



Access West

Ten Years and Still Going Strong

by Barry Lake, Senior Program Advisor,
WD Headquarters, Edmonton

For 10 years now, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has supported small businesses through a unique partnership of several integrated organizations that provide entrepreneurs with the products and services they need to establish a business or make it grow. With over 100 points of service across the West, this network of organizations helps make small business ownership a reality for western Canadians.

The foundation of these partnerships was put in place in 1995. That year, WD took over responsibility for the Community Futures Program in the West and its network of 78 (now 90) Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) from Human Resources Development Canada. At the same time, WD established Women's Enterprise Initiative centres (WEIs) and Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs) in all four western provinces. In 2001, Francophone Economic

Development Organizations (FEDOs) partnered with WD to create the Western Canada Business Service Network as it exists today.

Over the years, these organizations have helped even the most remote businesses with strategic economic planning, technical and advisory services, loans and self-employment programs. Ten years, and many success stories and awards later, these partnerships are still going strong.

Small Business Week 2005, October 16-22, is the perfect time to celebrate this important anniversary and acknowledge the hard work of our partners in keeping small business the driving force of the western economy.

This year's theme sums it all up "YOU'RE THE POWER behind the Canadian economy, let's share the energy!"

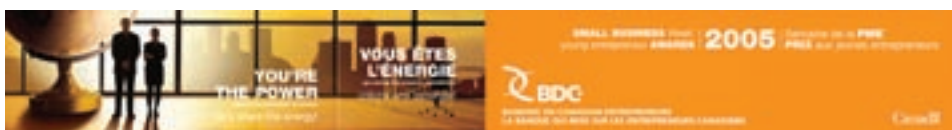
For more information on our business service partners, visit www.wd.gc.ca or see the contact information on the back cover. For more information on Small Business Week, visit www.bdc.ca. ■

Since 1995, CFDCs have provided more than 16,750 loans totaling over \$424 million. These leveraged an additional \$589 million.

Since 1999, CBSCs in Western Canada have provided more than 1.25 million in-person services and their user-friendly Web sites attract more than two million visits annually.

Since 1995, WEIs have provided more than 1,100 loans totaling over \$32 million. The report by the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, in October 2003, cited the WEI as an effective model for service delivery to women entrepreneurs.

Since 2001, FEDOs have provided more than 26,000 business services to francophone entrepreneurs. Through their support for pan-west tourism initiatives, the number of francophone tourists visiting Western Canada has grown dramatically.



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MESSAGE FROM

The Honourable Stephen Owen

Year after year, small business continues to be the engine of the western economy. In the 2004 CIBC Small Business Outlook Poll, more than 90 per cent of western small business owners were optimistic about their profit outlook and chances for success in the next year. More than 83 per cent of owners said their company was currently profitable. Both these figures outweigh the national average.

As Western Canada establishes itself as Canada's Asia-Pacific Gateway, new and exciting opportunities will be available to innovative small businesses in the West. The Government of Canada recognizes the growing economic importance of Asia. Strengthening trade and investment with China and Japan will bring lasting benefits to our region.

Looking ahead to spin-off economic opportunities created by the 2006 World Urban Forum and 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games — both hosted in Vancouver/Whistler — there is much to be optimistic about. This Small Business Week, Western Economic Diversification Canada is proud to partner with the Business Development Bank of Canada and other sponsors to acknowledge the invaluable contribution small business makes to our economy.

By building a stronger West, we are building a stronger Canada.

*Honourable Stephen Owen, P.C., Q.C., M.P.
Minister of Western Economic Diversification
and Minister of State (Sport)*

By Jitka Licenik, Editor-in-chief

Welcome to the New *Access West*!



Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) is proud to launch a renewed and revitalized *Access West* magazine that better reflects the priorities of the department and the interests of our key stakeholders.

“Our mandate as a catalyst for economic development and diversification in Western Canada remains the same,” said the Honourable Stephen Owen, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport), “but our methods have evolved to focus on where we can make the greatest impact.”

