

# **2014 Annual Report**

## **Atikokan Economic Development Corporation**



**“TURNING THE TIDE”**  
**RESOURCE-BASED INDUSTRY SPURS COMMUNITY’S RE-BIRTH**





# Atikokan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
A Community Futures Development Corporation

**April 22, 2015**

Atikokan continues to grow as it moves out from the shadow of recession and the decline of the resource industry, with a number of exciting projects leading to good, long-term employment.

Atikokan's industrial projects have moved towards their final stages, and with them beginning operations the community is renewed. Ontario Power Generation's Atikokan station successfully completed transformation to biomass fuel, with stakeholders, delegates and provincial Ministers attending the grand opening in September, including the AEDC. The project continues to move forward as anticipated and the technology holds great promise as a marketable item to foreign investors; local operators at the plant continue to adapt to the new technology with great skill and pride in their work.

Resolute Forest Products' completion of the Sapawe mill site nears, and a number of high-level positions in management and operations have already been secured, most of them locally. Company President and CEO Richard Garneau, as well as a number of high-ranking executives from the company have engaged both the community and our offices on numerous occasions this past year as we continue to work to build the foundation of a long-term partnership. A number of people have returned to the community to fill workplace positions, which is definitely a testament Atikokan's ability to remain a safe, desirable location to live and grow.

Rentech continues to provide employment to the community; it, like many other first-time ventures in this resource, is still a 'work in progress' – that said, the mill produces and is meeting its contractual obligations to supply 50% of OPG's biomass contract, as they explore further contracts overseas.

Much has been made of Osisko this past year, and it's hoped its new joint venture as Canadian Malartic Partnership will - in combination with recovering markets and a completed environmental assessment - move the project back into development. We will continue to advocate for both the Cassandra project and Bending Lake Iron Ore as viable and responsible community building blocks.

We continue to work with the Town Council and staff try to prepare for an increased demand for homes, education, senior services, social services and the growth of business, both commercial and industrial, and our efforts to assist the Town whenever possible in these matters remains a top priority. The same can be said of the AEDC's catchment areas; in particular, much has been done to further the relationship with Seine River First Nation. We will spend 2015 continuing our relationships with Upsala and Lac La Croix First Nation, as we expand our ability to provide services easily and effectively.

I am pleased to extend my most sincere appreciation to all of the volunteers and staff who have committed countless hours to ensuring 2014 was a successful year for the AEDC.

**Dave Elder, AEDC Chair**





# Town of Atikokan

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March 9, 2015

## Thank you from the Mayor and Council

On behalf of Atikokan Town Council and staff, I would like to thank the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Board and staff for their ongoing support in community and economic development initiatives that benefit the citizens of Atikokan and area.

As we all know economic development is one of our main issues in Atikokan as we need more jobs so we can have more people to help pay for the services local residents want and deserve. The Atikokan Economic Development Office has certainly helped in this area.

During the past year we saw the conversion of the OPG plant to wood biomass completed, the completion of Rentech at the old Fibratech facility to make wood pellets, and the construction by Resolute of the former site at Sapawe to make a lumber mill. In addition the Osisko Hammond Reef Gold project continues to move forward with the EA process. We thank the AEDC office for their efforts in helping all these initiatives.

Other services such as having access to capital through the Community Investment Fund, and administering the Atikokan Employment Centre are valuable services the AEDC provides for Atikokan and area residents.

Also AEDC efforts such as those provided to the local Chamber of Commerce, the Energy Committee, and tourism related activities all help to make for a better Atikokan. Special thanks for meeting with Atikokan Town Council and staff this past year to develop strategic plans that enable both groups to move forward in the same direction. We are especially pleased with the efforts of the AEDC in attempting to get more seniors' apartments in Atikokan as well as assisting with other services for seniors.

Congratulations on another successful year. Your efforts in community and economic development are needed and much appreciated.

Yours truly

Dennis Brown  
Mayor



# Community & Committee Reports

## INVOLVEMENT AND UPDATES

### ATIKOKAN THERMAL GENERATING STATION

After many years of uncertainty and hard core lobbying, 2014 was a year to take a breath with respect to the Atikokan Thermal Generating Station. The construction phase of conversion of the facility came to an end and the plant was commissioned. After reaching full production for a specified period of time, the AGS was able to lay claim to the title “North America’s largest 100% biomass fueled generating station.” About eighty jobs have been

preserved at the plant and several jobs have been created transporting pellets from Thunder Bay and Atikokan to the plant. As we go forward, Atikokan must focus on ensuring the future of this economic engine extends beyond the current ten-year fuel contract cycle.



In 2014 the CanBio Annual Conference and Bioeconomy Week was hosted in Thunder Bay September 8-12. An all-day excursion to Atikokan to tour the OPG biomass conversion project was a highlight of the tour, followed by lunch and a presentation on the community and its resource-based focus by Mayor

Brown at the AEDC offices September 9. More than 40 participants from Canada, the US and Japan attended the event; thanks to Brent Boyko for the opportunity for the AEDC to be involved in such a high-profile and unique event.

### SENIORS' HOUSING

The Need and Demand Study demonstrated a definite need for market rent seniors apartments in Atikokan. A Business plan was subsequently prepared by the consultants outlining the conditions upon which this development would be successful. Both reports were submitted to CMHC as evidence for SEED funding. We are waiting on their response to the reports, a check to cover the cost, and approved to proceed to phase two.



**RENTECH'S FIRST WOOD HAUL TO ITS ATIKOKAN PLANT, OCTOBER 2014 (COURTESY RENTECH, INC.)**

There is reason for optimism in the forest sector in the area. Rentech's pellet mill is in production and they are making regular deliveries to the Atikokan Generating station. The company will continue to optimize and fine tune the operation to improve productivity and consistency. Rentech has become a key employer in Atikokan.

