

The National Indigenous Economic Development Board

2023 Annual Report

DATE

October 2024

NIEDB Secretariat
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

On behalf of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB), I am pleased to present our 2023 Annual Report.

In 2023, the Board continued to engage with Indigenous communities and partners across the country, and identify existing barriers and opportunities for growth within government policy. Through comprehensive research and collaborative efforts, the Board worked to modernize outdated policies and introduce new initiatives that promote economic self-sufficiency and parity.

As the NIEDB's Chairperson, I am proud of the work we have accomplished over the past year. Most notably:



- NIEDB members appeared at the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples and the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Indigenous Reconciliation.
- The NIEDB hosted its annual ministerial meeting in Ottawa, ON, and engaged with the Ministers of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Small Business and Indigenous Services Canada on Indigenous economic reconciliation.
- The NIEDB engaged with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on improving Information and Communications Infrastructure in the Far North and for all remote Indigenous communities.

The NIEDB is deeply committed to advancing Indigenous economic reconciliation throughout the entire country. By fostering sustainable development and creating opportunities for economic self-sufficiency, we strive to build a future where all Indigenous Peoples can thrive and prosper. We welcome this opportunity to share our initiatives, successes, and the impactful changes we are making in pursuit of a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

Sincerely,

Dawn Madahbee Leach

Chairperson

National Indigenous Economic Development Board



ABOUT THE BOARD

Established in 1990, the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB) is a non-partisan, national organization mandated to advise the Government of Canada on Indigenous economic development. Comprised of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community and business leaders from across Canada, the Board plays an important role in helping the federal government develop and implement policies and programs that respond to the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous Peoples. The Board also provides a vital link between policy makers, federal departments, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous business and community leaders.

Vision

The NIEDB envisions a vibrant Indigenous economy, where Indigenous Peoples are economically self-sufficient and have achieved economic parity with Canadian society.

Mission

The NIEDB is committed to providing advice and guidance to the federal government on economic opportunities that empower Indigenous Peoples to have a voice in government policy.

Mandate

The NIEDB's mandate is to advise the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada and other federal ministers on policies, programs, and program coordination as they relate to Indigenous economic development.

Members



Dawn Madahbee Leach
Chairperson, Ontario,
Aundeck Omni Kaning First
Nation

General Manager of
Waubetek Business
Development Corporation



Victoria LaBillois
Vice-Chairperson, Québec,
Listuguj Mi'gmaq First
Nation



ABOUT THE BOARD



Chief Terrance Paul
Member-at-Large, Nova Scotia, Membertou First Nation

CEO of Membertou Development Corporation



Hilda Broomfield Letemplier
Member, Newfoundland and Labrador, Inuit

President/Chief Financial Officer of Pressure Pipe Steel Fabrication Ltd.



Dr. Marie Delorme
Member, Alberta, Métis

CEO of The Imagination Group of Companies



Dr. Ruth Williams
Member, British Columbia, High Bar First Nation

Business Advisor/Project Manager of the Pathways to Technology Project with All Nations Trust Company



Sandra Sutter
Member, Alberta, Métis

Indigenous Manager for PTW Energy Services

Indie recording artist and filmmaker



Maxime Volland
Member, Québec, Innu First Nation of Pessamit

Head of Indigenous relations at the Rio Tinto IOC mining company



Andy Moorhouse
Member, Québec, Inuit

Vice President of Economic Development, Makivik Corporation



Michael Bonshor
Member, British Columbia, Dzawada'enuxw First Nation of Kingcome Inlet

President and CEO of Visions First Nations Financial Services/ Ki'mola Indigenous Capital



ABOUT THE BOARD



Danielle Levine
Member, British Columbia,
Métis

Entrepreneur and owner
of Danielle Levine
Consulting



Dana Soonias
Member, Saskatchewan,
Red Pheasant First Nation

Director of Economic
Development and
Employment Training
Services at the Saskatoon
Tribal Council



Bob Dickson
Member, Ontario, Lac Seul
First Nation

CEO of companies owned
by the Attawapiskat First
Nation

Committees

Executive Committee

Provides ongoing advice and guidance to the NIEDB in carrying out its roles, responsibilities, and mandate. Consists of the Board Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Ex-Officio Member.

Economic Progress Report Committee

Provides ongoing advice and guidance on the development of the Indigenous Economic Progress Reports.