WD looks for strategic opportunities to collaborate with industry associations, research institutions, universities and other stakeholders. The department enters into partnership agreements that

support its three inter-related priorities: sustainable communities, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Gone are the days when WD provided direct grants or subsidies to businesses. Instead, the department helps innovative small- and medium-sized enterprises flourish in local, national and international markets through a network of dedicated non-profit organizations. The Western Canada Business Service Network partners, which provide business advice, loans or referrals, include the award-winning Canada Business Service Centres, Community Futures Development Corporations, Women’s Enterprise Initiative centres and Francophone Economic Development Organizations. You’ll find their contact information on the back of every issue of *Access West*.

As strong supporters of Small Business Week, this year being held October 16-22, the department’s focus for this inaugural issue of the new *Access West* is entrepreneurship. In addition to supporting the network partners, WD’s other priorities in entrepreneurship include promoting new investment into Western Canada and increasing the presence of western businesses in domestic and global markets to improve the region’s international competitiveness.

As part of WD’s role as an economic catalyst, the new *Access West* magazine will provide our partners and stakeholders with the latest studies, trends and policy directions in Western Canada. It will provide a glimpse into some of WD’s most important programs and initiatives and report on events and milestones that are relevant to the West.

Themes for each issue will continue to be relevant to western interests and diverse in scope. In addition to an annual small business issue, our themes will reflect priority areas for the western economy including environmental technologies, technology commercialization and the social economy.

We hope you enjoy the new *Access West*. Your feedback, comments and input are welcome at any time. Just email the editor at access.west@wd.gc.ca. ■

***Access West* will provide our partners and stakeholders with the latest studies, trends and policy directions in Western Canada.**

by Jillian Glover, WD Communications, Vancouver

Slumped to Pumped: How One Community Futures Office Helped a Region Achieve its Potential

The community was knocking down the door when a Community Futures Development Corporation opened in Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

“Prince Rupert and its neighbouring communities were experiencing a severe economic slump in 1999,” said Maynard Angus, general manager for the Community Futures of the Pacific Northwest office. “The region’s main industries — fisheries, forestry, and tourism — were all suffering. Our office opened in the midst of all that.”

Deemed a saviour by the community, the office became inundated with funding proposals when it opened. Angus had to hit the ground running when he was hired to manage operations.

“When I started, I walked into an empty building with just a desk and telephone,” said Angus. In its six years of operation, Community Futures of the Pacific Northwest has grown to a staff of seven and has helped provide \$10.5 million to the region.

“I measure our office’s success by the amount of funds that have come through our door for the communities we serve,” said Angus.

The economic situation of the Pacific Northwest has changed dramatically since 1999. Now, people are knocking on Angus’ door for a different reason: anticipation of huge economic growth from an expanded port and cruise ship terminal in Prince Rupert.

To help make the community a gateway for Asia-Pacific trade and a cruise ship destination, the community will receive \$30 million for port expansion from the federal government through Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD).

“We will make sure the community benefits from this incredible opportunity,” said Angus.

Operating in a service area that is 71 per cent First Nations, the office’s partnership with this community was recently recognized with the Minister’s Award of Excellence and Innovation. The RAIN project (Resources, Access and Information Network) brings computers and Internet access to nine communities, seven of which are mostly First

Nations and face extreme economic challenges. The project is enabling them to develop new skills through on-line learning and connecting to the virtual global community.

“The Community Futures of the Pacific Northwest was critical in getting this project off the ground,” said Kim Morrison, director of Finance and Corporate Services for the District of Port Edward.

Community Futures of the Pacific Northwest offers various business services, including loans to small businesses. There are 90 Community Futures offices across Western Canada, all operated in partnership with Western Economic Diversification Canada. For more info, visit www.communityfutures.ca. ■



The community of Prince Rupert now welcomes international visitors to dock at their port thanks to Western Economic Diversification Canada’s support toward building their cruise ship terminal.

by Jason Brisbois, Chief Economist, WD Headquarters, Edmonton

Second Phase of *Building the New West Initiative* Promotes Dialogue and Policy Development



The first step in developing new policies and initiatives for western Canadians is understanding the region's needs, aspirations and opportunities. Each year, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) supports a number of research projects that provide insight into issues of interest to western Canadian citizens and policy makers.

