

**2017 Annual Report**  
**Atikokan Economic Development Corporation**



**“Atikokan is Naturally Wild”**  
photo courtesy Michelle Cain



# Atikokan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
A Community Futures Development Corporation

**April 25, 2018**

Atikokan continues to see slow and steady change over this past year.

We continue to work with our colleagues at the municipality to prepare for what we believe is an increased demand for homes, education, senior services, and social services, and to unlock the stalling of the growth of local small businesses to a changing regional out-shopping landscape complicated by the rise of online shopping. The same can be said of the AEDC's catchment areas; in particular, much has been done to further the relationship with the First Nations and in Upsala with the Employment Centre and a core of ambitious community champions in those locations.

On the industrial front, Resolute Forest Products continues to employ over 100 at its Sapawe mill, keeping skilled, well-paying jobs in the community. Similar results are seen at BioPower Sustainable Energy Corporation (formerly Rentech Fuels), as they continue to provide steady employment to the community; however we continue to cautiously watch and work with them as their operations and their role in the industry are evolving, especially in the face of ever-changing external forces such as NAFTA and the global markets for their products. Both firms continue to engage both us and the community as we strive to build long-term partnerships. Atikokan's ability to show itself as a safe, desirable location to live makes it an attractive destination - a town that fosters new families as workplace demographic shift with retirement and relocation.

Ontario Power Generation's Atikokan station continues to operate with clean burning biomass fuel; the local operators at the plant continue to adapt to the new technology with great skill and pride in their work. Both the Agnico Eagles Mines Limited gold mine project and the Cassandra Energy project continue to percolate under the surface; hope remains that shifting global markets and government cooperation will move both projects back into full-scale development. We will continue to advocate for this and other large-scale projects as viable and responsible community building blocks.

Congratulations to the staff of the AEDC, whose accolades on the local, provincial, national and international level are without parallel – your contributions to the community and economic development are well deserved and speak highly to the work being done here. I am pleased to extend my most sincere appreciation to all of the volunteers and staff who have committed countless hours to ensuring 2017 was another successful year for the AEDC.

**Jim Turner, AEDC Chair**





# Town of Atikokan

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April 23, 2018

Thank you from Mayor and Council

On behalf of Atikokan Town Council and staff, I would like to once more thank the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation Board (AEDC) and staff for their ongoing support in community and economic development initiatives that benefit the citizens of Atikokan. The AEDC is the ultimate group of information for small businesses and Atikokan community groups and an important connection to important additional resources.

I want to congratulate the AEDC for all the awards the group has won as an organization and also to the staff who have won individual awards in the past year. I know Garry McKinnon and Gord Knowles have received special awards and Katie Hannon was strongly involved in the Tourism Atikokan "Project Wild" that was recognized the past four years by the Economic Developers Council of Canada. I know too that Katie, Gord, Garry and all the staff are putting a great deal of effort to increase tourism in Atikokan and area.

Atikokan is very fortunate to have such dedicated, progressive thinking staff and we thank all of them very much for this.

By working with many groups, including Atikokan Town Council, the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation is able to help sustain and expand employment through community economic development initiatives. This is crucial for our entire community and area. We know there is very little, if any, unemployment in our town at this time. Anyone who is employable and wants a job and lives in Atikokan has one.

Having access to capital funds, through a Community Investment Fund at the Atikokan Economic Development Office for businesses is very important, especially at a time when it is becoming more difficult for the private sector to acquire such capital funds from other sources. The AEDC is a fair, free, accessible and confidential source of financing, something Atikokan certainly needs for small business and community projects in Atikokan.

The Atikokan Employment Centre, which is administered by the AEDC, is also an essential service to the workers and their families in Atikokan.

Other AEDC services such as those provided to the local Chamber of Commerce and especially to tourism related activities, all help to make for a better Atikokan. Special

thanks for meeting with Atikokan Town Council and staff on several occasions this past year to discuss and plan for common issues. This is something Atikokan Town Council and staff certainly appreciate.

Congratulations on another successful year. Your efforts in community and economic development are necessary and very much appreciated. Keep up the good work.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dennis Brown".

Dennis Brown  
Mayor



# Community & Committee Reports

## INVOLVEMENT AND UPDATES

### TOURISM ATIKOKAN



services. With lots on the horizon for 2018, we look forward to the future of Tourism Atikokan as it looks to grow its footprint with practical, cost-effective ways to deliver value to the community.

Coming off the heels of not one but two Economic Developers



received its second consecutive internationally-recognized Gold Award from the International Economic Developers Council for Best Special Purpose Website during a ceremony in Toronto for [www.VisitAtikokan.ca](http://www.VisitAtikokan.ca).

In late 2017 the AEDC implemented its efforts to collaborate with other local stakeholders to forge ahead with its Tourism Development Committee, a grassroots effort of government leaders, not-for-profit organizations and for-profit businesses to establish best practices and engage in tourism projects that benefit the whole of the community - cost effectively and with group input. The work continues to be augmented

We continued our work with the Tourism Atikokan project, although in a far more nuanced manner due to the life stage of the project.

Tourism Atikokan went in to overdrive during the summer thanks to funding from the federal government to host two Tourism Ambassadors. Brenna Nephin, back for a second year was joined by Hannah Hayes in promoting programs and



Council of Ontario marketing awards in February 2017

(Best Regional/International Collaboration, Best New Media), in September 2017, the AEDC received its second consecutive Economic Developers Association of Canada marketing award, this time for Best Website during its annual conference in Niagara Falls. Two weeks later, AEDC

### WORDS OF THANKS

*"On behalf of the IEDC board of directors and Excellence in Economic Development Awards Advisory Committee, congratulations to the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation. Not only did they work to provide a necessary service to their community; but also, their participation in the awards program sheds light on their stellar projects which other communities can now use as a benchmark."*

*Michael Langley, FM, CEO of GREATER MSP, Minneapolis–St. Paul, MN, and 2017 IEDC Board Chair*

by students and volunteers, using leveraged funds in order to increase the capacity of tourism delivery methods that will continue to grow the influx of dollars into the community through tourism initiatives. We look forward to where 2018 takes Tourism Atikokan.