Procurement Committee

Focuses on the federal government's policies and programs, including the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) and related initiatives, and actively participates in the Indigenous Procurement Reference Group.

Women's Economic Policy Committee

Provides ongoing advice and guidance to the NIEDB in relation to Indigenous women in the domestic economy and within feminist foreign policy.



ABOUT THE BOARD

Infrastructure and Connectivity Committee

Provides ongoing advice and guidance to the NIEDB in relation to infrastructure and connectivity in Indigenous communities.

International Issues Committee

Provides ongoing advice and guidance to the NIEDB in relation to policy on international Indigenous economic development.

Strategic Planning Committee

Supports the development of the NIEDB's Strategic Plan.

Communications Committee

Provides ongoing guidance on the Board's communication strategy including website content and development, social media content, media releases, Board interviews, etc.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Throughout 2023, the NIEDB engaged extensively with Indigenous communities, organizations and government, nationally and internationally. During the NIEDB's quarterly meetings, the Board met with local organizations, business leaders and members of government to learn about the barriers Indigenous Peoples and organizations face. The Board attended summits, seminars, forums, conferences and roundtables, and participated in engagement and consultation processes to provide advice and guidance about Indigenous economic development.

In line with the NIEDB's mandate, the Board wrote organizations and ministers, sharing the experiences and concerns they heard during the engagement process, and pushing for the implementation of recommendations to combat barriers and change restrictive government policies.

The key highlights from the Board's work in 2023 include:

- Expanding the NIEDB's mandate internationally by presenting to the Te Puni Kōkiri Delegation in New Zealand on Economic Reconciliation in Canada.
- Appearing at the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples and the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Indigenous Reconciliation.
- Meeting with the ministers of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Small Business and Indigenous Services Canada.
- Hosting in-person meetings in Prince Rupert, Winnipeg, and Ottawa.

In between meetings and discussions, the Board also worked towards the release of four reports in 2024: *2019 IEPR Recommendations Revisited*; *Economic Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy*, the *2024-2027 NIEDB Strategic Plan*, and the *2024 Indigenous Economic Progress Report*.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Saskatchewan Economic Development Network's ᐱᓭᓴᓄᐅᐃ·ᓐ pimâchisowin (livelihood) Summit

On January 24, 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach provided the keynote speech at the Saskatchewan Economic Development Network's ᐱᓭᓴᓄᐅᐃ·ᓐ pimâchisowin (livelihood) Summit in Whitecap Dakota First Nation.

Ms. Madahbee Leach spoke about the Board's work and the National Indigenous Economic Strategy (NIES). She shared examples of access to affordable capital in the province of Saskatchewan and community success stories from across Canada. Ms. Madahbee Leach also shared key recommendations related to Indigenous economic development and economic reconciliation, based on the following NIES Calls to Economic Prosperity:

- #41: Establish Indigenous institutions focused on building Indigenous capacity to address land sovereignty.
- #70: Create an Indigenous Knowledge Institute focused on protecting Indigenous Rights, monitoring Indigenous-focused research, protecting intellectual property rights, community-specific cultural knowledge, and development of national ethics principles to guide Indigenous-focused research.
- #86: Governments enact policies and legislation prioritizing Indigenous Peoples as equity partners in all major projects.

AFOA Canada's 21st National Conference

On February 15, 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach presented at the Aboriginal Financial Officers Associations (AFOA) Canada's 21st National Conference in Ottawa, ON. The conference brought together professionals, practitioners, executives, and stakeholders working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations.

Ms. Madahbee Leach's presentation focused on "Business Development – Connecting the Indigenous Economy of Tomorrow with Improving Social Outcomes." She provided an overview of the Board's work and the NIES and gave recommendations for immediate action in the areas of access to affordable capital and procurement, including:

- Establishing a national Indigenous-led procurement institution, responsible for maintaining a directory of certified Indigenous businesses, and helping such businesses navigate federal and corporate procurement processes.
- Annual monitoring and reporting by government on whether departments are meeting the mandated 5% Indigenous procurement target.
- Creating a new financial system that gives First Nation communities more ways to boost their income and investment opportunities by improving their skills and resources.