One of the most comprehensive projects was the Canada West Foundation's *Building the New West* initiative. The first phase, completed in 2002, identified five basic steps the West needs to take to compete in the global economy and maintain a high level of domestic pro-

perity. These include investing heavily in human capital, increasing the diversity of our products and exports, improving our transportation systems, ensuring our metropolitan centres are world-class economic engines, and improving co-operation among the western provinces.

To encourage dialogue and policy development in the five areas, the Canada West Foundation undertook a second phase of the project. It involved preparing over 30 detailed research reports, as well as holding numerous conferences, meetings, and undertaking extensive communications activities for each one. Advisory committees comprised of lead-

ers from business, government, and academia volunteered their time to guide the work in each area.

A final report on the second phase, *Under Construction: Western Canada and the Global Economy*, was released in March 2005. The report notes that 44 newspaper articles discussed various findings of the project, over 5,500 copies of project reports were downloaded from the Canada West Foundation's Web site, and more than 3,000 subscribers signed up for the *Building the New West* newsletter. The project clearly succeeded in getting the word out about western issues and prompting discussion and debate.

The cost of the *Building the New West* project was \$2,655,000, with 34 per cent coming from the Kahanoff Foundation, 26 per cent coming from WD and the remainder coming from over fifty public and private sector sponsors.

Electronic copies of all project reports are available free of charge on the Canada West Foundation's Web site at www.cwf.ca. ■

The second phase of the initiative involved preparing over 30 detailed research reports, holding numerous conferences and undertaking extensive communications activities.

by Terry McConnell, Freelance Writer, Edmonton

Concept to Commercialization a Booming Success

One look out the window from the Edmonton office of Dr. Eric Swanson is testament to the fact a new and diversified economy is taking root in Western Canada — an economy based on cutting-edge technology.

Swanson's office looks out on five massive construction cranes that loom over the campus of the University of Alberta on Edmonton's south side. For Swanson, an industrial technology advisor for the National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP), those giant booms serve as a reminder that the West is beginning to realize the economic benefits that come from public investment in companies that transform ideas into success stories.

Many of those success stories took flight at a meeting in Banff in 2001, when the NRC-IRAP and Western Economic Diversification Canada, or WD, joined forces and brought together 50 companies to talk about the future — a future where clusters of like-minded companies could share technology, resources and experiences, and help put Western Canada on the map in a brave new world. The Banff meeting focused the group's thoughts and discussions on how microsystems and nanotechnology can be applied to the life sciences.

Joining forces to mount such an initiative was a natural for both NRC-IRAP and WD, given how the work the NRC is doing through IRAP addresses a key component of WD's mandate — to strengthen Western Canada's economy.

"WD and NRC-IRAP have a long history of working together to accelerate innovation in Western Canada," said Brant Popp, director general of policy for WD.

