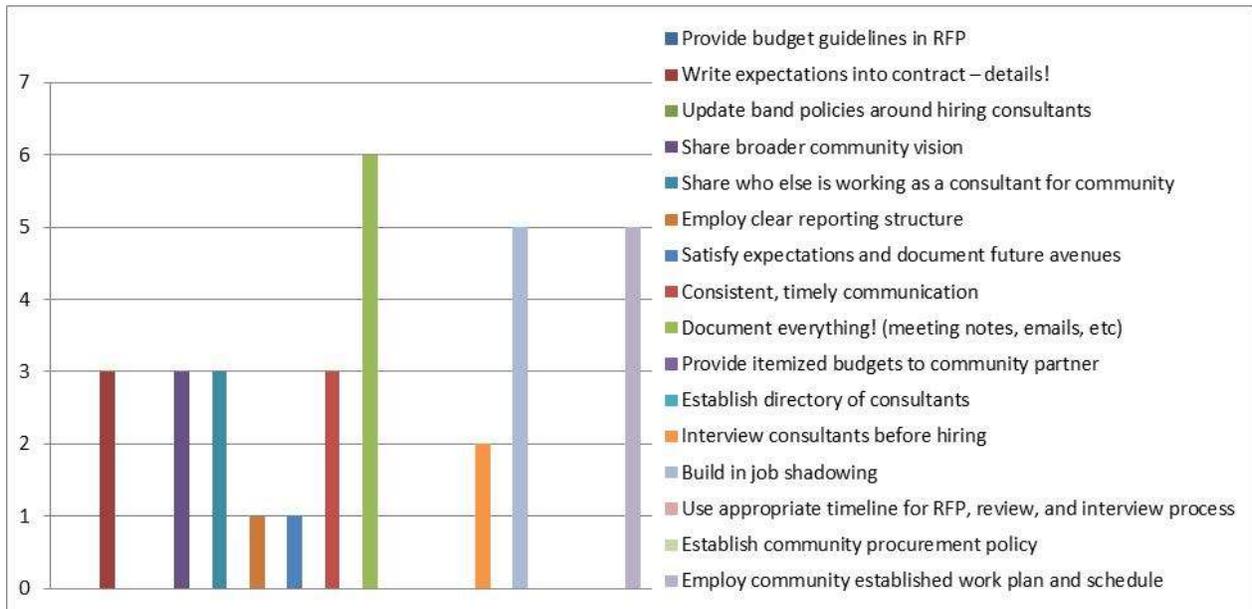
## Establishing Partnerships



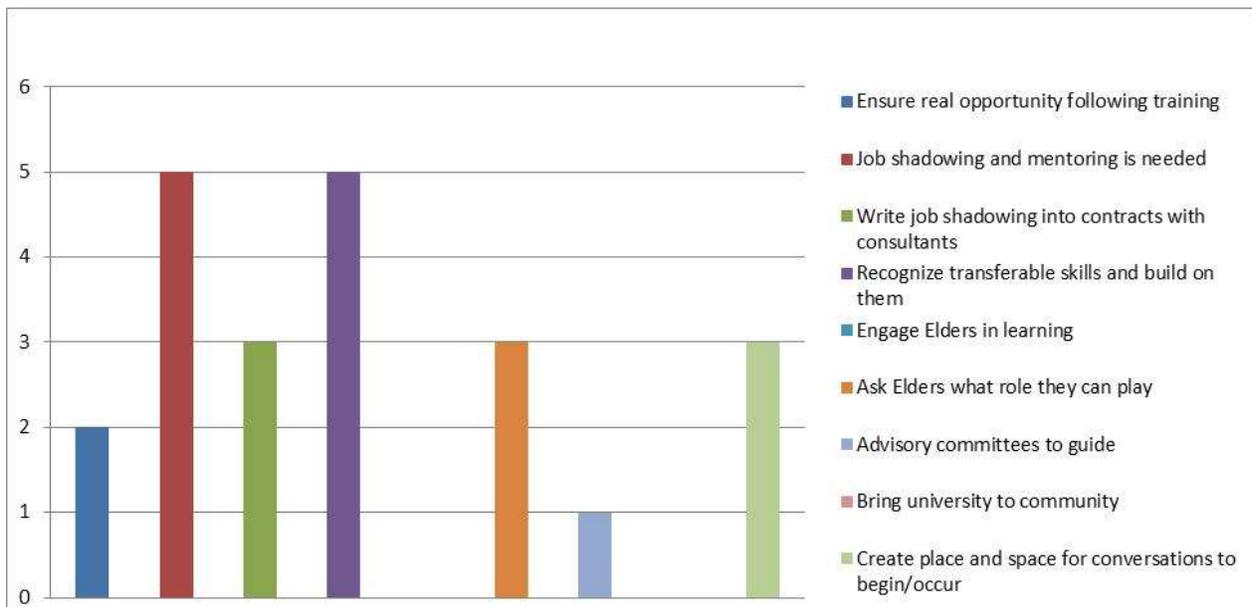
## Research Partnerships



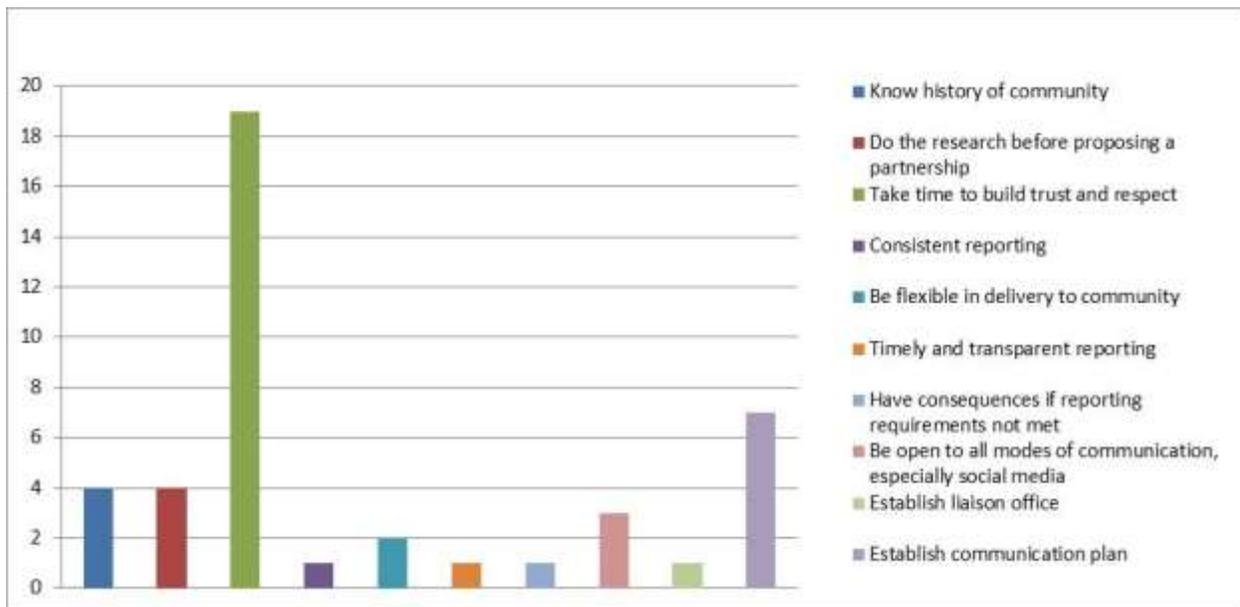
## Working with Consultants



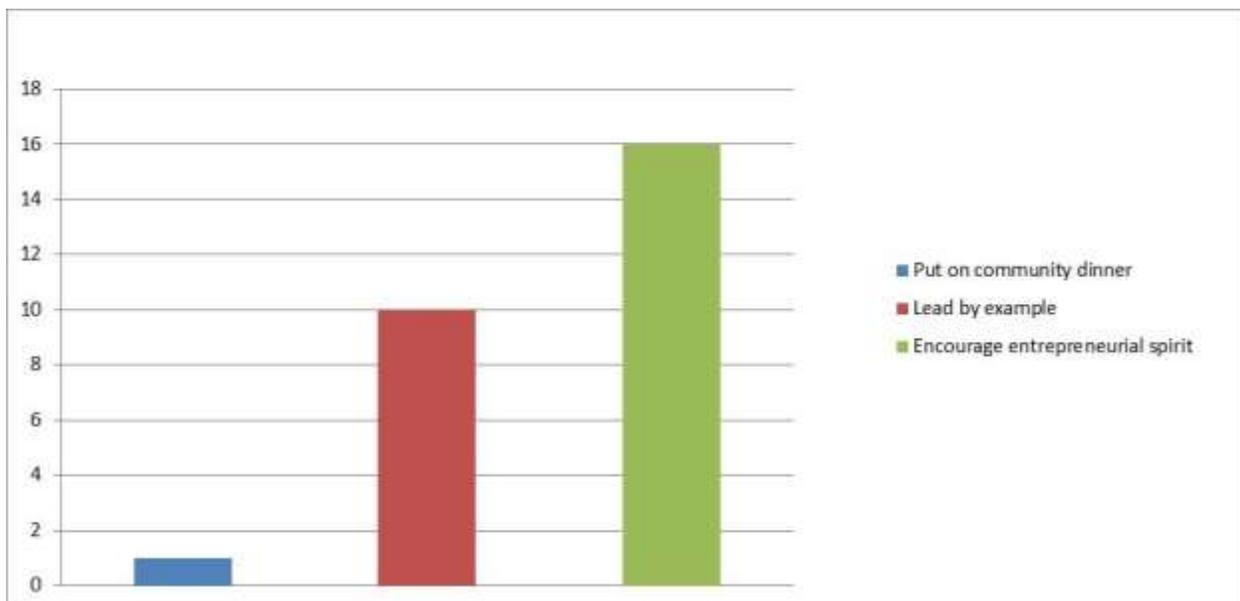
## Capacity Building



## Communication



## Engagement



## Summary of Small Group Discussions

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Keith G. Brown

I want to thank you for joining us at Cape Breton University for what has been two days of thought-provoking dialogue in the area of Aboriginal economic development. The focus on best practices in establishing partnerships is critical as major resource development projects are undertaken by and with Aboriginal peoples from coast to coast to coast. Many Aboriginal communities, particularly those in remote areas, are located amidst the country's richest resources. If the riches that are in the ground are to be developed and the community *wants* them to be developed, the sharing of the resources will be one means of alleviating some of the poverty in isolated Canada. From our discussions have emerged clear directions for the establishment of successful partnerships for economic development and I'd like to highlight a few.

From the breakout groups, we learned of the necessity for community-based needs assessments where the community itself determines what its needs are and how these should be prioritized. Such assessments will vary from community to community and be based in the particular histories of each community. A cookie cutter approach will not work. Communities and partners, then, must do their homework, engaging in deep and broad research. Before entering into partnerships, there has to be a wide understanding and acceptance of what the needs and expectations are from each partner.

True partnerships take time to develop, as trust and respect have to be earned. This process cannot be rushed. The community will establish relationships when it is acceptable to move forward with them. If a prospective partner has an aggressive and short timeline, it will probably not lead to a successful partnership. Further, those establishing successful partnerships realize that risk must be shared. An outside partner should not expect the community to accept all of the risks while the outside partner accepts little or none.

