

# Cedar Post

Economic Development Special Edition



Spring 2001



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### About the Circles of Light image

The image, *Circles of Light*, symbolizes a new era of co-operative efforts to build stronger Aboriginal communities and economies. These *Circles of Light* reflect a powerful belief in the future of Aboriginal people. The image also refers to the rising sun as a symbol of new beginnings. The five rays of the sun represent the five challenges Aboriginal people are undertaking in economic development—skills and experience, access to capital, lands and resources, markets and economic infrastructure.



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## About our publication

This special edition of the Cedar Post highlights successful business initiatives in several Ontario First Nations. These stories celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in many Aboriginal communities. We are pleased to share examples of how First Nation leaders, business people, and other partners are finding ways to build stronger economies and improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

**ONTARIO REGION**

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# First Nation profits from plaza and business park

*"The Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation is a progressive community open to fostering business alliances that will enhance economic development within the community. We are proud of the accomplishments made to date and we continue to strive for further success."*

*~ Chief Daniel S. LaForme,  
Mississaugas of the New Credit  
First Nation, speaking about New  
Credit's economic development*

Members of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation are proud of the advancements the community has made to strengthen its wealth and resource base.

New Credit has a 20 year economic development plan—and the membership played an important role in creating it.

A significant percentage of the community responded to New Credit's Economic Development Strategic Plan by saying they wanted a shopping mall, gas station, and light industry. The council matched that by building a shopping plaza with the New Credit Variety and Gas Bar. It also started developing a business park.

The plaza opened in 1997 and doubled its profit projections during its third year of operation. The infrastructure (water and sewer, hydro, etc.) for the business park was recently completed, and the council is developing a strategy to attract business partners.



*Mississaugas of New Credit commercial plaza.*

Fifty per cent of the profits stemming from the New Credit Variety and Gas Bar are donated to community organizations, social services organizations and recreational groups.

The remainder of the profits go back into business development.

The overall goal of New Credit's economic development strategy is to cultivate self-sufficiency and generate employment. The method of getting there requires the community and its elected band council to work together to reach those goals.

*For more information about New Credit's economic development programs, please contact Mandy Eason in communications at 905-768-1133 or by e-mail at mandyeason@newcreditfirstnation.com.*

## **New Credit First Nation Commercial Plaza**

**Opening Date:** 1997  
**Job Creation:** 29 full time positions

**Plaza Tenants:**  
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce  
New Credit Variety & Gas  
King's Bait and Tackle  
General Partners Inc. (Casino Rama Distribution Centre)  
Aiwana (Personal Counselling)  
Andyhun Inc.  
Mohawk College

**Traffic Flow:** More than 10,000 cars pass the plaza each day





## Brewing success at Turtle Island Coffee



*Turtle Island Café.*

Did you know that coffee is the second most traded commodity on the world market next to oil? We have all heard of Starbucks®, Timothy's®, and Second Cup® but how about Turtle Island Coffee? Turtle Island Coffee Company is an Aboriginally owned business run by the Mohawks of Akwesasne First Nation located on Cornwall Island, Ontario. The company's on-site roaster recently celebrated its first anniversary. Its café has been open for about two years. Turtle Island Coffee's future looks bright as the company expands to meet a growing demand for its socially conscious product.

What makes this company unique is its business philosophy which espouses international development through partnerships with other Aboriginal groups and the adoption of socially responsible corporate business practices. The only coffee beans Turtle Islands buys are beans

grown and harvested by Aboriginal coffee cooperatives in Latin America. You might say this is a modern day example of an international trade agreement between a First Nation in Canada and indigenous people in Central America.

About two years ago, the Turtle Island Café opened in the Peace Tree Trade Centre on the Akwesasne reserve. With a seating capacity of 40 people, its floors, tables and walls are adorned with Iroquois and Mohawk designs. The café features paintings from a different artist each month. The moment it opened its doors the café became an instant success, serving as the hub for community members who need to kick-start their day with its brew.