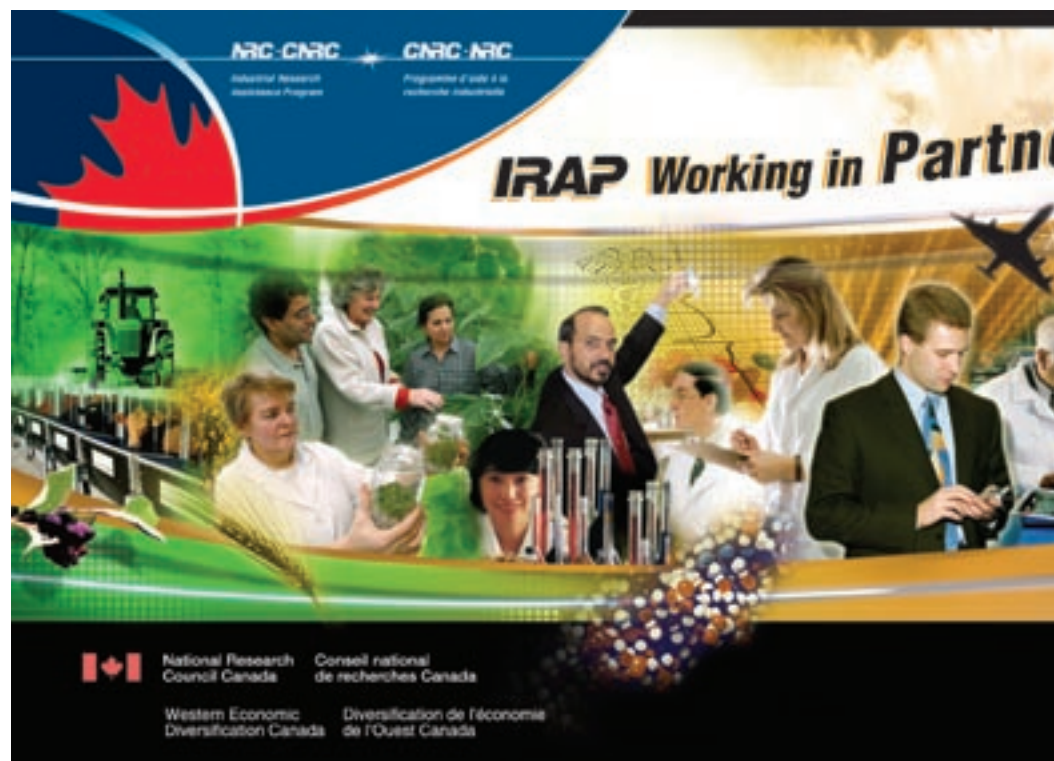
NRC-IRAP's western operation, encompassing not only Alberta but Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories, is appropriately titled IRAP West. Its executive director, Bill Smith, has helped engineer a shift in the program's focus from his Winnipeg office.

Smith says that, first and foremost, NRC-IRAP is in the business of helping small and medium-sized businesses grow, so that they, in turn, can help grow the west-

ern economy. To be sure, that help can come in the form of financial assistance, but that's only one part of the equation, he says.

In short, NRC-IRAP officials often play the role of mentors for their clients. They help find the expertise needed to solve problems, and they provide networking opportunities for people to pick each other's brains.

Joan Barichello, IRAP West's regional director for Alberta and the Northwest Territories, says industrial technology advisors, or ITAs, such as Dr. Swanson and others, are "thrilled" when they can play a role in the growth of a client. "It's



tremendously exciting to see the impact of the services that we bring to that table,” she said, “the advice, the networks, the connections.”

It’s an excitement shared by clients who are grateful for the guidance offered by NRC-IRAP’s army of experts. “They keep us from going down blind alleys,” said Chris Lumb, president of Edmonton’s Micralyne Inc., a nanotechnology firm. “What IRAP does for companies like ours, it enables us to reduce our risk in two ways: not just the financial support, but in bringing the right kind of expertise to product development.

For Dr. Yuebin Ning, vice-president

of research for Norcada Inc., another Edmonton nanotechnology firm, it’s the networking opportunities NRC-IRAP offers that he finds so valuable.

Moreover, says Jerome Konecsni, vice-president for corporate development for Bioriginal Food & Science Corp., a biotechnology firm in Saskatoon, it’s the background, education and experience of the ITAs themselves that many clients value.

It’s more than a complementary relationship, said IRAP West’s Barichello, “but a very tangible collaboration.” WD is interested in nurturing innovation as part of its mandate, she says, which means

it will work with non-profit organizations and universities to, say, help secure a sophisticated piece of scientific equipment that could help any number of companies. As for NRC-IRAP, “we can help individual companies put that equipment to use,” she said.

WD’s Popp said the partnership “allows companies to close the gap between the discovery of new ideas and the ability to successfully market new products and services.”

Vivian Sullivan, IRAP West’s regional director for Saskatchewan and Manitoba called it “full bang for the public dollar.” Whatever it is, it’s working.

And, according to Bioriginal’s Konecsni, the success that drives NRC-IRAP’s and WD’s efforts is not rocket science.

Although there will always be the temptation to try and pick winners, “where politicians can cut ribbons,” he said, the reality of successful government investment programs is quite different. “Programs work by helping individual companies. At the end of the day, that’s where innovation occurs. It’s created within a company, with programs designed to work with a company and address its specific needs,” he said. “That’s what works.”