Regarding community involvement, Elders should be involved to the degree that they choose. That is not the same in all communities, nor is it the same for all Elders. Some communities have very active Elders circles or Elders committees that are involved in development projects, and some less. They should be invited to identify the level of involvement they want. Further, community protocols need to be understood and adhered to, not only in relation to working with Elders, but more broadly in communities.

Our discussion has indicated that consultants are widely used by communities, but the results are somewhat spotty. Increasingly, there is a need for communities to develop consultant protocols, an RFP process, and budget guidelines. Specificity of expectation is very important and it is advisable to prioritize deliverables for consultants. This will ensure that partnerships with consultants meet the needs of the community, for good contracts make good partners.

There are many important issues to be considered in establishing partnerships, but if we commit to following the recommendations that have emerged here, the future will be one of collaboration to the benefit of Aboriginal peoples.

**KEITH G. BROWN** is a professor within the Shannon School of Business, as well as Vice President, International and Aboriginal Affairs and the Purdy Crawford Chair in Aboriginal Business Studies at Cape Breton University. He earned his BBA from St. Francis Xavier University, his BEd from Saint Mary's University, his MBA from City University, and his PhD from Bradford University. His professional and academic experience spans local, regional, and national First Nations issues and he is recognized as an international educator, author, and speaker on the subject of cultural tourism marketing.

## Participants

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Christopher Alcantara, Wilfrid Laurier University  
Gillian Austin, Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Applied Research Program  
Louis Joe Bernard, Union of Nova Scotia Indians  
Keith G. Brown, Cape Breton University  