Resolute is continuing construction on their new sawmill and

planer on the former Atikokan Forest Products site. Resolute personnel advise that most major equipment has been contracted and the wood supply is in place - hiring and training is set to commence, with materials hauling and yard services already contracted. Key benchmarks will be: kiln commissioning March 2015, scale operational March 2015, planer start-up March 2015, and sawmill start-up May 2015. Direct employment at the sawmill and planer is projected at ninety. Upon completion of the planer, dry lumber from Resolute's Ignace sawmill will be transported to their Atikokan mill for planing and shipping. The Ignace mill began production on December 1, 2014. In the meantime, Resolute continues to develop its relationship with the community, hosting open forums and providing information to the public through various means; in October the AEDC worked with a film crew from Quebec to put together a promotional piece.



**RESOLUTE'S PRODUCTION ASSEMBLY BEING INSTALLED AT ITS SAPAWE PLANT (COURTESY ATIKOKAN PROGRESS)**



**LAYING CONCRETE AT THE FUTURE SITE OF RESOLUTE'S SAPAWE MILL (COURTESY M. STEVENS, RESOLUTE FOREST PRODUCTS)**

The development of these two projects will have significant impact on the sector beyond the mill gates. Several idled logging contractors have returned to work on their overlapping licenses or as subcontractors in the forest. Log, lumber, and residual hauling will generate many opportunities as materials move from the forest to the mills and between Thunder Bay, Atikokan and Ignace and from the mill to Atikokan for loading onto rail.

## THE PATH OF THE PADDLE (by Carrie Nolan, General Manager)

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The Path of the Paddle is a 1,000km water trail from Manitoba to Thunder Bay for canoes and kayaks. This trail is a regional tourism initiative supported by the Path of the Paddle Association in partnership with Trans Canada Trail (Ontario and National), driven by volunteers part of Regional Trail Committees (RTC) from the communities of Atikokan, Dryden, Kenora and Thunder Bay. In Atikokan, the RTC is chaired by Michelle Savoie and is comprised of over 17 community members, meeting regularly to plan and execute Atikokan's 100km portion of the trail from Turtle River Provincial Park to Quetico Provincial Park.



The Path of the Paddle Association, an incorporated non-profit, received an Ontario Trillium Foundation two-year grant, enabling the hiring of General Manager Carrie Nolan. This summer she, as well as two student ambassadors, will be paddling the entire trail. To follow these adventurers please see [www.pathofthepaddleassociation.com](http://www.pathofthepaddleassociation.com).

The past few months and looking ahead have been incredibly productive for the Atikokan trails as Lise Sorenson was hired as a contract Trails Officer. She spent time on the trail in the fall, marking out portages, checking out campsites and creating a work plan for this coming year. Work permit applications have gone into the MNR and public consultation as well as an informational meeting will be held in the spring of 2015. With a combination of volunteer efforts and the hiring of a couple contract Trails Technicians, it is anticipated that the Atikokan portion of the Path of the Paddle will be completed in the fall of 2015.

It is anticipated that the entire Path of the Paddle will be operational by summer 2016. When operational, the trail will offer visitors opportunity for day trips, multi-day excursions or the chance to be 'thru paddlers'. Being operational means having multiple access points, over 200 campsites established along the entire trail and over 120 portages cut and maintained. Additionally, the Path of the Paddle Association is working towards offering promotional materials in the form of a guidebook to help visitors and residents experience our trail in a safe and happy manner.

The Path of the Paddle water trail is northwestern Ontario's Trans Canada Trail, connecting us to the rest of the Trans Canada Trail's 24,000km. When completed in 2017, in time for Canada's 150th birthday, this trail will connect nearly 1,000 communities, three oceans and be the world's longest trail. Multiple benefits of trail connection are expected to be experienced in connected communities, such as increased traffic for local outfitters, guides and camp operators, canoe and kayak manufacturers, restaurants, souvenir stores and hotels.

What a visionary endeavour of connecting all Canadians by trails - made for active living through heritage and traditional ways of travel.



## THE HEART OF THE CONTINENT PARTNERSHIP

The Heart of the Continent Partnership is a cross-border coalition of stakeholders working together on international projects that promote economic, cultural and natural health of the lands on the Ontario/Minnesota border.

2014 proved to be a very eventful year, as we continued our integral role in the design and implementation of the cross-border geo-tourism website collaboration with National Geographic. We continue to hold a prominent position on the project's design team, and are being relied upon heavily as a main Canadian connection on the project, in addition to spear-heading a media relations subcommittee. We met a number of times during 2014 to assess the project and relay our input to National Geographic, and took part in training and familiarization sessions as the final product began to enter its completion.



Our local efforts to publicize the project, done with little monetary resources and often via direct engagement with potential sites, earned the AEDC a coveted Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) Marketing Award in the category of "Regionalism and Cross-Border Collaboration," which we graciously accepted at the EDCO Presidents' Dinner February 12, 2015 in Hamilton from EDCO President Paul Finley (above).

In 2014 we hosted a quarterly meeting jointly between Atikokan and Quetico Park, only the second to be held here since the group's inception. Hosted at Quetico College School and scheduled during the town's largest event – the Atikokan Bass Classic – the meeting drew a wide-range of participants from both sides of the border to strategize future direction for the group and begin plotting a course for potential projects and goals.



It was an excellent opportunity to showcase Atikokan at its finest for a number of guests – many of whom had never been to Atikokan before!