IRAP succeeds, he added, by turning its attention to a company’s specific needs, “to bring real products to market that make money. It is a basic, common sense approach to innovation.”

And that’s good for everyone. ■



by Tom Wakefield, WD Communications, Vancouver

High-Tech Company Flourishes in Rural British Columbia

The term “high-tech” isn’t often associated with a small community of less than 10,000 people.

Nestled in the Southern Interior of British Columbia, Nelson has traditionally relied on the forestry industry to fuel its economy.

But times change. Communities evolve. And there’s an interesting evolution taking place in Nelson.

“There’s a fairly large underground technology community here,” says Dr. Morgan Dehnel, founder and president of Dehnel Particle Accelerator Components & Engineering Inc, or “D-Pace” for short.

“We’re still trying to find out who everyone is. Every time you go into a coffee shop you meet someone new in the technology field.”

D-Pace is one of the companies putting Nelson on the high-tech map, and helping the community become a Canadian leader in particle transport systems research.

Starting in the mid-1990s as a consulting firm for the particle accelerator industry, D-Pace switched gears in 2002 to focus on the commercialization and design of particle accelerator components. It licensed eight products from Canada’s Tri-University Meson Facility (TRIUMF) located at the University of British Columbia. This world-class subatomic physics research laboratory is home to the world’s biggest cyclotron, which is used to accelerate 1000 trillion particles each second.



Morgan Dehnel, founder and president of Dehnel Particle Accelerator Components & Engineering Inc, beside one of the magnets he designed and implemented at TRIUMF.

Today, D-Pace is a world leader in designing industrial charge particle transport systems for ion implantation, radiation processing, and radioisotope production sectors.

Not sure what that means?

“It means that a customer wants a particle beam to get to target,” says Dr. Dehnel. “We design how it gets there, right from the beginning to the end.”

The technology is used in such areas as nuclear medicine, killing germs (sterilization) and in the production of computer chips.

In May, Dr. Dehnel made a presentation to Nelson City Council. He acknowledged council’s support in helping him acquire a \$150,000 repayable grant through Western Economic Diversification Canada’s (WD) Softwood Industry Community Economic Adjustment Initiative.

The funding provided for marketing and business plans, technology transfer, and prototype development that have led to increased sales globally.

“We’re swamped,” says Dr. Dehnel. The company has six employees and just moved into a new office.

But there was another reason why he decided to address city council.

“The presentation alerted people to what’s going on in Nelson. It’s not the sort of business that was here in the past,” says Dr. Dehnel.

“With all the arts and outdoor activities available, Nelson’s a cool place to be. This helps us and other technology-related companies attract people to work here.”

For more information on how Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) supports small business, visit www.wd.gc.ca. ■

by Linda Chorney, *The Business Link*

An Innovative Way to Educate, Communicate and Participate

Albertans are becoming more and more connected, thanks to the wonders of technology and the Internet. Now, a new video conferencing network is giving Alberta entrepreneurs and small business owners access to business information and interactive training opportunities like never before — without leaving their own communities.

Championed by The Business Link, Alberta's primary Canada Business Service Centre (CBSC), this video conferencing network has 23 business development centres that use IP-based video conferencing equipment to educate and communicate with entrepreneurs across Alberta. Working together under the banner of the Entrepreneurship Learning Centre (ELC), these centres now offer their business clients training and expertise that was previously unavailable within their region.

"No other network like this exists in Canada," said Rodger Cole, general manager of The Business Link. "Not