The roasting and distribution operations are also located within the centre's complex. Currently, the roasting operations are in the process of expansion and will soon grow to five employees. As business expands,

employment opportunities increase for community residents. For instance, the roaster will soon require the assistance of a travelling sales representative as well as a package/delivery person.

There are two driving forces behind Turtle Island Coffee Company: Vaughn Sunday, the Director of Economic Development for Akweks:kowa Corporation and Tessa Jocko-Jaereo, General Manager of Operations for Turtle Island Coffee.

Tessa is optimistic about future plans: "We also hope that the café becomes a First Nations' franchise and spreads out in all directions just as the Great White Roots of Peace spread in all directions."

Vaughn and Tessa have big plans for Turtle Island Coffee. They have been especially pleased by the interest and support for the coffee expressed by local residents and businesses in the surrounding Cornwall area. Tessa



states the Cornwall and area community residents supported the coffee as they knew it was distributed by the First Nation.

However, they were really won over and surprised to learn that the coffee was also roasted on the reserve making it an even more special commodity.

"Our original target market was other First Nation communities and some 230 First Nation casinos around North America," says Vaughn. "However we have begun to supply non-Aboriginal businesses and restaurants. We have recently been requested by major grocery stores in Cornwall to add bar coding on our bags so that they will be able to sell our coffee to their customers. This was rather unexpected, so we are obtaining a GST registration and bar coding technology for our products."

Vaughn recently returned from a tour of Mojave Territory in Laughlin, Nevada. The Mojave community has expressed interest in setting up a Turtle Island café and roastery franchise to service the southwestern United States. Vaughn also attended

the National Indian Gaming Association convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico, last year, to market the coffee and the café franchise opportunity to other Aboriginal groups.

What has been the secret of their success in such a short period of time? Perhaps in

fee we buy is mountain grown. We do not compromise on quality and buy cheaper lowlands coffee. We are now ready for growth and expansion."

*For more information please contact Tessa Jocko-Jaereo, General Manager of Operations for Turtle Island Coffee 613-933-8975. E-mail address: turtleisland@akwesasne.ca*



**Above: A selection of coffees produced by the Turtle Island Company.**



**Tessa Jocko-Jaereo, General Manager of Operations for Turtle Island Coffee.**

this era of the Internet and globalization there is room for a socially responsible and environmentally sensitive product. As Vaughn states, "There is a lot of interest among both the general population and other First Nations in Aboriginal coffee. Many people are socially conscious of what benefit there is to the local Aboriginal farmers in Latin America. It is beneficial for us to pay fair market price for all of the coffee purchased by Turtle Island Coffee. In addition to being a socially conscious business, the cof-

***"We also hope that the café becomes a First Nations' franchise and spreads out in all directions just as the Great White Roots of Peace spread in all directions."***  
**Tessa Jocko-Jaereo, General Manager  
Turtle Island Coffee**



## Sky is the limit for Rainy River businesses



Chief Jim Leonard at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre.

The employment and economic development picture for Rainy River First Nations has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. The late 1960s and 1970s saw 100 percent unemployment in this community. The only local work came from the two loads of wood each family was allocated to cut each winter for sale to the local mill. Summer months brought some jobs for those who moved to Minnesota to work for logging companies, but local employment was largely unheard of.

Today, there are jobs in Rainy River First Nations for anyone who wants to work, according to Chief Jim Leonard.

The change has brought a new feeling to this community, one of confidence and satisfaction. With this confidence comes a bright outlook for the future. "There is a lot of feeling in this community that the sky is the limit," says Chief Leonard. "We have the knowledge and expertise here now to do whatever we want to do." Others are noticing the community's

accomplishments, too. Rainy River First Nations was awarded a Caring Community award in 1999 by Ontario's Trillium Foundation. The award recognizes communities whose imagination and collaboration have led to specific and long lasting achievements, especially in the face of limited resources and difficult situations.

The First Nation is also establishing regional and international partnerships that have led municipal, state, and provincial governments to formally recognize its contributions to local health care services, and the management of the ManOMin watershed.

What is Rainy River's key to success?

"The people themselves," says Chief Leonard. "You have to have a com-

munity that is committed to change. With their support you can make anything happen. You also need to have a Council that is prepared to step back and let the businesses run themselves. You can't interfere in the day to day operations or they won't succeed."