SPECIAL EVENTS

NACCA's 2023 Indigenous Prosperity Forum

On April 19, 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach presented at the Indigenous Prosperity Forum, hosted by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA). The forum was held in Gatineau, QC, on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin and Anishinaabe People, and was an opportunity for Indigenous Elders, business owners, youth, and leadership to discuss Indigenous economic development, self-sufficiency, and economic reconciliation with business professionals, financial institutions, and government.

Ms. Madahbee provided an overview of the Board's work and the NIES. Inspired by the forum's discussions, the NIEDB provided recommendations for immediate action in the Budget 2023 Proposals, and the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business, as well as in the areas of access to affordable capital and digital connectivity. Specific recommended actions for the private sector were also provided. These recommendations include:

- Increase federal funding for Indigenous economic development programs and initiatives by no less than 10% of total spending on Indigenous Peoples.
- Increase the very low thresholds for non-competitive processes and sole source contracting.
- Increase the maximum loan limit of \$250,000 for Indigenous Financial Institutions.



APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Dawn Madahbee Leach – Central Bank Network on Indigenous Inclusion Canada

Dawn Madahbee Leach gave a presentation on Indigenous access to capital to the Central Bank Network on Indigenous Inclusion Canada on January 11, 2023.

Ms. Madahbee Leach emphasized how Indigenous access to capital remains one of the greatest challenges to greater autonomy and self-reliance for Indigenous governments, businesses and individuals. She spoke about the NIES and how the Calls to Economic Prosperity can be adapted for use in other countries with Indigenous Peoples and shared the specific Calls relevant for the Central Bank Network:

- #84: Reform government policy and legislation to remove all barriers to Indigenous access to capital.
- #90: Research and action the mechanisms that will stimulate Indigenous economic prosperity.
- #93: Create an Indigenous Business Development Bank or intermediary for Indigenous finance.

Sandra Sutter – Roundtable on Indigenous Economic Reconciliation in Natural Resources Sectors

On January 12, 2023, Sandra Sutter presented at the Clerk of the Privy Council and Deputy Minister of Natural Resources' Roundtable on Indigenous Economic Reconciliation in Natural Resources Sectors.

Ms. Sutter spoke about the relevance of the NIES Calls to Economic Prosperity to advance economic reconciliation in the natural resources sectors. Additionally, Ms. Sutter offered recommendations for the development of NRCan's National Benefits-Sharing Framework, such as:

- Use the NIES and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to inform the Framework, such as adopting the concept of "free, prior and informed consent."
- Align the Framework with the target that 5% of federal contracts go to Indigenous businesses.
- Recognize Indigenous governments as formal decision makers and establish co-management regimes.

Dawn Madahbee Leach – Deputy Ministers' Committee on Indigenous Reconciliation

Dawn Madahbee Leach presented to the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Indigenous Reconciliation on January 19, 2023.

Ms. Madahbee Leach provided an overview of the Board's work and the NIES, as well as recommendations for immediate action in the Budget 2023 Proposals, the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business, and in the areas of access to affordable capital and digital connectivity. These recommendations include:



APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

- Invest in existing Indigenous-led economic/business institutions and establish national Indigenous-led institutions focused on lands, infrastructure, procurement, statistics, education, and in the various economic sectors.
- Government departments to support and work with the NIEDB to make an Indigenous Telecommunications Strategy.
- Increase the total value of federal contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses by at least 5% where warranted by local populations.

Victoria LaBillois – Cannabis Act Industry Roundtable

On January 30, 2023, Victoria LaBillois spoke with the Cannabis Act Review Expert Panel at the Cannabis Industry Roundtable.

Ms. LaBillois discussed the importance of including Indigenous Peoples and perspectives in legislative development, particularly as Canada continues to develop the cannabis industry. Recommendations were directed toward Health Canada and included:

- Contract an Indigenous research firm to help ensure support for self-determination in the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples and in providing mentorship and leadership opportunities for Indigenous individuals who have the relevant expertise on this topic.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the motives for cannabis use among Indigenous Peoples (including understanding both the risks and the potential benefits of therapeutic use), as well as the Indigenous-specific factors associated with cannabis use to support health and wellness in Indigenous communities and inform public health programming.
- Help Indigenous communities set up the right legal frameworks and tools for the cannabis industry by offering expert advice and information they need to fully participate.