In 2014 with the pending departure of the group's coordinator, the AEDC played an instrumental role in bringing the position back home to its roots, and led by Chris Stromberg, was successfully awarded the contract (in a very competitive field on both sides of the border) to provide those services moving forward. The AEDC will be working in an advisory and support role to ensure Chris has the opportunity to move the group forward as his vision sees fit. As of January 2015 HOCP services are being routed through the AEDC via Mr. Stromberg – welcome aboard Chris, and thanks to Bret Hesla for his years of dedicated service! Due to Chris' change in position within the organization, he has stepped down from the steering committee for the group; Gord Knowles now assumes the role for the AEDC and Town.

Further involvement will continue in the Heart of the Continent; a local steering committee directs local representatives to keep apprised of the work of the group. We will continue to be a part of quarterly meetings in Canada and the US, which allow for unprecedented networking and the sharing of ideas with not just regional partners, but those in northern Minnesota, who share not only a common vision, but common obstacles to success. We are beginning to lay the foundation to establish a 'business and economic development' arm of HOCP that will allow for the building of networks that could lead to increased trade, tourism and collaboration on viable projects. While in its infancy, there seems to be an appetite to move forward, and we will likely be a key piece in moving it along.

Thanks to local steering committee members for the efforts this past year: Dennis Brown, Marlene Davidson, Linda Braun, Chris Stromberg, Garry McKinnon and Gord Knowles.

## **OACFDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS (by Diana Jedig, OACFDC Executive Director)**

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Garry McKinnon was appointed to a two-year term as Vice President of the OACFDC, the membership organization that serves all 61 CFDCs in the province. The association recently launched a revamped website to enhance its capacity to support the staff and volunteers involved in delivery of the Community Futures Program. In a new strategic partnership with Contact North, the OACFDC facilitates the opportunity for CFDCs to help their clients' access extensive online learning resources.

Members are participating in a window decal initiative to increase public awareness of CFDCs, to generate more clients for their services, and to reinforce the value of and maintain the political support for the Community Futures Program. Watch for the new window decals and identify your business as a "Proud Supporter of Local Economic Development".

## **OACFDC SOFTWARE PROCUREMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (by Diana Jedig)**

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The AEDC continued to play a pivotal role in leadership with the OACFDC's Software Procurement & Development Committee. This dedicated team of colleagues oversees relationships with a number of technology suppliers and the development and testing of a new management software program called FaaSBank. The software will increase the administrative efficiency of CFDCs, enabling them to dedicate more time to serving the needs of their clients and community partners. Committee members include Garry McKinnon (chair), Linda Sencyszyn, Wes Bailey, Susan Stacey, Betty Langford, and Michelle Cathers.

## **EDCO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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We continue to play an active role in working with the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) as they strategize relevant training and professional development sessions for the next two years. We have been active in pushing for the unique needs of both northern and rural EDCO members, and been working on developing region specific programs that address the needs of rural communities, such as Aboriginal engagement and tourism development. We played an integral role in establishing an EDCO-wide members survey that catalogued needs and also highlighted the need to break down results by a region and experience-based quantity, in order to tailor our results to specific regions. Finally we were a central player in establishing EDCO's first scholarship fund, providing the groundwork to establish the criteria and framework for the program, with particular emphasis on new, young and Northern Ontario-based applicants – it is expected to roll out by April 2015. The committee is comprised of John Regan (Chair), Gord Knowles, Myles Buck, Kelly Stahl, Mislal Balogun, Alison Newton, Mark Steffler, Jonathon Condratto, Deb Mountenay, Pranab Shah, Jim Miller and Eric McSweeney, with ongoing support from EDCO's Executive Director & Past Presidents.

## **OACFDC YOUTH COMMITTEE**

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The OACFDC Youth Committee's future remains somewhat questionable. A number of variables exist for this, including the low number of youth involved in Community Futures, the rather 'revolving door' nature of their positions within CFs as interns and contracted positions, and the difficulty in establishing value to the CFs to allow time for youth to participate in these activities. In 2014 Gord Knowles of the AEDC agreed to chair the committee due to a vacancy



in the position. The OACFDC board was engaged regarding continuing youth subsidies to attend the annual conference, and with new support from both the Northwest and Northeast CF Networks, a number of subsidies were made available for the 2014 annual conference in Huntsville, removing the board's financial commitment moving forward. Unfortunately, much of the available subsidy went unutilized, but efforts are being made to improve for 2015. In 2015 the representative from the organization, Mary Alderson left the OACFDC and a successor is not yet in place, leaving a large hole in the committee and its ability to be relevant. In 2015 the committee plans to evaluate its relevance and survey OACFDC members to assess needs and projects which might fit a new direction.

#### **ATIKOKAN SNO HO CLUB (by Katie Hannon, NOHFC Intern)**

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This season the Atikokan Sno Ho Snowmobile Club hired an intern through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. As the intern, I am to promote the Club and our Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' (OFSC) District Region 17 - known as North Western Ontario Snowmobile Trails Association (NWOSTA) - in tourism and promotional initiatives. I work closely with both the president of the club and with the NWOSTA coordinator as well as each individual club in our region. This season our region was able to receive greater support from OFSC in marketing material, as well as create stronger ties in Minnesota.

With a work start date in June for a winter recreational sport, you wouldn't think that there is much work to do. Well I can say that even I thought so, but I was wrong. There are many pre-season things to think of including trail work and applying for grant applications to help offset these costs. This season we were able to apply for both the Tourism Development Fund and the National Trails Coalition Funding. The District and the Atikokan Club applied for both of these grants and



were granted funding in the majority of our applications. Things we applied for included brush work on sections of trails, a culvert replacement that met the requirements of the MNR and new loop signs for new designated loop routes we created in the summer of 2014.