Chief Leonard also believes it's important for businesses to grow at a rate they can sustain. "People are always asking me how we have accomplished so much," he says. "And what I tell them all the time is, 'Don't be afraid to go slow with this. You need to learn to walk before you can run.' A lot of economic development starts out too big and communities can't handle it, but if you grow at your own pace you'll succeed."

As for the community's future economic development plans, the main goal is to continue nurturing the existing businesses. "We actually have a labour shortage here," explains Chief Leonard.

"For now, our plan is to keep strengthening what we already have."

Those plans include continued training to make sure the First

Nation's workforce continues to be well skilled and ready to take on new challenges.

***"You have to have a community that is committed to change. With their support you can make anything happen."***  
**Chief Jim Leonard**

*For more information on Rainy River First Nations economic development initiatives, contact Chief Jim Leonard at 807-482-2479.*





# Manitou Forest Products

## A strong foundation for business



Jeff Brown, of Rainy River First Nations, handles wood while working at Manitou Forest Products.



**R**ainy River First Nations' largest employer is

also its oldest. Manitou Forest Products began almost 30 years ago as a sawmill operation. It has now expanded to a year-round business that produces high quality wood products and employs about 35 full time workers. Profits from 1999-2000 totalled roughly \$400,000. Twenty-five percent of this is "saved for a rainy day," says Chief Jim Leonard. The other 75 percent is invested in other community economic development projects.

Manitou Forest Products bills itself as a specialty wood manufacturer, offering a wide array of premium forest products—everything from knotty pine interior panelling and birch flooring, to exterior cedar siding and decking. The company has contracts for materials used for housing construction and home renovation as well as

commercial products. Boise Cascade, for example, purchases boards that are cut and heat glued together to make wood separators. Inserted between large stacks of wood, the separators allow forklift operators to access the wood easily, saving valuable labour time. Manitou Forest Products' heat gluing facility is just one more way for the company to diversify and capture its share of the lumber products market.

The company's state of the art equipment means that virtually nothing is wasted. For example, sawdust and bark removed from the raw logs are sold to Marvin Windows in Warroad, Minnesota, which uses them to fuel its boiler system.

The log edges are removed using a computer guided laser which increases accuracy and efficiency, and what remains is cut into boards or left as square timbers for commercial sale. The waste wood is chipped and sold

to paper mills in Fort Frances.

The boards, timbers and other wood products are dried in a boiler heated kiln that holds up to 80,000 boards at once. They are then run through one of two planers, and graded for sale. In busy times, both planers often run day and night.

Manitou Forest Products knows its market share ultimately depends on the quality of its products. The construction of Rainy River's Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre offered a unique opportunity for the company to show what it could produce, and the stunning result leaves no doubt it was more than up to the challenge.

*For more information on Manitou Forest Products, contact Dale Kaemingh, Manager, at 807-487-2185.*



## Historical centre takes visitors back in time



*Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre.*

If Manitou Forest Products laid the foundation of Rainy River First Nations' modern day economic development, Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre celebrates where it began thousands of years ago.

Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung means "Place of the Long Rapids" in Ojibway. It is a sacred place with a history that dates back 10,000 years. For thousands of years, people from across the continent met at this place, just 65 kilometres from the headwaters of the Mississippi River, to trade, fish, celebrate, and bury their loved ones.

These earlier peoples were the builders of the Manitou (Ojibway for "spirit") Mounds, an archaeological record of life throughout these diverse generations. The ancient burial mounds are built on river terraces along the edge of the Rainy River and the Long Sault Rapids. Today, the people of Rainy River First Nations are the guardians of this site's rich heritage, and Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre is their way of sharing it with others.

The Manitou Mounds site is well known throughout the region. In 1969, the Canadian government declared it a National Historical Site. It was the Elders, at Rainy River First Nations who has the vision of building a facility that would help teach visitors from all over the world more about the vibrant, sophisticated societies that thrived at the Place of the Long Rapids.