## FOREST PRODUCTS

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The forest sector continue to be a strong economic engine for Atikokan. The purchase of the Rentech plant by True North Timber has resulted in greater stability for that facility. The new owners have travelled to Europe in an attempt to secure markets for the plant's surplus production capacity. In light of the continuing growth in demand for wood pellets, it is anticipated that additional markets will be forthcoming.

Resolute Forest Products production is falling somewhat short of projections but Canada's newest sawmill continues to employ in excess of one hundred workers. The production challenges may be related to state-of-the-art technology that was new to Canada and may not be suited to the operating realities of our climate and species. The company remains confident in the future of the Atikokan mill and is working diligently at resolving any outstanding production issues.

The availability of labour is an issue that haunts the sector. Resolute is in constant recruiting mode for labourers and continues to address the shortage of skilled trades by cannibalizing their other operations by sending tradespeople to Atikokan on as a short term solution. Harvesting and transportation operators advise that there is a serious need for workers to operate harvesting equipment and drive truck. Some have stated that they are aggressively courting past workers, some in their seventies, to return to work!

A scan of a number of forest sector publication predict a positive outlook for the lumber market. Increased housing starts in the US is the primary driver of a robust North American lumber market. China is also increasing Canadian lumber imports but experts speculate the Chinese market is extremely price sensitive so an increase in the value of the Canadian dollar may reduce exports to China. The continued valuation of the Canadian dollar below eighty cents US has softened the impact of duties imposed by the current US government. A decision in favour of Canadian producers is expected in the near future and if that in fact occurs, exports to the US will continue to be robust.

## ENERGY SECTOR

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Notwithstanding the fact that there are six years remaining in the Atikokan Generating Station's contract, there is still a fair degree of uncertainty in the energy sector in this region.

Six years is a very short time when one considers everything involved in renegotiating a long-term contract to ensure the continuity of the station, and the contingent continuity of the operation of Atikokan Biofuels' pellet plant. Ongoing lobbying for the future of the AGS is imperative and the AEDC, the Town of Atikokan, and the public must continue to advocate for the future of our generating facility.

A large investment for a pumped-storage facility at the former Steep Rock Iron Range is still an important possibility. This development is proposed to be 100% indigenous owned and the plan is for it to be designed, built, and operated by a consortium of highly accomplished developers. Unfortunately, the province of Ontario continues to choose to be blind to the value of this development, not only as an economic development tool but as an energy security and price stabilization opportunity.

The final element of uncertainty in the energy sector is the transmission consideration. There is little argument that existing transmission capacities need to be more robust, but new transmission corridors must

also be developed to service unserved and underserved areas and to serve developments that are anticipated in the northwest. What transmission infrastructure will be enhanced, what will be built, and where will they be constructed? Of course we will argue the rationale for utilizing existing corridors that pass near to Atikokan.

## SENIORS' HOUSING

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There has been little progress on the development of new housing for seniors in the area. For the most part, the AEDC withdrew from the process in late 2017 when the Town of Atikokan engaged in a community wide survey to quantify the need and entered into discussions with a firm specializing in design, financing, and construction of seniors' housing developments. After considering the best information available at the time, the Town determined that they are not in a position to move forward with the development of senior's housing.

The CEO of the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board developed a conceptual plan for redevelopment of the North Star School property in anticipation of the construction of a new K-12 school and redundancy of North Star. In this plan, there would be a number of rental housing units but it is unlikely they could be restricted to seniors only.

The AEDC will re-engage in the process of securing a developer to construct market rent seniors' accommodation. It has proven to be a huge challenge to identify an interested developer to this point and there is little expectation it will be any easier going forward. Regardless, the AEDC will continue our efforts as new rental accommodation for seniors will free up additional homes for families and for new workers our community desperately needs.

## CANADA 150 CELEBRATIONS

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The Atikokan Economic Development Corporation and the Atikokan Employment Centre celebrated Canada's Sesquicentennial with the creation of the Canada 150 Carnival. A subcommittee was formed between the two agencies and two Town Councilors. Michelle Gushulak and Katie Hannon were the leaders behind this event and gathered the town businesses and organizations to make this event happen. Each individual business or organization



was in charge of one carnival themed



activity. Put together, all of these activities then formed the whole carnival, closing off Main Street for the day. The weather wasn't the greatest that afternoon, but it seemed like the whole community came together on Main Street to partake in the different fun themed activities. The event was such a

great success that the planning stages have already begun for Canada Day 2018.

## THE PATH OF THE PADDLE ASSOCIATION (by Ed Shields, DDS, PhD, POPA Chair)

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The Path of the Paddle Association (POPA) is an incorporated non-for-profit driven by volunteers, named for the renowned film maker and paddler Bill Mason.

On August 26, 2017 each of the Path of the POPA's four Regional Trail Committees (RTC - Kenora, Dryden, Atikokan and Thunder Bay) celebrated the completion of the 25,000km of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT, also known as The Great Trail). The Path of the Paddle's 1,200km mainly water trail section of the TCT extends from the Animikii Trail traversing from Fort William Historic Park in Thunder Bay along the world-class beauty of the islands and mesas on Lake Superior to the International border at Pigeon River. The Omimi Trail then extends through La Vérendrye Provincial Park, abutting with the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, to the world famous Quetico Provincial Park and Atikokan. Continuing as the Maukinak Trail from Turtle River-White Otter Park canoeists paddle on to Dryden, the Migizi Trail then heads to Rushing River Provincial Park and Kenora and finally, the linoo Oowan Trail traveling along the Winnipeg River to the Manitoba Border to join the existing TCT land trail (Borders to Beaches) at Whiteshell Provincial Park.



Within the Atikokan region, one can paddle from the town to Nym Lake via the Atikokan River, and to Plateau Lake and Fire Lake from Nym Lake. Heading towards Dryden one can then paddle from town on the Atikokan River to White Otter Lake via the Eye River, Dashwa Lake and Clearwater West Lake.