As a club we have participated in different tourism related conferences. Our club president attended the Snowmobile Tourism Summit in Sault Ste. Marie in March and the OFSC AGM in Ottawa in the fall. Representatives from NWOSTA, including myself, attended the Northern Tourism Summit in Thunder Bay from November 17-19 and the Sno Barons Snowmobile Club Hay Days Grass Drags event in North Branch, Minnesota from September 4-6. At each of these events we promoted our local club as well as riding in northwestern Ontario in District 17.

In the beginning of 2014 we saw one of the harshest winters with most of February in minus 40 temperatures and snow lasting until May. This was great for the sport of snowmobiling and the "Try Our Trails" Promotion Program for the following season. The beginning of the season was a slower start with a small amount of snow, but we saw an increase of preseason permits in the hopes of another snow packed winter. This season we saw an increase of 30 percent in permit sales, bringing the club back to over 200 members. This does not include three- or seven-day permits, special event permits or the "Try Our Trails" promotion (which are free for Family Day weekend). In the district we saw an increase of permit sales of

almost 400 classic and seasonal permits sold, a number that does not include any special events, three- or seven-day permits or the Try our Trails promotion.

This season we had support from Tourism Thunder Bay and received funding from RTO13. With this funding we were able to attend Hay Days Grass Drags in Minnesota in September and get proper digital content. A photo shoot was completed at the end of the 2014-15 season, and this allows for us to have better images that depicts our snowmobiling region and meets the guidelines of OFSC.



PHOTO COURTESY S. REID (THUNDER BAY TOURISM)

The Atikokan Sno-Ho makes sure that not only touring riders have a great experience on our trails but that our local club members have the best possible season. We host many events throughout the season including Snowarama (which raised just under \$25,000 for Easter Seals), a Family Day Ride and our annual Poker Derby & Rally Weekend (with over 70 riders joining us to Quetico North for lunch). This year we also recreated the International Crane Lake Rally which celebrated its 50th anniversary of the original ride in 1965. This ride had 10 Americans that traveled from Crane Lake to Atikokan on Friday; we then had supper at the Legion Hall where stories from some of the Original Riders and Trail Breakers were told. We then finished off the night with the annual Tug-Of-War competition - the Canadians were successful in bringing back the trophy to our side. Saturday the group traveled up to White Otter Castle where they had a campfire lunch, dinner and

a dance before departing Sunday back to Crane Lake.

This season we put new tracks on our Tucker groomer. We also applied for a new groomer through the OFSC and were successful - we received our new Prinoth Husky in February 2015. Both of these upgrades allow for us to provide the best equipment for trail maintenance as well as providing a safe environment for our groomer operators as they travel long, remote distances on our trails. This season our groomers put in a total of 371.9 hours on the trails.

We also participate in advertising and promotion and received positive feedback. This season we completed interviews with CBC Radio (about Royalty Contest & opening up to males contestants), the Border 93.1 (International Crane Lake Rally 50th Anniversary) and a 'What A Ride' Podcast promoting the region and the wonderful experiences you have in northwestern Ontario including the unique experience of cross border riding and partnerships in Minnesota.

Introduced this season was a new loop in our club: the White Otter Loop. This helps to draw in visitors and provide them with an experience including a full day of riding and seeing the historic White Otter Castle (which is only accessible by snowmobile or boat).

The Atikokan Sno-Ho Club has accomplished a lot in the last year. With the hopefulness of continuing to grow the club would like to see an increase in volunteerism, outside markets (Minnesota & Manitoba) and permit sales.

## PROFESSIONAL & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

AEDC's staff continued to develop their skills through additional professional development, in an effort to increase our capacity to assist clients and better our understanding of economic development as it relates to community building. In 2014 staff attended annual conferences for the Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC), Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations (OACFDC), Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO), the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), and the first annual Northern Ontario Tourism Summit in Thunder Bay. All staff attended regional FERN Software training in anticipation of the launch of new database software, as well as webinar modules of it and the current TEA software. Staff has also completed additional CaMS software training modules as they familiarize themselves with the provincial database software required by both Employment Services and the Self-Employment program. Staff from both the AEDC and the Employment Centre completed First Aid re-certification in 2014.

In 2014, Senior Community Development Advisor Paula Sanders completed successful recertification of her Ec.D designation through the University of Waterloo. Community Development Advisor Gord Knowles also completed his Ec.D certification, as well as CEcD certification through the International Economic Developers Council (IEDC) and Certified Business Counsellor accreditation through the Asia-Pacific Economic Corporation (APEC-CBC). In addition, he completed basic certification through the Community Futures Leadership Institute (CFLI) as both a Business Analyst and Community Economic Development Coordinator, the first in Ontario to hold concurrent certifications. Staff will continue to attend seminars and courses designed to maintain their designations and build their skillsets.

Staff of the Atikokan Employment Centre completed training courses on the Canada/Ontario Jobs Grant: Data Analysis, as well as Customer Service Excellence training and safeTALK training, which is geared towards suicide-awareness and prevention. Staff-wide certification with the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada is planned for 2015.

## OUR SERVICE AREA

The AEDC offers its services to the residents of Upsala, Lac La Croix, Lac Des Mille Lacs and Seine River. We continue to strengthen our relationship with these outlying areas, as we attend meetings together and finance projects within their communities.



Map courtesy of [www.oacfdc.com](http://www.oacfdc.com)

**DID YOU KNOW?** The AEDC's service area is over 2,400 square kilometers!



# LOCAL LOAN DISBURSEMENT

## SELF-EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS, LOANS & THE COMMUNITY

**Our mandate:** Working in partnership with the people of Atikokan and the surrounding areas, to generate and maintain permanent employment through the creation and support of self-employment initiatives and economic-based community projects.