Their vision has become a world-class interpretive centre that is home to roughly 20,000 artifacts. It is a magnificent facility, with five brightly lit galleries, a conservation lab, teaching and demonstration areas, a gift shop specializing in Ojibway arts and crafts, and a restaurant that serves traditional Ojibway foods like wild rice and pickerel.

Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung employs 15 full time staff year round, adding two extra tour guides during the busier summer season. Construction began in 1995 and the centre opened to visitors for the first time in 1997. Like most cultural centres, it is a constant work in progress as displays are

rotated to make sure there is something new for repeat visitors.

The First Nation and its partners have invested more than \$7 million in the centre so far. Through Canadian Heritage, FedNor and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the Government of Canada has provided approximately \$1.3 million to the project. Included in this is funding from INAC's Opportunity Fund program, which was used to develop an exhibit demonstrating traditional methods for harvesting wild rice.



*Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre lobby.*



The Province of Ontario has also been a significant partner, contributing \$1.3 million in the initial stages, and an additional \$2.8 million in 1998 through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Program.

Rainy River First Nations Chief Jim Leonard estimates the community's contribution to Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung at roughly \$2 million so far, including operating and initial marketing dollars, as well as funding to produce two of the centre's main exhibits.

Now that all of the centre's services are fully operational, the focus has turned to marketing to attract the number of visitors needed to cover Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung's annual \$500,000 operating costs. In fact, curator Stacey Bruyere is now spending half of her time on marketing the historical centre. She is also the cultural and heritage sector representative on the Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada.

More than 10,000 visitors have been through the site since 1997. The guest book shows that visitors have come from as far away as Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Brazil, New Zealand, Holland, and the United Kingdom. Chief Leonard estimates that if they can reach an annual target of 70,000 visitors, "we'll be breezing along in terms of covering our costs."

The centre has already started selling bus tours for the spring. Many tour operators visited the site last summer, and the First Nation hopes this will mean large tour groups for the coming season. Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung's informative web site will help increase access to more distant tourism markets.

Rainy River First Nations is also heavily involved in a regional marketing strategy called Gete-Miikana (The Old Road) which is designed to draw tourists to the whole area. This approach goes hand in hand with the community's view that when it comes to economic development, what's good for the region is good for Rainy River First Nations – and vice versa.

Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre leaves Rainy River First Nations uniquely poised to play a key role in the region's tourism industry for years to come.

*To find out more about Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung, visit its website at [www.longsault.com](http://www.longsault.com) or contact Curator Stacey Bruyere at 807-483-1163.*



**Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung gift shop. Visitors Thea Sinninghe (left) and Anne VanLeeuwen (right) receive help from gift shop attendant Leah Hunter (centre).**

### **Gete-Miikana The Old Road**

Rainy River First Nations and the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa are hoping the ancient trails, routes, riverways, and paths used for thousands of years by their ancestors will draw new visitors to the region's modern day attractions.

Together, they are developing an audio tour of the area's sites and attractions called Gete-Miikana, Ojibway for "The Old Road." Using a CD player, visitors can listen to the region's history while they travel today's more modern roadways.





## Future looks bright through Northwind Windows

Next door to Manitou Forest Products is Little Fork Ojibway Window Factory, a recent addition to Rainy River's business community. The company employs an average of six full time staff year round, with that number almost doubling during the busy building season.

Located in Rainy River First Nations since 1995, Little Fork produces high quality, custom built windows that are made to handle northern Ontario's extreme weather conditions.

"Here in northern Ontario, we get a real range of temperatures, from sweltering summer days to our long, cold winter months," explains manager Dan Parfitt. "Little Fork produces Northwind windows, which are made to withstand the extreme temperatures we experience throughout the seasons."

Northwind windows feature PVC (polyvinyl chloride) frames and sashes manufactured on site in Rainy

River. The PVC arrives in long strips and is molded into shape based on the customer's order. Like the sawmill, Rainy River's window factory uses the latest technology, including machines that produce "fusion welded" corners. The pre-cut glass is then fit into the custom frames. All of this is designed to ensure good looks, great fit, and excellent thermal efficiency.