Quetico Park Superintendent Trevor Gibb, the POPA Trails Officer Lise Sorensen, and the trail crews from Atikokan are now working hard to clear a major blowdown in the Atikokan region. They hope to have the trails clear for canoe season. The POPA is an evolving entity since it meanders through the marvelous and wonder-invoking, but unpredictable, wilderness of northwest Ontario.

Atikokan is represented on POPA's Board of Directors by Regional Trail Committee Chair Michelle Savoie. The Atikokan Regional Trail Committee promotes the Path of the Paddle and engages the community with such events as the International Reel Paddling Film Festival.

The Path of the Paddle engaged an intern in partnership with the Heart of the Continent Partnership for several months in Atikokan, but the intern received a permanent job and moved on. A new intern will again be located in Atikokan through funding from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. The intern will identify stakeholders and community partners and assist in bringing information on the trail to help visitors and residents experience the Path of the Paddle.

Presently the POPA is without a General Manager due to the illness of Pam Cain's partner, John Rafferty. The POPA will soon search for a new GM, an essential moving force for this mainly volunteer organization. Also, new RTC and Board members are essential to keep the great dream and vision alive. The dream of moving at nature's pace through the awe-inspiring vast spectra of wildlife, flora, and the expanse of the cosmos, the pure nature of northwest Ontario mainly untouched by the powers of humanity.



## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION OF ATIKOKAN

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The Young Professionals Association of Atikokan's future remains somewhat questionable. A number of variables exist for this, including the low number of youth who are involved with committees or boards within the community of Atikokan and the constant competition for people's time. Jordan Boileau currently chairs this committee, and in 2018 plans to work closer with the AEDC to evaluate its relevance and survey members to assess needs and projects which might fit a new direction.

## FRIENDS OF WHITE OTTER CASTLE

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The Friends of White Otter Castle continue to preserve and highlight the importance of Jimmy McOuat and the White Otter Castle. The Friends have created a 30-year maintenance plan and budget that outlines where money would need to be spent and what projects need to be completed to get the castle into a safe structure again. The last major restoration was completed in the mid-1990s and the castle has since seen a need for improvement.

The main accomplishment of the Friends for the year was flying the Hon. Bill Mauro, MPP to the Castle in June. The purpose of this trip was to raise awareness to the Provincial Government on funding needed to make the necessary restorations as well as creating media attention to the castle and highlight that the Friends are active and engaged. The Friends are working closely with Minister Mauro to find the perfect funding stream that will meet the needs for repairs.

Canada also celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, which the Friends used in their advantage towards a marketing plan; a 150 Photo Challenge was created. It encouraged visitors to take a photo of themselves in front of the castle holding a Canadian Flag. This helped celebrate Canada's special anniversary as well as creating marketing material for the Friends to use on their Facebook page. This worked so well that the Friends plan to do again in 2018 to help celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary since Jimmy McOuat's death.

The focus will remain the same, but the challenge will get visitors to take a photo in front of the newly reconstructed grave site that will be in place by spring 2018.

### PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

*"PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise and the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation have worked together for many years with the main goal of supporting local businesses. This include helping to start and grow businesses and providing ongoing support which all leads to a stronger economy. Partnering together by sharing resources such as facilities to meet with or present to clients or in providing events in the community to help develop people's skills and provide access to additional services. PARO and the AEDC are committed to working together to build a sustainable and a better future for the Atikokan community."*

*Karen Lynn Evans, Lead Business Counsellor  
PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise*

## TOURISM NORTHERN ONTARIO (TNO)

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In 2018 Senior Community Development Advisor Gord Knowles was appointed to serve a second three-year term on Tourism Northern Ontario's (TNO) 13C Advisory Committee, where he provides input with other industry stakeholders to share industry trends, regional market intelligence, and present options to the TNO Board of Directors to best serve the needs of all tourism stakeholders in northern Ontario. The

council meets at least twice per year in person, and quarterly teleconferences. AEDC continues to build on its solid relationship with TNO, from local and regional officers to having direct outreach with the organization's executive director, to ensure the tourism needs of the community are recognized and proactive steps are taken to ensure Atikokan is front and centre of all new and existing initiatives. AEDC has been a strong proponent of the Tourism Excellence North (TEN) program, completing basic training to serve as program ambassadors and working with the TEN team to ensure it creates maximum impact and is a well-utilized tool in our client's toolbox. AEDC will continue to be a key partner of TNO as it moves forward with its mandate to bolster the region's tourism capacity for its businesses and residents.

## SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

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During the week of October 15-21, 2017 the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation celebrated Small Business Week by hosting a number of workshops in honour of our local small business owners. Throughout the week the AEDC partnered with local and regional providers including:

The Atikokan Employment Centre  
Atikokan Chamber of Commerce  
Atikokan High school  
BDC Canada  
CPA- Chartered Professional Accountants

With 37 participants participating in five different events throughout the week, Small Business Week in Atikokan was a big success for our community. Workshop sessions were facilitated by Brittany Beyak-Freamo where she taught participants from all ages, including a Grade 10 Civics and Careers class.

All participants completed a satisfaction survey for each event attended, allowing us to monitor successes and make modifications for next year's offerings.

## THE HEART OF THE CONTINENT PARTNERSHIP (by Chris Stromberg, Coordinator)

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The Heart of the Continent Partnership has made leaps and bounds towards developing the perception of what was already a reality, an interconnected region that shares the largest expanse of public greenspace in North America. We continue to develop, celebrate and support the sustainable economic growth of communities and natural health of the lakes and forests. We strive for a diverse leadership with sometimes opposing views but with a common goal; to inclusively build vibrant and resilient communities that value and protect public lands in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario.

We continue to encourage the benefits of partnerships and branding and as we move forward into 2018/2019 we are working on outreaching to new groups, re-engage with lesser involved communities, invite and include diversity. We want to reach out to the young generation not just to sit in on our meetings but to help take the reins. We encourage and strive to have

### PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

*"The AEDC has been a strong partner with Heart of the Continent since our beginning over 10 years ago. We have been able to count on our friends in Atikokan for financial and in-kind support that has truly made a difference for us."*

*We really appreciate and value our relationship and look forward to it continuing for many more years."*

Doug Franchot, Chair  
The Heart of the Continent Partnership

all industries, special interest groups, tourism and community stakeholders participate at our Roundtable Meetings. We understand how our environment is interconnected and collaborative management improves sustainability but also how integrated conversation makes this region economically stronger.