Danielle Levine – Business Development Bank of Canada Legislative Review

Danielle Levine presented at the virtual Indigenous Entrepreneurship Roundtable in support of the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) Legislative Review on February 2, 2023.

Ms. Levine provided an overview of the Board, the NIES and barriers to economic reconciliation. She provided recommendations to the BDC on how to better support Indigenous entrepreneurs, including:

- Establish a division specific to Indigenous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), designed to become a standalone, Indigenous-led institution.
- Develop a clear statement that focuses on supporting Indigenous SMEs and mitigating barriers that hinder access to capital and finance.
- Seek partnerships with Indigenous Financial Institutions, engage Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses, and commit to hiring more Indigenous staff.



APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Dawn Madahbee Leach – House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

On April 19, 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology on the topic of “Development and Support of the Electronics, Metals, and Plastics Recycling Industry.”

Ms. Madahbee Leach spoke about the importance of engaging Indigenous Peoples in the electronics, metals, and plastics recycling industry due to the significance of renewing, recycling, and reusing to Indigenous communities and the importance of environmental sustainability and ecological integrity. The potential for Indigenous procurement opportunities was also raised, and the following recommendations were provided:

- Institute Indigenous procurement targets in the Electronics, Metals, and Plastics Recycling Industry, and report annually on whether these targets are being met.
- Ensure that Indigenous Peoples are represented at all levels in this industry, and within related organizations, including at the most senior management and leadership levels.
- Learn more about how Indigenous communities are involved in recycling and environmental clean-up. Use initial studies, including traditional knowledge, to understand which parts of the environment are important to these communities.

Dr. Ruth Williams – CRTC Committee Meeting

On April 20, 2023, Dr. Ruth Williams presented to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Ms. Williams spoke about the importance of connectivity reach for economic reconciliation. She shared advice on improving Information and Communications Infrastructure (ICI) in the Far North and for all Indigenous remote communities, including:

- Seek agreements to allow Indigenous providers to utilize their existing infrastructure where possible.
- Change legislation to commit government and telecommunications providers to provide 100% connectivity – last mile connections.
- Prioritize Indigenous participation in the provision of telecommunication services in the private sector, both within the supply chain and in executive roles.



APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Maxime Vollant – Association of Canada Lands Surveyors Conference

Maxime Vollant presented to the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors on May 10, 2023, on “Indigenous Perspectives for Sustainable Land Governance.”

Mr. Vollant presented on the Board’s work, the NIES and the current state of First Nation’s land governance. Mr. Vollant invited the Association to engage further with the Board.

Dawn Madahbee Leach – Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples

On May 31, 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach spoke to the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on the topic of *Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation*.

Ms. Madahbee Leach shared several recommendations regarding Bill C-29 to ensure that Canada is held accountable for progress on reconciliation. These recommendations include:

- Expand the list of those nominated to the Board of Directors beyond Indigenous political organizations to include Indigenous Youth, Women, Elders, Survivors, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- Extend the responsibilities of the National Council for Reconciliation to include monitoring and reporting the full implementation of the UN Declaration Act.
- Develop a mutual workplan between the National Council for Reconciliation and First Nations University to ensure their responsibilities complement each other, focusing on monitoring research, policies, and progress related to implementing the TRC, UNDRIP, and NIES Calls.

Dawn Madahbee Leach – Te Puni Kōkiri Delegation Presentation

In April 2023, Dawn Madahbee Leach presented to the Te Puni Kōkiri Delegation in New Zealand on Economic Reconciliation in Canada.

Ms. Madahbee Leach presented on the Board’s work and the NIES. Ms. Madahbee Leach also shared information on areas for immediate action, including access to affordable capital, the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Businesses, and the Indigenous Telecom Strategy. Such required actions shared included NIES Calls to Economic Prosperity #84, #90 and #93.



APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Ruth Williams and Victoria LaBillois – NIEDB Meeting with CRTC

On June 19, 2023, Dr. Ruth Williams and Victoria LaBillois met with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Chairperson Vicky Eatrides.

Ms. Williams and Ms. LaBillois presented recommendations for improving Information and Communications Infrastructure (ICI) in the Far North and for all Indigenous remote communities, including:

- Connectivity must be seen as a human right, in the same way that food and shelter are human rights.
- The recommendations in the Auditor General of Canada’s (OAG) report on connectivity in rural and remote areas need to be implemented.
- Every community should have a fibre backbone, fibre to the home and cellular coverage within the community and inside dwellings, as stressed by the Assembly of First Nations Infrastructure Gap Analysis.