The AEDC works with local residents to create and maintain jobs by:

- ❖ By providing access to a loan program;
- ❖ Providing technical and advisory support, such as help with their business plan, cash flow projections, staffing issues, training, etc.;
- ❖ Works with the Town of Atikokan and community groups, planning to the future;
- ❖ Participating in the Ontario Self Employment Benefit Program.

The Self-Employment Benefit Program (funded by The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities) is administered by our office and offered to residents within our service area. It is a very successful program, as it provides financial support and monitoring to new entrepreneurs engaging in business start-up.

### SELF-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

SECTOR	YEAR ENDED DEC. 31/14	SINCE INCEPTION
Hospitality	--	7
Service	4	67
Tourism	--	6
Aquaculture	--	2
Manufacturing	--	11
Transportation	--	6
Retail	1	27
Forestry	--	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>132</b>

In 2014 the community welcomed the following as successful completions of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit program through the AEDC: Handcrafted by Dave Hanson, Old Growth Revival, Lynx Photography, and Riverside Auto Detailing. Congratulations and well done!

## FROM A FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE...

During 2014, our office disbursed new investment funds of \$642,032 towards new loans. In total, 20 loans were refinanced, amalgamated and/or disbursed.

Since 1988, Atikokan Economic Development Corporation has dispersed almost \$13.5 million in Atikokan and the surrounding region.

With the AEDC, five additional Community Futures Development Corporations within northwestern Ontario form a corporate pool for dispensing larger loans: Superior North (Terrace Bay), Rainy River Futures (Fort Frances), Greenstone EDC (Geraldton), Thunder Bay

Ventures and Lake of the Woods Business Incentive Corporation (Kenora).

Atikokan currently has 11 of these regional investments totaling \$679,254 in that portfolio. This partnership allows the AEDC to consider investments in excess of \$250,000 by sharing the risk with five other partners (up to a maximum loan of \$500,000).

### BUSINESSES & JOBS CREATED/MAINTAINED VIA BUSINESS LOANS

YEAR	BUSINESSES STARTED	BUSINESSES MAINTAINED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS MAINTAINED
2009	3	12	4	42
2010	4	8	11	40
2011	3	18	11	31
2012	5	8	13	6
2013	6	12	18	32
2014	8	11	19	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>184</b>

### INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO BALANCE

YEAR	LOANS ISSUED	LOAN AMOUNT	REPAYMENTS	PORTFOLIO BALANCE
2010	18	\$411,335	\$421,120	\$3,677,491
2011	26	\$988,900	\$776,059	\$3,890,331
2012	13	\$371,500	\$481,214	\$3,260,853
2013	20	\$468,378	\$499,314	\$2,942,597
2014	20	\$642,032	\$540,749	\$3,093,750

All funding applications received by the AEDC are reviewed by our Community Investment Fund Committee. This committee is comprised of up to four members from the community at-large, and three members from the AEDC Board of Directors, all of whom have extensive business experience and a high regard for community building.

We gratefully acknowledge the following for the many volunteer hours throughout the year that they contribute: Dr. Ken Sawchuk (Chair), Elizabeth MacKay, Kim Cross, Jack Pierce, Samantha Boyko, Tami Stinson and Elvin Rydberg.

## INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

SECTOR	AMOUNT OF LOANS ISSUED IN 2014	CURRENT # OF LOANS IN PORTFOLIO	CURRENT AMOUNT OF LOANS
Hospitality	\$78,000	7	\$395,176
Agriculture	--	1	\$34,933
Mining	--	1	\$100,195
Service	\$403,700	20	\$838,101
Tourism	\$49,832	5	\$282,125
Manufacturing	--	3	\$229,036
Transportation	\$7,500	8	\$338,403
Retail	\$98,000	13	\$677,238
Forestry	\$5,000	1	\$136,043
Research/Development	--	1	\$62,500
Culture & Arts	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$642,032</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>\$3,093,750</b>



### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2014, more than 235 meetings and seminars were held at the AEDC offices by non-profit groups? And that doesn't include the Atikokan Bass Classic, who utilized the Board Room exclusively as their central headquarters from May 23 to September 5.



# Atikokan Chamber of Commerce

## ANNUAL REPORT

BY MIKE MCKINNON, PRESIDENT

The Chamber of Commerce is in need of renewal, and we are working now with the AEDC to develop a survey for members and non-member businesses – expect it to be conducted this summer, and followed up with a strategic planning session in the fall.

We are searching for new board members, and would welcome anyone interested in serving. We carry out two major activities each year - the business awards and operating the tourist bureau. If there are more activities or programs you'd like to see from your Chamber of Commerce, now is the time to speak up!

We joined the Canadian Chamber of Commerce last year, thanks to the input from Johnson's ESSO. Our membership in that organization allows our members to qualify for a gas discount with ESSO; contact our office for details on how to sign up.

We got a very strong response to our annual business awards program, with 22 nominees for the awards sponsored by the Chamber, Tramin, the AEDC, the Employment Centre, and Ontario Power Generation.



**Clockwise:** Brad Beyak presents the new Atikokan Employment Centre not-for-profit award to Ange Sponchia of Atikokan Youth Initiatives; AEDC board chair Dave Elder presents the business excellence award to Johnson's ESSO assistant manager Kaleen Burns and manager Garry Braun; Chamber director Doug Moynihan presents the Tramin Ambassador Award to Brad Sampson; Rob Ferguson presents the OPG health and safety award to Atikokan Hydro, represented here by CEO Wilf Thorburn, Scott King and André Durand.