And best of all for the customers, this manufacturing method means that if you can think it up, they can build it. In addition to standard rectangular windows, Little Fork produces octagons, hexagons, rakeheads, peakheads, and more. The company's first job was to produce the windows for Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre.

Little Fork's customers include many Nishnawbe-Aski and Treaty 3 First Nations. The company can fill virtually any order for clients in virtually any location. In October 2000 it shipped

280 windows to Eabametoong First Nation (formerly Fort Hope), a remote fly-in community north of Thunder Bay.

To help promote itself in the competitive window market, Little Fork has set up displays in hardware stores throughout the region. Parfitt also visits technical services staff who assist First Nations with their housing projects to introduce them to Little Fork's Northwind windows. Rainy River's proximity to U.S. markets means the company is also looking for ways to increase its American client base.

"Our goal is to continue to grow while maintaining the quality of our products," Parfitt says. "It's a competitive industry, but we're making a name for ourselves and our products speak for themselves."

*For more information about Little Fork Ojibway Window Factory, contact Dan Parfitt at 807- 487-1100.*



**Little Fork Ojibway Window Factory employees displaying examples of their work. Left to right: Pamela Major, Vern Smith, BJ Wilson, Dan Parfitt, and John Barras.**



**Vern Smith preparing a Little Fork Northwind window frame for glass.**





## Business is growing at the sturgeon fish hatchery



Hatchery manager Joe Hunter (left) and Craig Jourdain (right) tag a sturgeon as part of an ongoing study.

These two month old sturgeon fry were born and raised in the hatchery.

**R**ainy River First Nations is home to another business that is growing—a sturgeon fish hatchery.

Prior to the 1900s, the Rainy River was renowned for its sturgeon, but over fishing caused the population to "crash" around the turn of the century. It made a comeback in the following years, before crashing again in the 1960s.

The community's hatchery was designed to restock the river's sturgeon supply. It's just one of many environmental initiatives this First Nation has undertaken. Rainy River has been recognized nationally and internationally for its wide range of environmental projects focused on protecting, conserving, and revitalizing the ManOMin Watershed area. The First Nation works with various levels of government in Canada and the United States, as well as with local landowners. The community also develops and delivers a variety of science and nature programs to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the region.

Jennifer Mercer is the co-ordinator of

Rainy River First Nation's watershed program. She explains that the very elusive nature of the sturgeon is making the business of raising these fish in the hatchery a more difficult task than first imagined.

"The main problems come from the fact that we don't know much about the sturgeon and their habits because they haven't been readily available for study like more prevalent fish such as pickerel," Mercer says. "We know just about everything when it comes to what pickerel like during their various growth stages, but certain stages of development in the sturgeon are a complete mystery."

This makes it difficult for the hatchery to recreate the conditions that will let the fish thrive and develop commercially.

To better understand the fish and their preferred habitat, the First Nation is conducting a study of the sturgeon that appear to be making a limited comeback in the river. The goal is to find out more about the ideal breeding and growth conditions,

and also to determine what effect reintroducing large numbers of sturgeon from the hatchery could have on the river habitat.

The hope is that in addition to restocking the river, the hatchery will also eventually produce sturgeon for sale to American fish farms—an industry Chief Jim Leonard describes as "huge" in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In the meantime, the fish habitat studies continue, and the hatchery is being used to raise trout and other fish for commercial sale. It's just one more example of how Rainy River First Nations adapts its economic development initiatives to meet the needs of the marketplace.

*To find out more about the fish hatchery contact Joe Hunter at 807-482-2479 extension 230. To find out more about Rainy River First Nations' Watershed Program and other environmental initiatives, contact Jennifer Mercer at 807-482-2479 or visit the program's website at [www.watershedreportcard.org](http://www.watershedreportcard.org) or [www.ec.gc.ca/eco/reg/default.cfm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/eco/reg/default.cfm)*



## Wabigoon tree nursery a growing success



*Fred Garneau checks seedlings that have just gone through a Jiffy root cutter.*

A community that once cut trees for the forestry industry now operates one of northern Ontario's most modern tree nurseries, thanks to solid partnerships developed between the First Nation, the private sector, and the Government of Canada.