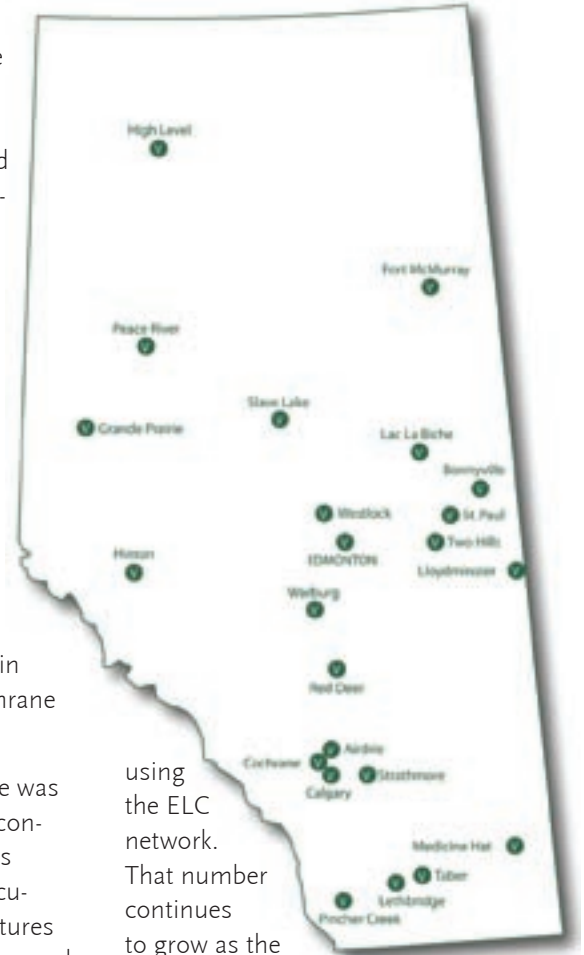
The Entrepreneurship Learning Centre is a network of 23 business development centres that use IP-based video conferencing equipment to educate and communicate with entrepreneurs across Alberta.

only does this connectivity allow our entire network to extend more services to clients throughout Alberta, (but) those clients are saving time and money that would have been spent traveling to seminars and meetings outside their community. It's a win-win situation for everybody."

With the support of Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD), the ELC network started out as a pilot in 2004. It connected The Business Link in Edmonton, the Alberta Women Entrepreneurs office in Calgary, the St. Paul office of La Chambre économique de l'Alberta, and Community Futures (CFs) offices in Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, Cochrane and Medicine Hat.

"It soon became evident that there was so much potential and benefit to connecting more of our centres across the province," said Jon Close, executive director of the Community Futures Network Society of Alberta. "The second phase of the initiative saw the network grow to 23 sites, mostly in rural Alberta, including a number of our CFs from as far north as High Level to as far south as Pincher Creek."

In one year, over 4,000 people received training or participated in meetings



using the ELC network. That number continues to grow as the ELC sites build on the skills in their own communities to customize seminars and workshops for Alberta small business owners. The CBSCs in B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba are also connected to the ELC network and can now share training expertise inter-provincially. ■

by Colleen Gnyp, Freelance Writer, Saskatoon

Young Entrepreneur Loves Being His Own Boss

Starting a new business is tough work. Starting a new business as a young adult is even tougher. Help is hard to find. Investment is hard to get. Mistakes are easy to make.

Fortunately for Matthew Anger, who opened MDG Computers, a computer and electronics retail franchise, in Saskatoon last year, there was someone there to give him a hand.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation (CYBF) is a national charitable organization that helps aspiring entrepreneurs from ages 18 to 34 to start their own businesses.

In 2001, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) contributed \$900,000 over three years to the CYBF. The funding included a \$500,000 repayable contribution to establish a loan fund. The remaining \$400,000 non-repayable contribution established a mentorship program and supported operating, administration and research costs. The WD loan fund contribution was matched by private sector support that CYBF receives nationally from CIBC and Royal Bank, and from corporate contributors in Saskatchewan.

The CYBF provides three core services that give young business owners the tools they need for a successful beginning: mentoring, start-up financing, and learning resources in local communities.

“It’s tougher to approach traditional lenders (when you’re a young entrepreneur),” said Anger. “The program helps to do that.”

Like most small business owners, Anger started with a thorough knowledge of his field. With a background in engineering, there wasn’t much he didn’t know about the technical side of his business.

Where he needed help, he said, was in understanding the financing and cash flow needs of a new business. CYBF set him up with a mentor who could guide him through this minefield.

“For me, the mentoring, being set up with a mentor, was the best part,” he said. “I have someone to give me extra support.”

“You have to remember you don’t have a boss any more. You have to be able to talk to somebody. They help you with the things you’re not as familiar with.”