Some recent highlights this past year include:

- Our website team continues to edit and refine [www.traveltheheart.org](http://www.traveltheheart.org) website working with Old Town Creative and National Geographic;
- Produce quarterly newsletters for our field experts, members, and subscribers;
- Continued active Facebook page posting insights of happenings within the Heart of the Continent, updating the public of our projects and showcasing the talents of the local artists and the beauty of the landscapes;
- Held meetings throughout the Heart to talk of the benefits of partnerships and encourage all communities to participate;
- Created certificates for the participating nominators and field experts and National Geographic website “badges” to affiliate their own website with the Travel the Heart Geotourism Initiative;
- HOCP presentations include the Lake Superior Wilderness conference in Duluth, National Wilderness conference in Albuquerque and the SHIFT festival conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming;
- Coordinator home base in Atikokan Ontario and an intern for a six month contract- (finished) and recently hired a community outreach intern for an additional year starting May 2018;
- Attended and staffed tradeshow booth at Earthfest – Mountain Iron Minnesota April 2018 and won an award in Community Sustainability Initiative (CSI) Contest 2018;
- Heart of the Continent Partnership-National Geographic Tourism Initiative won the USFS Eastern Region Honorable Mention – Promoting Recreation and Tourism;
- Our revived science team that initiated March 2016 Symposium are now working on a 2019 Science Symposium with the help of funding from Quetico Superior Foundation;
- Registered Trademarked name and logo Heart of the Continent;
- Re-signed the Sister Sites Arrangement (an agreement among land managers to work together) and to revive Natural Resource Branch and host Land Managers meetings that will include but not limited to; cross border projects, invasives, geotourism initiative and science partnership;
- Recruited Patty Thielen to the Steering Committee and increased MNDNR involvement; Andy Hubley, Director - Arrowhead Regional Development Commission; Bob DeGross, Superintendent Voyageurs National Park – NPS; and Gary Davies Neebing Economic Development Advisory;
- Hosted a very successful Science Symposium and three Recreation/Tourism Summits;
- Marketing campaign proved successful with visitation to web and Facebook up and our highest number of visitors stretching out to Chicago, Minneapolis and Winnipeg;
- Formed a task force to develop a financial sustainability plan;
- 2017 General Meetings, along with Land Managers meetings were held in Duluth at the Forest Headquarters and in Two Harbors at Gooseberry Falls State Park. 2018 Meetings planned for Grand Portage MN in May and Atikokan/Quetico in September;
- Produced and distributed newsletters and redistributed relevant articles such as SNF Superior Research Reader and other relative educational articles to members and subscribers.

The AEDC's Gord Knowles continues to act as a local steward for the Heart of the Continent Partnership in Atikokan, sitting on its steering committee, its finance subcommittee and providing direction and mentorship to the project coordinator when necessary. Further local participation from Atikokanite and steering committee member Trevor Gibb (Ontario Parks) and from Linda Braun (MNDM) have given Atikokan a strong voice in this collaborative partnership on both the development and the land managers' sides.

## COMMUNITY FUTURES ONTARIO (CFO)

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AEDC Executive Director Garry McKinnon is serving in his second year as President of Community Futures Ontario (CFO) and as a member of the board of the Community Futures Network of Canada.

As the advocacy voice of the Community Futures program in Ontario, CFO meets regularly with FedNor (northern Ontario) and FedDev (southern Ontario) on behalf of our members. In addition to the ongoing argument for more operational funding, the key message this year has been made on behalf of our colleagues in southern Ontario. Community Futures organizations there are subject to variable operating funding based on “Key Performance Indicators” or KPIs; this has created funding inequities that have had a devastating impact on the communities that are the most challenged and in the greatest need. In many of those communities, it is impossible to score high on the FedDev KPIs, resulting in reduced funding and requiring the organizations to scale back in projects and reduce staffing. The impact has been declining performance and reduced operating funding and the spiral continues. These efforts may have had a positive impact, because for the first time in several years FedDev has decided not to reduce operating funding for any CF, regardless of KPI score.

CFO was successful in negotiating a reduction in the premium increase for organizations that participate in the health benefits program. They also successfully transitioned participating members from Desjardins to Valeyo for loan insurance.

The Community Futures Network of Canada (CFNC) has been laser focused on enhancing our relationship with FedNor and the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) for the past eighteen months. Beginning in the spring of 2016, CFNC consulted with representatives of the RDAs to develop a position paper that clearly outlined the vision for the CF program going forward. The position paper was circulated to every CF in Canada for comment and the final product was presented to Minister Bains in March of 2017. Nearly every CF in Canada met with their MP to support the asks in the position paper and they received near unanimous support for the program and for the requested changes. When nothing happened by September, the CFNC President contacted Minister Bains' office and received a commitment that the request was being worked on. CFNC was soon contacted to meet with the RDAs after a conference call and a face-to-face meeting in Ottawa, and were assured increases to the CF program would be in the 2018 budget. Although the budget announced significant increased funding for the RDAs, CFNC is receiving very confusing and mixed messages regarding CF funding. The CFNC has recently ratcheted up the pressure on the Minister's office and the RDAs and we will have to stay tuned to see what comes of it!

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS COUNCIL OF ONTARIO (EDCO)

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In February 2018 the AEDC's Gord Knowles was elected to serve a second term on the Board of Directors of the Economic Developers Council of Ontario, and was elected once again to the Executive to serve as its Treasurer. In 2017 he chaired the newly formed Finance and Policy Committee and sat as past chair on the professional development committee. EDCO, which has grown to be the country's largest economic development body meets six times in person annually in various locations in Ontario, and the organization serves over 1,400 economic development and municipal members through networking, events, professional development and awareness campaigns.

The AEDC was a partner in delivering the EDCO Northern Spring Symposium in Thunder Bay in May 2017, in collaboration with Thunder Bay CEDC and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. While attendance was not as high as anticipated, the event drew a number of key professionals from around the province and was an ideal opportunity to highlight the region and its economic development and tourism achievements.