(photos and cutline courtesy Atikokan Progress)

Congratulations to our award winners: Johnson's ESSO (Business Excellence Award), Atikokan Youth Initiatives (Not-for-profit Excellence Award), Dr. Sara Van Der Loo (Customer Service Award), Brad Sampson (Ambassador's Award), and Atikokan Hydro (Health & Safety Award).

This year we teamed up with Community Living Atikokan for a new award: the Widening Our World Award recognizes a business or organization for its exceptional contribution to creating or enhancing employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. Ontario Power Generation's Atikokan Generating Station was the first winner.

Again, our biggest activity as an organization was operating the tourist bureau, which we do in partnership with the Town. Chamber manager Jolene Wood secured grant support to hire three students working as ambassadors this past summer. Visitation was down slightly this year; 2,800 travelers signed in. About three-quarters of them were Canadians; we had 687 American visitors and 124 from Europe, a dozen from China and seven from Dubai.

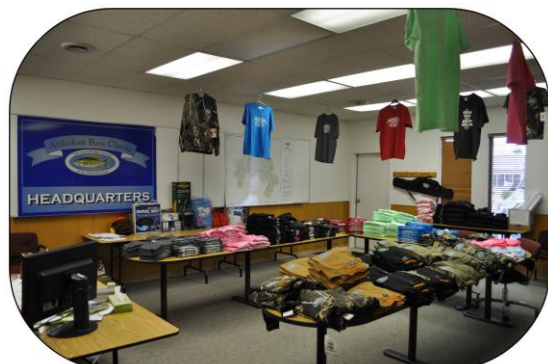
The bureau is Internet-connected, and we have also established a Wi-Fi hot spot for travelers, so are able to serve them 24/7 from Victoria Day to mid-September. This also allows us to use the bureau as a Chamber office.

None of these things would have been possible without our partnership with the Atikokan Economic Development Corp. It provides low-cost office space, helps us employ our manager, and continues to be a big supporter of the Chamber and our programs.

Finally, thank you to the 70 businesses, organizations and individuals - our members - who make the Chamber a reality. Being part of the Chamber is one of the best ways for a business to give back to the community it serves. We are stronger as businesses, and as a business community, when we work together and support one another.



**ONCE AGAIN A PACKED HOUSE WAS ON HAND UNDER THE TENT TO WATCH THE WEIGH-INS FOR THE 2015 ATIKOKAN BASS CLASSIC. THE ATIKOKAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION WAS ONCE AGAIN PROUD TO BE A SPONSOR AND SUPPORTER OF THE BASS CLASSIC'S EFFORTS – WELL DONE TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF THIS HUGELY POPULAR, AWARD-WINNING INTERNATIONAL EVENT!**



# Atikokan Employment Centre

## ANNUAL REPORT

BY BRAD BEYAK, EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR

Great news, the message is getting out! The Atikokan Employment Centre is not focused on unemployment and re-applying for employment insurance benefits.....but rather, employment. Yes, it is true, and I will say it again....EMPLOYMENT! Not only minimum wage entry level positions (we need these jobs too), but competitive employment that may come with full benefits, pensions and a liveable wage that can support a family in our community.

The Atikokan Employment Centre, being supported provincially through Employment Ontario and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) continues in its efforts to provide necessary employment related services and supports to area residents. In aligning with our mandate to provide employment related services to the underemployed and unemployed, we assist in ensuring that area residents are truly viewed as the most qualified and appropriate candidates for competitive employment locally and regionally.

In 2014/15, the Resource Centre received in excess of 2,600 visits from individuals who required assistance in one form or another that was directly related to their employment. Know that the majority of people accessing the resource centre required assistance with job search activities - this may include providing assistance in creating or revising resumes, composing cover letters, submission of resumes to potential employers via e-mail or fax, computer use, accessing the Internet to search for jobs online, networking, further investigating Employment Ontario programs as well as viewing local and regional job postings.

To increase awareness and accessibility regarding our services and opportunities associated with the Atikokan Employment Centre and Employment Ontario, we undertook a revision of our website. To see first-hand the outcome of our work and planning, I would recommend that everyone visit <http://employment.atikokaninfo.com>. Notably our website was redesigned to be more intuitive and interactive for the user, especially for those who elect to access it via smart phones or tablets. On average, the Atikokan Employment Centre is seeing 200 to 300 visits to the website per week facilitating those searching for employment and/or career oriented opportunities. I must also express a sincere thank you for Denine Richard, the Employment Support Worker at the Atikokan Employment Centre, for the taking the lead on the websites redesign.

In 2014/15 the Atikokan Employment Centre continued to host Service Canada's monthly visits to the community in our attempt to assist area residents with a variety of their needs. Those attending Service Canada's outreach visits typically have questions concerning their Employment Insurance claims, Canada Pension Plan benefits, Social Insurance Numbers/Cards or Old Age Security benefits. Demand for this service remains strong as the service is well attended on the second Tuesday (afternoons) and Wednesday (mornings) of each month.

The Atikokan Employment Centre also continued to offer career exploration, vocational/career counseling, career planning, training workshops and training placement opportunities. Assistance also continued to be provided to those wanting to access post-secondary education funded through Employment Ontario's Second Career program. Second Career is an initiative that targets unemployed individuals who have been laid off who are wanting to complete post-secondary college level training lasting up to two years in duration. When this program is accessed, the MTCU provides funding to individuals for their tuition, books, childcare and possibly living expenses while attending school; we have had a number of individuals access this program locally. Individuals who have accessed this program are



working on education aimed at providing social services, working in a trade or working in business administration. This continues to be a popular program and enquiries regarding eligibility remain significant.

The Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program funded through Employment Ontario and the MTCU, has also been accessed by unemployed individuals wanting to start their own business. After reviewing an unemployed entrepreneur's eligibility and suitability for the OSEB program, we refers individuals to an OSEB Coordinator (Atikokan Economic Development Corporation) for assistance with program applications, business planning, business start-up and necessary follow-up. In the current fiscal year, six referrals were provided to the Atikokan Employment Centre for the OSEB program.

The Atikokan Employment Centre continues to provide or facilitate participation in workshops and safety oriented awareness training that includes Job Search Strategies, Interviewing Skills, General Safety Awareness, Worker Health and Safety in Four Steps, Supervisor Health and Safety in Five Steps, WHMIS, Lock Out/Tag Out, Confined Space, Fall Protection Systems, Traffic Control training, Forklift Operation Training & Lift Truck Awareness Training, Chainsaw Safety Training, Transportation of Dangerous Goods, Asbestos Awareness, Safe Work Practices, Excellence in Customer Service, Smart Serve and First Aid Training. In the previous fiscal year, the Atikokan Employment Centre provided support /facilitated involvement in over 110 course participations, excluding those who completed Warehouse Hazardous Materials Information Systems Training. Moreover, the Atikokan Employment Centre continues to be a central point for health and safety related training of this type in the community - employers often elect to utilize the facility if they are providing training to their employees. It is hoped that employers will further expand their collaboration to provide appropriate training to their employees and reducing their costs.

The Atikokan Employment Centre was also directly involved in pursuing, coordinating and managing a large number of training placements for clients with the associated incentives being provided to a number of local employers. The design and intent of these "training on the job style" of work placements varied depending on the needs of the client and the expectations of employers. Using funding provided by Employment Ontario, the Atikokan Employment Centre was able to facilitate the initiation of 27 training work placements in the current fiscal year designed to assess and address client's employment barriers. Know that these placements often serve to increase the participant's personal marketability, increase and highlight their marketable skills, and improve their employment related network. Of the 27 training work placements, 17 were funded by the Youth Employment Fund (for at risk 15-to-29 year-olds) and 10 were funded through the Atikokan Employment Centre's yearly Employment Services allocation provided by Employment Ontario. As part of these programs, incentives were provided to employers that totalled in excess of \$109,000. Work placement participants were also able to access personal work related supports while attending their work placement. This included transportation costs, child care, work related clothing and necessary tools. Financial assistance for these personal supports was also provided which totalled more than \$12,000. Of those who participated in a training placement, 17 obtained employment or continued with their education. Of these 17, three individuals are now in an apprenticeship. Five individuals continue in a placement that was started in the 2014/15 fiscal year. And the other five individuals are either without work at the current time, or have no involvement with Atikokan Employment Centre at this time.

Roughly mid-way in 2014/15, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities introduced a new program, the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant (COJG), which is supported by both the federal and provincial governments. This program is designed provide employers with the financial support needed to fund training for their employees. Using the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant employers may be able to access 83% of the cost of training up to a maximum of \$10,000 per employee for training. The Atikokan Employment Centre was selected to be the

provider of this new program locally. At the end 2014/15 fiscal year, over \$6,000 had been allocated for employers to provide training to their employees.

Relationships with Atikokan and regional employers, social service providers and First Nation groups in our catchment area continued to be focus of our relationship building strategy. As the result, we have developed strong relationships with numerous local employers and are regularly contacted regarding their human resources needs. We have visited both Lac La Croix and Seine River First Nation to introduce services available through the Atikokan Employment Centre and have had significant contact in the community. We continue to coordinate and host monthly inter-agency meetings to facilitate communication and program information between area care providers. Although a committee has been set up to manage these events, Cindy Simard at the Atikokan Employment Centre has spearheaded the coordination of these meeting that allow attendees the forum to regularly share information. These monthly sessions are targeted towards the provision of enhanced social services locally - 18 to 20 (on average) health, wellness and social service providers are represented. Cindy Simard is sincerely thanked for her ongoing efforts in the coordination of these monthly information sharing/training sessions.

Late in the 2014/15 fiscal year, the Atikokan Employment Centre, collaborating with the Atikokan High School, put on an Employment Exposition in the community. There were over 300 visitors to this afternoon and early evening event which showcased over 20 local and regional employers. It is hoped that in the coming years that this event can transition into a truly regional event to further assist local employers and workers. Notably, the purchase of vertical marketing banners by the Atikokan Employment Centre (manufactured locally by Dutka Signs) assisted in making our table one which was most often visited at the expo. Thanks to all employers who attended the expo and Ed Ojala, from the Atikokan High School, who significantly assisted with facilitating this event and obtaining volunteers.

With respect to employee training, Denine Richard and Cindy Simard both attended a number of events in Thunder Bay that were targeted at increasing skills in the areas of customer service, communications, conflict management and assertiveness. Notably, over the next year Ms. Richard and Ms. Simard are scheduled to attend Career/Employment Coach Certification training provided through the University of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Transition Centre.

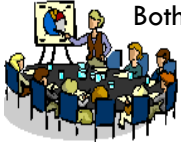
Lastly, we have recently updated our facility to further increase its accessibility and improve the atmosphere and appropriateness of our business environment. This was achieved through repainting most of the interior and updating some equipment as required (computers, chairs, office equipment, etc). Ideally, we would want the Employment Centre to be welcoming as possible to our clients.

Note that a lot has changed at the Atikokan Employment Centre but the staff remained consistent. Cindy Simard (Case Manager) and Denine Richard (Employment Support Worker) continue in their current roles and have assisted greatly in providing service to clientele over the last year. Thanks to Denine and Cindy for sticking with it, even though it has been a steep learning curve for all of us. Thank you also to the staff at Atikokan Economic Development Corporation for assisting and supporting us in attaining our goals. Know that this year has been a huge success for the Atikokan Employment Centre. We look forward to continuing to provide necessary services and further expanding our presence in the community and region.