In addition, the CYBF helped the new business acquire capital and financing for inventory, said Anger. “In computers, it’s so tough to finance inventory.”

“Running a business is awesome,” he said. “It’s also challenging. There’s a big learning (curve).”

“It’s nice being my own boss, that’s for sure. Ultimately, it’s pretty rewarding, not only to support myself, but giving employees a life out of it as well.”

To learn more about the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, call Daria Coneghan, regional director, Saskatchewan office at (306) 664-2923, e-mail dconeghan@cybf.ca or visit www.cybf.ca. ■



Matthew Anger stands outside his Saskatoon franchise, MDG Computers, which he opened with the help of the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

by Lee Gregg, WD Communications, Winnipeg

Stylistically Innovative

“My husband came home from work one day and announced that he wanted to start a laser business,” recalled Alice Taylor. “I thought he was crazy.”

Five years later the crazy idea has made Alice and Malcolm Taylor the successful owners of Innovative Laser Works, a company that engraves highly detailed graphic images onto any flat surface, such as granite, acrylic, glass or wood.

“As I worked on the business plan, I was sure the numbers would show it wasn’t a viable business,” said Alice. “I spoke with the memorial industry who thought it was a great idea. I went to the Women’s Enterprise Centre (WEC) who thought it was a great idea and were prepared to provide financial support. I finally went to a bank who not only thought it was a great idea, but were willing to extend a business loan to see it happen.”

While working with WEC on her business plan, Alice was encouraged to visit the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre (C/MBSC). “The Business Centre was very helpful,” noted Alice. “I rented videos that showed me how to work out my profit margins, I researched start-up and marketing information, and I attended the Manitoba Business Start Program business seminar.”

Through the C/MBSC, Alice was introduced to the Aboriginal Business Service Network (ABSN) and was invited to compete in their business plan competition. She surprised herself by winning and used the award money to open up a 2,000 square foot storefront location.

The Taylors were the first entrepreneurs to bring the large format laser to Manitoba and have recently expanded



Clear Night, by artist Sandi Storen, features a mother polar bear and her two cubs trekking across the arctic polar icecap as the cascading colours of the northern lights dance overhead.

PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOVATIVE LASER WORKS
PHOTOGRAPHER: LANCE THOMSON, LANCE THOMSON PHOTOGRAPHIC

their services to include edge lighting. These decorative pieces are made out of vector-cut acrylic, then laser engraved and set into a wood base. Light emitting diodes (LED) are placed in the base and illuminate only where the laser engraved. A beautiful example of this technique can be found at the Parklands/Mixed Woods Gallery at The Manitoba Museum.

The company’s services include memorial plaques, monuments, donor boards, promotional items, industrial applications, signage, and edge lighting. Clients have used their services to etch photos, images and words on doors, tabletops, fireplaces, plaques, floor inlays and mirrors. In fact, the Taylors are open to any idea their customers bring to them. As Alice likes to point out, their name is “Innovative”.

For information on Innovative Laser Works, call (204) 633-0860 or visit www.innovativelaserworks.com.

For information on WEC, C/MBSC and ABSN, visit: www.wd.gc.ca. ■

“The Business Centre was very helpful. I rented videos that showed me how to work out my profit margins, I researched start-up and marketing information, and I attended the Manitoba Business Start Program business seminar.”

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THE ABORIGINAL BUSINESS

SERVICE NETWORK helps to increase the ability of Aboriginal people to access capital, and to establish and grow their businesses. Customized business information and resources are provided through Canada Business Service Centres across the West.

www.cbosc.org/absn/

In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, contact your local Canada Business Service Centre for referral to the nearest Aboriginal resource office, or explore the link above.

All British Columbia enquiries can be directed to the B.C. Aboriginal Business Services Network coordinator.

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Community Futures Network Society of Alberta (403) 851-9995 Toll-free: 1-877-482-3672

Community Futures Partners of Saskatchewan (306) 260-2390

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offices provide customized services to help women entrepreneurs succeed, including business loans, advice and information, as well as networking and mentoring opportunities.

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www.womensenterprise.ca

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provide enhanced services to francophones, including training, business and community economic development, access to capital, information services, marketing advice, networking and mentoring.

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