## **INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS COUNCIL (IEDC)**

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In 2017 Gord Knowles was appointed to serve on the International Economic Development Council's International Advisory Committee for a three-year term. The International Advisory Committee is comprised of around 40 Economic Development Council members from all over the globe with the objective to promote international membership and content in IEDC's conferences and in the professional development training courses. The committee reports to the Planning and Business Development Committee and also takes on special assignments as directed by the board. The committee holds five conference calls throughout the year and one in-person meeting at the IEDC's annual conference. The committee also works with IEDC staff to develop the theme and suggest speakers of at least one international themed webinar each year. The committee also works with IEDC staff on international themed sessions and speakers at IEDC's Annual Conference.

## **PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & AWARDS**

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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 2017 staff attended annual conferences for the Community Futures Ontario (CFO), the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) and the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, as well as a number of meetings for regional projects including Superior Country, Tourism Northern Ontario, the Northwest CF Network, the Northwest Training and Adjustment Board and the Heart of the Continent Partnership.

Senior Community Development Advisor Gord Knowles successfully recertified his economic development certifications through the Economic Developers Association of Canada (Ec.D) and the International Economic Developers Council (CEcD) in 2017, and is in the process of completing college certified education through the Leadership Development series at Confederation College.

Community Development Advisor Katie Hannon, after successfully obtaining her Certificate in Economic Development, continues to work towards obtaining the Ec.D designation. Katie and Gord also completed recertification of Class C First Aid training in early 2018.

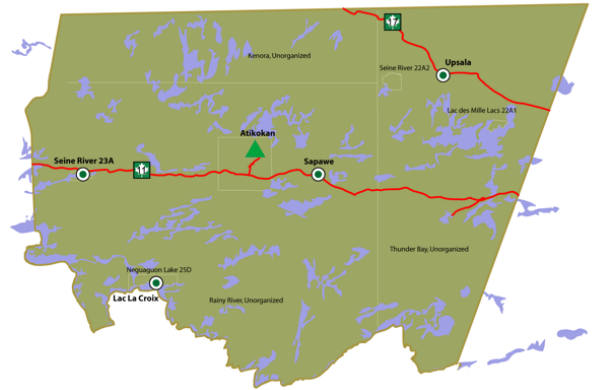
AEDC Office Administrator Annette Bryk and Administrative Assistant Brigitte Tribe continue to participate in Sage 50 training, as they build skills in order to facilitate the in-house delivery of bookkeeping services.

Staff from the Atikokan Employment Centre organized and participated in a multi-day course from Sarah Delicate related to changing human behaviour and case managing in employment services. Additionally, staff from the Atikokan Employment Centre also attended training throughout the year related to soft skills for employment, motivational interviewing, the application of common assessment techniques, engaging youth in programming, handling difficult clientele, mental health in the workplace, first-aid and accessible customer services.

Staff continue to attend seminars and courses designed to maintain their designations and build skillsets.

## 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 Community Futures Ontario*

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

## CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

**"I can't imagine where we'd be today without the support of the AEDC. Since about 2003, we've leaned on the AEDC for funding support for rebuilding and growing our business. The single biggest impediment to a small business in Ontario is the lack of funding. And the lack of funding with manageable terms. We could never have built our business without that support – we simply couldn't have gotten loans to add cabins, buy equipment, replace septic fields, advertise etc.**

**We likely wouldn't have survived.**

**And because we've received that support, we've in turn contributed to our economy. We've hired people, we've purchased materials and supplies. I don't know the economic spin off from the support of the AEDC, but it is substantial.**

**The financial support was crucial, but the support from [the staff of the AEDC] over the years has been incredible. They get it – they get the things we're going through as a small business. They're fantastic to talk to...bounce ideas off of and give advice.**

**It's everything to feel that you've got someone on your side. That's the AEDC – they're on the side of all the people with the great ideas that maybe don't have the money to turn the ideas into a reality. The people that have a great idea but need coaching to execute it. The great ideas but are nervous to move forward and act on their dreams.**

**If the "ways and means committee" didn't already have a (not always great) connotation with our southerly neighbours, I'd be inclined to use it for the AEDC. They represent it well."**

**Quentin Branch, Owner/Operator  
Branch's Seine River Resort**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## METRICS FOR SUCCESS (JAN 1 TO DEC 31 2017)

### Atikokan Economic Development Corporation

General Inquiries	↑ 180
In-Depth Counselling and Information Services Interviews	↓ 211
New CED Projects	↓ 10
Number of Community-Based Projects in Progress	↑ 24

### Atikokan Employment Centre

In-Person Visits	↑ 2,450 (+50)
Electronic Visits	↓ 14,855 (-2,424)

### Social Media Accounts

Website	AEDC	↑ 15,287 Visitors (+3,053)
		↑ 25,307 Actions (-2,066)
		↑ 5,791 Visitors
		↑ 14,389 Page Views
Twitter		↑ 167 Followers (+25)
		↓ 14 Tweets (-19)
		↑ 17,035 Impressions (+13,406)
Facebook	AEDC	↑ 182 Likes (+36)
		↓ 14,747 Post Reach (-1,429)
		↓ 1,404 Engaged (-23)
	Tourism Atikokan	↑ 1,715 Likes (+98)
		↓ 302,028 Post Reach (-83,146)
		↓ 19,680 Engaged (-8,111)
	AEC	515 Likes
		23,949 Post Reach
		1,177 Engaged

AEDC Senior Community Development Advisor Gord Knowles; Hon. Don Rusnak, MP, Thunder Bay-Rainy River; Aaron Matichuk, owner, Voyageur Bait & Tackle; Dennis Brown, Mayor, Town of Atikokan; and Jim Turner, Chair of the AEDC announcing the delivery of \$1 million in FedNor funding for community investment during the summer of 2017.



# LOCAL LOAN DISBURSEMENT

## SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT, 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;

2017 was a relatively slower year in terms of loan disbursement, as businesses held steady and we did not see dramatic wholesale changes in the ownership landscape. During 2017, our office disbursed new investment funds of \$220,916 towards new loans. In total, 11 loans were refinanced, amalgamated and/or disbursed to clients in a wide range of sectors. We continue to work with traditional lenders to transition its loan clients to their services as per our mandate, but uptake from those institutions has been a challenge.