Wabigoon Anishnaabe Gitigewin Inc. Tree Nursery is located at Wabigoon First Nation, 30 kilometres east of Dryden, Ontario. This business is owned and operated by the First Nation and is a clear example of how successful partnerships can bring employment, business opportunities, and economic growth to Aboriginal communities.

The \$1.8 million facility is the result of financial partnerships between the First Nation, Human Resources Development Canada, FedNor, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). INAC's contribution was pro-

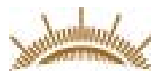
vided through the department's Opportunity Fund program.

The nursery's private sector partners are Weyerhaeuser Company Ltd. and Bowater Forest Products Division. These forestry giants are the nursery's prime customers, with contracts to purchase 3.1 million and 2 million seedlings respectively this year. The companies also provided essential technical, legal, and business advice during the nursery's development stages, and are sponsoring and assisting Wabigoon with development workshops for the nursery's board of directors.

The success of this partnership was recognized on November 23, 2000 as Anishnaabe Gitigewin, Weyerhaeuser, and Bowater received the first ever Ontario Aboriginal Partnerships Recognition Award. Established by the Government of Ontario with the assistance of the

National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, the award recognizes efforts to strengthen Aboriginal economic development.

Anishnaabe Gitigewin employs eight full time and 30 to 40 seasonal employees. The 94,000 square foot facility features state-of-the art equipment. Computers give readings on temperature, humidity, sunlight levels, and other essential data, allowing the nursery to keep close tabs on environmental conditions during the delicate germination and growing stages. Heaters, watering machines, exhaust fans, and windows respond to changes in the environment. Machines are used for the seeding process, and to separate the seedlings' roots during preparations for winter storage.







**Manager Roddy Brown checks one of the nursery's four "water walkers" as it passes over jack pine seedlings.**

By all accounts, the nursery's first crop is exceeding expectations. It may even produce 700,000 extra seedlings which can be sold for additional revenue. As for future plans, Anishnaabe Gitigewin's manager Roddy Brown says the key is to maintain quality while the company considers expanding its crops to appeal to the largest possible market.

"We want to diversify, but we have to ensure we do it well," he explains. "The knowledge has to be there if we're going to succeed. We're under a magnifying glass from the companies and from other corners too, so we want to stay top-notch."

But he adds, "We do have the facility to diversify so nothing will hold us back when we're ready. We have the people who are dedicated to making this a success but we need the knowledge too, and that will come."

Chief Reuben Cantin agrees that steady growth is the key. "When we

started developing this operation, profits weren't the main goal," he says. "We were looking for sustained employment and economic opportunities, not a quick buck. And that hasn't changed."

For now, the main goal is to pay off Anishnaabe Gitigewin's start-up costs. Eventually, a 10 member non-profit board will be set up to determine how extra revenues will be used in the community.

And while the First Nation's attention is focused on making the nursery a success today, plans for the future are already under way. Chief Cantin says a number of related businesses, like cone collection and tree planting contracts, might be worth developing hand in hand with the nursery.

"We'll always be looking for new opportunities for our people to participate fully in the economy," he says. "One of the biggest challenges we had was to convince people that they

had the capacity to run this business. Now that our confidence is growing, it will open doors to other businesses, too."

*For more information about Anishnaabe Gitigewin Corporation, contact Roddy Brown at 807-938-1302, or Chief Reuben Cantin at 807-938-6684.*



**This seedling started from a Jiffy pellet shown on left.**



## Dinawo clothing youth in body and spirit



Dinawo's logo incorporates a rising sun over a male and female eagle feather. According to General Manager Shelley Burnham, the logo means "together we grow under the same sun and our hearts lead us to achieve."

It's not a conventional message, but Dinawo appears to thrive on the unconventional. Dinawo, which means 'clothing' in the Choctaw Cherokee language, began in 1997 as a marketing experiment for two Aboriginal business students at Trent University. When twenty t-shirts sold like bannock at a powwow, Dinawo was officially born. The company was bought out in 1988 by the Aboriginal company Ojistoh Management Services of Hamilton. It now operates from the Six Nations reserve near Brantford with three full time and five part time employees.