***“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own, and you know what you know. And you are the guy who'll decide where to go....***

***...oh, the places you'll go!” – Dr. Suess***

# Workshops & Seminars



Both the AEDC and the Atikokan Employment Centre are committed to offering ongoing education for our clients and residents within the communities we serve. We encourage suggestions from you if there are topics of interest that you would like to know more about. Last year, our organizations hosted information and training seminars on the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ❖ Confined Space Training                | ❖ WHMIS Certification                  |
| ❖ Self-Employment Benefit Workshops      | ❖ Chainsaw Certification Course        |
| ❖ Resume Writing Workshop                | ❖ E-Mail Creation Seminar              |
| ❖ Cover Letter Writing Workshop          | ❖ Lockout/Tagout Courses               |
| ❖ Emergency First Aid Training           | ❖ Fall Prevention                      |
| ❖ Forklift Sit Down/Counter Balance      | ❖ Job Search Workshop                  |
| ❖ Man Lift                               | ❖ Traffic Control Training             |
| ❖ Interviews: Your Key to Employment     | ❖ Propane Handling                     |
| ❖ Telehandler ZoomBoom                   | ❖ Transportation of Dangerous Goods    |
| ❖ Excellence in Customer Service         | ❖ Employability Skills Discussion      |
| ❖ Workplace Violence & Harassment Course | ❖ Business Fundamental Workshop Series |
| ❖ Business Plan Financial Workshops      |  |



**STAFF FROM THE ATIKOKAN LEARNING CENTRE JOIN THE EMPLOYMENT CENTRE TO HOST AN EMPLOYMENT BARBECUE, SUMMER 2014.**



Regular users of the AEDC Facilities include:

- |                                  |                                 |                  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| - Atikokan Minor Hockey Daycare  | - Ringette                      | - Rainbow Centre |
| - Atikokan Figure Skating Paddle | - Sno-Ho Club                   | - Path of the    |
| - Chamber of Commerce Team       | - Relay for Life                | - Family Health  |
| - Canadian Hearing Society       | - Hunter Safety/Firearms Course |                  |



# Meet the AEDC Staff

## Executive Director

**Garry McKinnon**

B. Comm.

*General management responsibilities including personnel, financial planning and management, business planning, government relations, technical and advisory services to businesses and organizations.*

## Senior Community Development Advisor

**Paula Sanders**

B. Journ., Ec.D

*Business planning and advice, self-employment consulting, marketing and promotion, liaison with community groups and organizations.*

## Community Development Advisor

**Gord Knowles**

B.A., Ec.D, CEcD, APEC-CBC

*Business planning and advice, loan compliance, self-employment counseling, marketing and promotion, liaison with community groups and organizations.*

## Office Administrator

**Annette Bryk**

*Contract administration, financial recordkeeping, loans administration, benefits administration, official minutes of board and committee meetings.*

## Administrative Assistant

**Brigitte Tribe**

*Reception and customer relations, banking, correspondence, recordkeeping, community information.*



## Atikokan Employment Centre Counsellor

**Brad Beyak**

B.A., H.B.P.E., MSc., R.Kin

*Employment program development, employment counseling and community outreach.*

## Atikokan Employment Centre Case Manager

**Cindy Simard**

*Employment Centre client file management, resume and cover letter assistance, data management.*

## Atikokan Employment Centre Employment

**Denine Richard**

### Service Support Worker

*Employment Centre reception, maintain jobs board, resume and cover letter assistance, assist with job searches.*

## Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

**Jolene Wood**

*(the AEDC contributes towards the wages for the position)*

*Relief reception, monthly community calendar, assistance with AEDC events, business relations.*

# Looking Ahead

## OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR...

Over the next year, the AEDC will be focusing its efforts on diversifying its pool of entrepreneurs and locally accessible businesses, as the community returns to having a stable workforce. Complementary businesses have been identified via a gap analysis study, and we are working with interested parties in order to bring those businesses to fruition. Concurrently, we continue to work with existing businesses as they seek out wind-down and succession planning, as well as diversifying in order to meet new market demands & the digital economy.

We must address the digital and online marketplace, and work with business owners to ensure they are able (and willing) to embrace new technology and use it to capture both residents and incoming tourists. Downtown development - in particular ensuring upstart businesses have an opportunity to develop their businesses in high-quality, high-traffic locations - will be another part of our 2015 work.

Tourism will continue to be an important part of our focus; with proper nurturing it has an opportunity to be an economic stabilizer that can complement a community's industrial development. A number of initiatives both regional and international will continue to be cultivated as we look to maximize our return on the time we invest into their strategies.

Both the AEDC and the Employment Centre will continue to strengthen our relationship with the service-area communities outside of Atikokan; while Seine River First Nation has seen marked improvement the past 18 months, we have much to do to replicate that success in Upsala, Lac la Croix and Lac des Milles Lacs First Nations. While funding and staffing issues have played a role, we must continue to find innovative ways to engage and provide value to these clients we cannot readily access on a day-to-day basis.

The past year was about building relationships: both organizations have done excellent work engaging private industry to ensure their transition into the community has been a smooth one: from providing courses to fielding enquiries, assisting in projects, to providing space to conduct business, we have had an excellent year building relationships with outside entities. In 2015, we will continue to build on these relationships as industries move into the operational phases of their lives, finding opportunities to ensure they remain a vibrant part of the community and its social fabric long beyond their business plan targets.

## Reaching the AEDC

COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS? IDEAS?  
HERE'S HOW TO GET A HOLD OF US



(807) 597-2757  
1-888-334-AEDC



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