Since 1988, Atikokan Economic Development Corporation has dispersed more than \$16 million in Atikokan and the surrounding region.

With the AEDC, five additional CFDCs 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 13 of these regional investments totaling \$790,138 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).

All funding applications received by the AEDC are reviewed by our Community Investment Fund Committee for approval by the Board of Directors. 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, Elvin Rydberg and Julian Jordan.



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

YEAR	BUSINESSES STARTED	BUSINESSES MAINTAINED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS MAINTAINED
2012	5	8	13	6
2013	6	12	18	32
2014	8	11	19	33
2015	3	16	19	37
2016	9	6	38	21
2017	0	10	4	40

### INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO BALANCE

YEAR	LOANS ISSUED	LOAN AMOUNT	REPAYMENTS	PORTFOLIO BALANCE
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
2015	20	\$1,116,076	\$468,806	\$3,629,099
2016	18	\$1,129,989	\$493,235	\$4,266,474
2017	11	\$220,916	\$501,617	\$3,985,152

### INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

SECTOR	AMOUNT OF LOANS ISSUED IN 2017	CURRENT # OF LOANS IN PORTFOLIO	CURRENT AMOUNT OF LOANS
Hospitality	\$24,800	10	\$589,656
Agriculture	--	1	\$34,933
Mining	--	1	\$83,639
Service	\$25,000	20	\$1,178,440
Tourism	\$37,000	5	\$398,148
Manufacturing	--	3	\$170,160
Transportation	\$44,416	6	\$365,279
Retail	\$70,000	15	\$1,140,214
Forestry	\$20,000	1	\$24,683
Research/Development	--	--	--
Culture & Arts	--	--	--
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$220,916</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>\$3,985,152</b>

# Atikokan Chamber of Commerce

## ANNUAL REPORT

BY MIKE MCKINNON, TREASURER AND PAST PRESIDENT

The Chamber of Commerce marked a successful year of operations in 2017-18. Membership was up a bit at 75, as more businesses were attracted to the Chamber's variety of benefit plans - from fuel discounts, to employee benefit programs, to low-cost digital payment services.

We re-joined the Northwestern Associated Chambers of Commerce after a four-year absence due to financial issues, and plan to get more active on the regional front in the coming year.

Locally, our Atikokan food and dining guide has been well-received by visitors and residents alike. We are working to keep the guide as current as possible - check our Facebook site for the latest version.

We have developed a 'Welcome to Atikokan' gift package. It's not quite a welcome wagon program, but by working with local businesses and employers, we aim to do a little something to help ensure newcomers to Atikokan feel welcome and appreciated.

Our Christmas promotion, Plaid Friday (a play on Black Friday, our American neighbours' post-Thanksgiving shopping lollapalloza), was the most successful yet. We had wide participation from local retailers, boosted by local artisans, who joined in the event for the first time.

Our summer student, Samantha Ribey, conducted a wide range of low-key events during the season to promote Atikokan businesses, both Chamber members and non-members.

We are an active participant in the new Tourism Atikokan committee, and are keenly supporting the development of a tourism plan for Atikokan.

We hosted our business awards gala at the Legion Hall on May 18, and saluted twenty-nine, businesses, organizations, and individuals nominated by Atikokanites. Our winners were:

- Resolute Business Excellence Award: North Stream Rehab Centre
- OPG Health & Safety Award: Atikokan Fire Rescue
- Tramin Ambassador's Award: Spencer Meany, XY Paddle
- Atikokan Employment Centre Not-for-Profit Excellence Award: Atikokan Community Food Bank
- AEDC Customer Service Award: Susan Roy, Janice Splawski

We again shared the event with Community Living Atikokan, which annually recognizes a business or organization that goes above and beyond to integrate Community Living members in the work-a-day world.

- Widening Our World Award: Canoe Canada

This year's event - which we are calling an evening of gratitude, or #gratitude in its digital version - will feature a return visit from Sandy Boucher, author, activist, and noted speaker. Boucher was named the Thunder Bay Chamber's business person of the year in 2016 and was also honoured by the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund as business woman of the year.

This year's gala will be held Thursday, May 17; tickets are available at the Chamber office.

Our financial house is in good order, and we finished the year with a positive balance.

We welcomed Brent Harris (AGH's chief financial officer) and Donna Nordstrom (North Stream Rehab) to our board, and chose Kathie Brigham (Celestial Gold) and Karen Vandoorne as co-chairs.



**Vic and Madge Prokopchuk with Chamber of Commerce board members Michael McKinnon, Kathie Brigham, Karen VanDoorne, and Lois Fenton.**

**During the 2016-17 business awards gala, the Chamber of Commerce saluted entrepreneur Vic Prokopchuk - a chamber member for over 60 years - with a lifetime achievement award for his unstinting contributions to the community of Atikokan.**



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

In 2017, 202 meetings  
and seminars were  
held at the AEDC  
offices by non-profit  
groups!

# Atikokan Employment Centre

## ANNUAL REPORT

BY BRAD BEYAK, EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLOR

Continued program growth and increased participant access exemplifies the services provided by the Atikokan Employment Centre in the past fiscal year 2017/18. With continued financial support through Employment Ontario, funded by Ontario's Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), the Atikokan Employment Centre provides quality employment services and related assistance to the residents of Atikokan and the surrounding area. This is inclusive of Seine River First Nation, Lac La Croix First Nation and the community of Upsala which all fall in the Atikokan Economic Development Corporations catchment area. Additionally, ongoing program support continues to be provided MAESD's Employment and Training Consultant, Kimberly Williamson based out of Fort Frances. We wish to thank Employment Ontario, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and Kimberly Williamson for their continued confidence in our professional employment service and their ongoing financial contributions designed to assist area residents with employment and training.

In terms of access to our services, over the last year, we have had in excess of 14,500 unique visitors to the Atikokan Employment Centre's website. These visitors took more than 45,000 actions while using the website. Of the 14,000 unique visitors, over 9000 elected to return to our website taking in excess of 30,000 actions.