Brian Calliou, The Banff Centre  
Gary Campbell, Province of Nova Scotia  
Rodney Chaisson, Highland Village Museum  
Gary Corsano, Sampson McDougall  
Margaret Donahue, Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Applied Research Program  
Mary Beth Doucette, Membertou  
Lois Duke, Athabasca University (student)  
Sean Erasmus, Athabasca University/Aurora College (student)  
Jessica Farrell, Cape Breton University (student)  
Owen Fitzgerald, Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office  
Margaret Froh, Turquoise Buffalo Consulting  
Keith Henry, Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia  
Brendon Jacque, College of the North Atlantic (student)  
Darlene Johnson, Cape Breton University (student)  
Alanna Jones, Cape Breton University (student)  
George Karaphillis, Cape Breton University  
Cheryl Knockwood, Membertou  
Elaine Kwandibens, Vancouver Island University (student)  
John K. Lynn, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation  
Sandra MacDonald, Eskasoni Cultural Journeys  
Allan MacKenzie, Cape Breton University  
Shauna MacKinnon, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
Rachel Marsch, University of Manitoba (student)  
Jodi McDavid, Cape Breton University  
Bill McIntyre, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada  
Michael McIntyre, Membertou  
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Heather Mulligan, Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Applied Research Program  
Alex Paul, Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office  
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Danielle Pottle, Memorial University of Newfoundland (student)  
Laura Prosper, Eskasoni First Nation  
Joanne Pyke, Cape Breton University  
Lori Ann Roness, Mount Allison University  
Diane Roussin, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre  
Rachel Starks, Native Nations Institute  
Ronald Troster, University of Arizona  
Janice Esther Tulk, Cape Breton University  
Jeff Ward, Membertou Heritage Park  
Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, The Banff Centre  
Tamara Young, Cape Breton University (student)

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