BOARD MEETINGS

Virtual Meeting

In February 2023, the Board met virtually to provide updates on committee activities and next steps. Board members also provided updates on their recent presentations and events. The meeting also featured a presentation on the “Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” by Keith Smith and Barry Christoff.

Board Meeting in Prince Rupert

In May 2023, the Board met in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The meeting featured reports from Board committees on their recent activities and future plans as well as an NIEDB Secretariat update. The meeting also included presentations from the Indigenous Services Canada BC Regional Office, Pacific Economic Development Canada, the First Nations Major Project Coalition, TELUS, the Prince Rupert Port Authority, and the Indigenous Services Canada Lands and Economic



The Board meeting at the Crest Hotel in Prince Rupert, BC.

Development Sector. On day two of the meeting, the Board hosted a roundtable on Indigenous access to capital alongside the First Nations Major Projects Coalition and Natural Resources Canada.



From left to right: Victoria LaBillois, Dawn Madahbee Leach, Lorne Pelletier and Elder Mae Louise Campbell.

Board Meeting in Winnipeg

In September, 2023, the Board met in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The NIEDB discussed the work of the various Board committees and received an update from the NIEDB Secretariat. The Board also held a strategic planning session for the creation and release of the 2024-27 NIEDB Strategic Plan. The meeting also included presentations and discussions with representatives



BOARD MEETINGS

from Indigenous Services Canada, PrairiesCan, Partnerships and Resolutions Sector of CIRNAC, Manitoba Inuit Association, Treaty One Economic Development Organization, Southern Chiefs Organization, and the Tribal Council Investment Group of Manitoba. The Board met with the Chief of Long Plain First Nation for lunch, and the Manitoba Métis Federation and Louis Riel Capital Corporation at their respective offices. The Board also visited the headquarters of the Indigenous company Manitoba Mukluks.

Board Meeting in Ottawa

In December, 2023, the NIEDB met in Ottawa, Ontario. The Board discussed the work of the various committees and received an update from the NIEDB Secretariat. This annual Board meeting in Ottawa allows the Board to bring recommendations and concerns directly to various ministers. The Board met with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister of Small Business and the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. The Board also had discussions with Indigenous governing organizations such as the President of Métis



From left to right: Maxime Vollant, Sandra Sutter, Hilda Broomfield Letemplier, Dr. Marie Delorme, Dawn Madahbee Leach, MNC President Cassidy Caron, Dr. Ruth Williams, Victoria LaBillois, Chief Terrance Paul, Andy Moorhouse, Bob Dickson.

National Council and representatives from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Assembly of First Nations. Presentations were also given by representatives from Indigenous Services Canada, the Department of Natural Resources, Animikii, NACCA, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Strategic Partnerships Initiative.



LOOKING AHEAD

Throughout 2023, the Board worked towards the release of four 2024 reports: *2019 IEPR Recommendations Revisited*; *Economic Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy*, the *2024-2027 NIEDB Strategic Plan*, and the *2024 Indigenous Economic Progress Report*.

2019 IEPR Recommendations Revisited

The *2019 IEPR Recommendations Revisited* details the Government of Canada's actions related to the recommendations provided in the *2019 Indigenous Economic Progress Report* (IEPR). The report links the 2019 IEPR Recommendations to the NIES Calls to Economic Prosperity. For each recommendation, the report identifies if progress has been made by the federal government or if more needs to be done.

Economic Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy

Economic Reconciliation: Growing Canada's Economy uses the 2021 Census data from Statistics Canada to estimate that closing economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous workforces could raise Canadian GDP by \$26.7 billion. The report outlines the methodology for this estimate.

2024-2027 Strategic Plan

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan identifies the NIEDB's goals and areas of focus over the next three years.

2024 Indigenous Economic Progress Report

The 4th edition of the *Indigenous Economic Progress Report* examines employment, income, community well-being, education, entrepreneurship and business development, governance, infrastructure, and the lands and resources of Indigenous communities. Guided by an Expert Advisory Panel of prominent academics from across the country, the report includes a gender-based analysis, as well as an examination of age and regional differences.