The majority of visitors to the Atikokan Employment Centre's website resided in North America, with the most being located in Canada. Most Canadian residents accessing the website resided in either the Toronto area or in Northwestern, Ontario. Accesses from the United States were dominated by residents of Illinois and Washington State.

Residents outside of North America also accessed the website. Notably there were visits to the website from Hong Kong, Russia, India, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Italy, Ukraine, Ireland, Australia, China, Kenya, Mexico, Spain, Israel, Japan and Poland. Based on this outcome, it would be fair to say that employment in Atikokan and the community of Atikokan itself is on the international stage.

In person visits to the Atikokan Employment Centre's resource centre continued over the last year with approximately 1900 visits being recorded (on average in excess of 7 visits a day). Visitors accessing the resource centre are typically completing job search activities and/or require the use of computer equipment, facsimile or printers needed to apply for employment opportunities. Others are looking for specific program information or are requiring assistance with reporting process associated with their Employment Insurance claim.

Other visitors to the Atikokan Employment Centre's resource centre also accessed the services of Service Canada, consulting their representative regarding Federal Government programs such as Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance or Social Insurance Numbers. The Atikokan Employment Centre continues to host Service Canada each month and provides private office space and a secure internet connection for Service Canada representative's use when meeting with clientele in person.

As part of our service to residents, computer systems in the resource centre were upgraded this year and larger monitors were purchased to further build on the accessibility of our services. We are planning to make further changes to our website and digital capabilities in the coming year to further expand our accessible design. The accessibility mandate will also be carried over into the physical environment as



we assess the built environment to ensure full compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Through the delivery Atikokan Employment Centre's Employment Services programming, 150 individuals were assisted in their search for appropriate employment. This would indicate that intensive support was provided to 150 unique participants with respect to their career exploration, resume creation, interview preparation, job search activities and referral to educational or necessary community based services. Of these 150 individuals, interest remained low in MAESD's Second Career program. The Second Career program provides laid off workers with financial support through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development to attend post-secondary certificate or diploma programs. It is thought that this has resulted from a decrease in laid off workers in our area as well as improved access to the Ontario Student Assistance program overseen by the Provincial Government.

In relation to youth oriented programs and participants, the Atikokan Employment Centre was once again provided with funding to further support youth (15 to 29 years old) experiencing barriers to employment. As a result of our efforts, \$68,000 was dispersed in the youth programs, supporting participation in pre-employment training, for the purchase of employment related supports (ie. work clothing, transportation, child care) and wage reimbursements paid to employers. In total, 21 individuals fully participated in youth programs including completion of work training placements, while 48 individuals participated in at least one component of the youth oriented programs during the current fiscal year. Thank you to Denine Richard for heading up these youth initiatives locally.

In an attempt to further strengthen the services provided to Youth in Ontario, a representative from the Atikokan Employment Centre attended two feedback sessions in Toronto, Ontario with other Employment Service Providers and representatives from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. As a result of these discussions, changes were implemented to the youth programs that are directed at enhancing services provided to youth and to better reflect the progress made by youth when working with Service Providers during employment related programming.

During the year, an additional youth oriented program was also introduced by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (Employing Young Talent Incentive – EYTI) which also promotes the hiring and retention of younger workers (ages 15 to 29). This incentive sees employers get access to up to a \$2,000 incentive for hiring and retaining young workers for six months while they are working at least 20 hours per week. In the 2018/19, the Atikokan Employment Centre has been earmarked to receive \$53,000 through the EYTI program that will be distributed to employers for hiring and retaining young workers.

In our attempts to further build access to services, the Atikokan Employment Centre with the support of Lac La Croix First Nation, continued to manage an outreach office located in Lac La Croix, Ontario. This has allowed the Atikokan Employment Centre to continue to employ one individual in this community who actively promotes the Employment Ontario programs available through the Atikokan Employment Centre. It is noted, that the employment office housed in the Business Administration office at Lac La Croix provides access to telephone, printers, internet, public use computers, standard office equipment and individual support as needed. Thank you to Meagan Atatise and the Lac La Croix community for continuing to support this initiative.

Similarly, over the last year, the Atikokan Employment Centre has made arrangements with the community of Upsala to further support efforts to establish an outreach employment office in this community. As a result, public use computers, a printer, facsimile and office related equipment were purchased. The intent is, that in the coming year, this office will be staffed on a part-time basis to further support Upsala residents search for employment and/or facilitate their participation in appropriated work related training.

During the last year, the Atikokan Employment has also had a number of opportunities to visit Seine River First Nation to further promote programs and collaborate with respect to program offerings. As a result Seine River First Nation community members continue to utilize the services of the Atikokan Employment Centre and has referred a number of potential program participants to our services.

The Atikokan Employment Centre also continues to take the lead in hosting and coordinating monthly luncheon "Inter-agency" meetings that provides a forum for social service providers, health care providers, faith groups and local educators to exchange information on their current programs and initiatives. Over the last year, this monthly function was well attended and continues to be a unique opportunity for local service providers to promote and explain in detail the programs they are mandated to deliver in the community. Cindy Wood with the Atikokan Employment Centre continues to take the lead in coordinating these monthly meetings and is thanked for her continued efforts in this area.

To further increase our community outreach activities, the Atikokan Employment Centre also continues to regularly attend community events. Notably, in recognition of Canada Day and the associated 150 celebrations, the Atikokan Employment Centre fully participated by hosting barbecues and minnow races during the previous summer. A sincere thank you goes to Michelle Gushulak and Katie Hannon for their considerable effort in organizing and coordinating the 150 celebrations held in Atikokan over the past year.

With the intent of further increasing the visibility of the Atikokan Employment Centre in the community and the programs available, the Atikokan Employment Centre elected to hire a designated marketer. As the result, Ange Sponchia (aka Sunday Wilde) was hired and has been very busy with making community contacts and initiating promotional activities on our behalf. We feel her continuing efforts in this area has resulted in increased program awareness and uptake over the last year. Thank you to Ange Sponchia for the use of her creative talents to further add to the efforts of the Atikokan Employment Centre.

The Atikokan Employment Centre also took the lead on providing training relevant to social service/health care and employment service providers by hosting a premier trainer (Sarah Delicate) in Atikokan during the early fall. Staff from the Atikokan Employment Centre, along with their colleagues from the community and surrounding area reviewed concepts related to changing human behaviour and case managing in employment services. Additionally, staff from the Atikokan Employment Centre also attended training throughout the year related to soft skills for employment, motivational interviewing, the application of common assessment techniques, engaging youth in programming, handling difficult clientele, mental health in the workplace, first-aid and accessible customer services. As part of training, reference materials were also purchased from the Canadian Standards Association that provide information on accessibility for the built environment and the establishment of accessible customer service practices. These reference materials are available for all businesses and individuals who desire to improve accessibility in the community or within their businesses.

Lastly, a sincere thank you to all our community associates and the employers who continue to assist in making our programs successful by helping community members move forward in their careers and advance in their employment related skills and training.

*"The most important thing is to make the technology inclusive - make the world change. Next, pay attention to those people who are 30 years old, because those are the internet generation. They will change the world; they are the builders of the world."*

**- JACK MA**

# Meet Our Team

## Atikokan Economic Development Corporation

### 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

Gord Knowles

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

*Business planning and counseling, loan disbursement and compliance, CED projects, tourism marketing and promotion, liaison with community groups and organizations.*

### Community Development Advisor

Katie Hannon

B.T.M.

*Business planning and counseling, loan disbursement, CED projects, marketing and promotion, liaison with community groups and organizations.*

### Office Administrator

Annette Bryk

*Contract administration, financial recordkeeping, bookkeeping, loans administration, benefits administration, recording of official minutes.*

### Administrative Assistant

Brigitte Tribe

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



## Atikokan Employment Centre

### Counsellor & General Manager

Brad Beyak

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

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

### Case Managers

Cindy Wood

Denine Richard

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

### Resource & Information Clerks

Michelle Gushulak

Meagan Atatise (Lac La Croix Outreach Office)

*Employment Centre reception, maintain job board, resume and cover letter assistance.*

### Program & Placement Representative

Ange Sponchia

*Community outreach and marketing.*

## AEDC's In-Office Partners

### Heart of the Continent Partnership Coordinator

Chris Stromberg

### Chamber of Commerce Office Manager

Ange Sponchia

# AEDC Board of Directors

We wish to thank the 2017-18 Board of Directors and community volunteers of the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation. Your tireless dedication and commitment - to not just the AEDC, but to our community as a whole - allows us to operate as an effective organization.

**JIM TURNER**  
**CHAIR**

**TAMI STINSON**  
**VICE-CHAIR**

**MARY MAKARENKO**  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER**

**DAVE ELDER**  
**PAST CHAIR**

**ROB FERGUSON**  
**TOWN COUNCIL REP**

**HAROLD MOSELY**  
**TOWN COUNCIL REP**

**CLEO WOLSIFFER**  
**UPSALA R.D.A.**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**

**DARCY WHITECROW**  
**SEINE RIVER F.N.**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**

**JULIAN JORDAN**  
**LAC LA CROIX F.N.**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**

**DAVID BJORKMAN**

**DAVID HOMER**

**DENNIS BROWN**

**DR. KEN SAWCHUK**

**JACK PIERCE**

**ROBERT POTTS**

**SHANNON RIDING**

**BRIAN STIMSON**

**VIC PROKOPCHUK**  
**MEMBER EMERITUS**

## AEDC Committees

### INVESTMENT FUND COMMITTEE

**DR. KEN SAWCHUK**  
**CHAIR**

**JACK PIERCE**

**JULIAN JORDAN**

**LIZ MACKAY**

**ELVIN RYDBERG**

**KIM CROSS**

### FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION/AUDIT COMMITTEE

**MARY MAKARENKO**  
**CHAIR**

**TAMI STINSON**

**JIM TURNER**

**SHANNON RIDING**

**CLEO WOLSIFFER**

**DAVE HOMER**

### PUBLIC RELATIONS & NOMINATING COMMITTEE

**BRIAN STIMSON**

**JACK PIERCE**

### AD HOC COMMITTEES – AS REQUIRED



# Looking Ahead

## OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR...

Atikokan is probably more economically stable than it has been in recent memory. Recent growth in job opportunities means everyone ready, willing, and able to work can find a job. In addition, there has been modest in-migration of workers and families.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Upsala and the First Nation in our area. The AEDC Employment Services continues to support a part-time position at Lac la Croix and will soon be hiring to fill a part-time position in Upsala. We certainly anticipate that in time these offices will help ensure increased employment, entrepreneurship and opportunity for those communities.

Mineral development continues to be an economic activity that holds some promise for the area. Agnico Eagle is now the sole owner of the Hammond Reef deposits and they are a fairly large international company and probably have the capacity to develop a mine when the time and gold price are right. We understand the Environmental Assessment process for Hammond Reef continues and is nearing completion. Several mining claims in the area have been optioned of late and significant drilling programs are anticipated in the summer of 2018. The AEDC will be vigilant in our monitoring of this sector in an effort to be ready to capitalize on any opportunity!

The Atikokan Naturally Wild tourism marketing initiative has received accolades from locals and recognition by way of a number of marketing awards from economic development organizations. Tourist operators are very supportive of this effort and some have attributed increased sales to the initiative. In addition, it seems to have generated a renewed interest in tourism in the area. A tourism committee has recently been formed and is chaired by a tourist operator. This committee will help plan and guide Atikokan's future tourism development and marketing activities.

Volunteerism continues to be the life blood of all of our communities. Whether it be the AEDC, a fishing tournament, snowmobiling, curling, skiing, etc., every aspect of our quality of life is positively impacted by the selfless contribution of volunteers. To each and every one of you, we say an unqualified and heartfelt **THANK YOU!**

## Reaching the AEDC

**COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS? IDEAS? GET A HOLD OF US!**

**[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ATIKOKANEDO](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ATIKOKANEDO)**  
**[WWW.TWITTER.COM/ATIKOKANEDO](http://WWW.TWITTER.COM/ATIKOKANEDO)**



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