Typically, when one thinks of Aboriginal fashion, what commonly comes to mind are images of fringe, buckskin, and intricate beadwork. Dinawo's casual jogging pants and polar fleece vests, with the cool logo imprinted on them, seem like standard fare in today's market, leading some to question what makes

**"We work to inspire and motivate young people to believe and achieve."**

**Shelley Burnham  
General Manager**



*Shelley Burnham poses proudly with the latest Dinawo sportswear line.*

Dinawo truly Aboriginal. The answer may lie within the fact that the company has the spirit of its people at heart. Although Dinawo generated \$250,000 in sales last year, the company insists it doesn't measure success by profits alone. It promotes Aboriginal role models, and is a clothing sponsor for an Aboriginal Peoples Television Network show, *The Seventh Generation*. It also provides training in retail sales and marketing for its staff. "We work to inspire and motivate young people to believe and achieve," says Burnham. "That's our motto."

As Dinawo grows, it aims to give back to Aboriginal communities. Once its website is complete, Dinawo will start an on-line newsletter to promote local lacrosse talent and other successful Aboriginal

people and businesses. It will also work towards attracting Aboriginal investors to expand its marketing, distribution, and retail stores.

*For more information, please contact Shelley Burnham at 519-445-0033, or visit Dinawo's web site at [www.dinawo.com](http://www.dinawo.com).*



**Dinawo clothing caters to all age groups.**





## Employment training brings jobs and healing

**G**inoogaming First Nation is home to a unique training program that is helping its members take advantage of the region's expanding employment opportunities.

The Aboriginal Workforce Development and Maintenance Program (AWDMP) began in 1996. It is a two tiered approach to removing barriers to employment for Aboriginal workers. The development portions help prepare clients for long term, full time employment, while the maintenance program helps them retain jobs through counselling and other support.

The AWDMP was developed with funding assistance from Mamo-Wichi-Hetiwin Employment and Training, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Contributions also came from Ginoogaming First Nation, Making Ground River Development Corporation, and Long Lake Forest Products.

Ginoogaming's training centre has three employees who offer a variety of training and support. In all, more than 500 clients have participated in AWDMP training programs. AWDMP offers three training options.

Level 1 training is a 12 hour employment preparation course which pro-

vides job-specific training to clients who are already employed. Level 2 training offers a four day course designed for clients who have some work experience. This course includes training in life skills, employment skills, job search skills, time management, and résumé writing.

The Level 3 training course is an extensive, six week program that has helped more than 200 participants. Many of these clients have little work

remove these barriers.

Once clients have found employment, AWDMP is available to help address any problems that make it difficult for employees to keep their jobs. Staff are available to mediate disciplinary discussions with employers, to help clients identify and resolve issues that could affect job retention, and to generally act as an advocate with employers. Counselling is available in areas like drug and alcohol addiction, anger management, life skills, financial management, and to address issues like housing, transportation, or child-care problems.

Employment in Ginoogaming has grown to 80 percent since the AWDMP began. In addition to its work with Ginoogaming members, AWDMP has also provided assistance or training to members of 30 other First Nations, the Métis community, and some non-Native clients.

"We are seeing a lot of positive outcomes from this program," explains

AWDMP co-ordinator Mary Candline. "I feel our community is healing and that individuals are becoming better prepared for the workforce. Their strengths and abilities are being reinforced, therefore empowering them with work skills and life skills."

*For more information on the Aboriginal Workforce Development and Maintenance Program, contact Mary Candline at 807-876-2242 or Cathy Meshake at 807-876-2878.*

***"I feel our community is healing and that individuals are becoming better prepared for the workforce. Their strengths and abilities are being reinforced, therefore empowering them with work skills and life skills."***

***AWDMP co-ordinator Mary Candline***

experience and have been out of school for a long time. This work skills program offers assistance with basic writing and math skills, job searching, and résumé writing. One of the main goals of this course is to help increase clients' confidence and self-esteem.

An employment community counselor is also available to help clients identify issues in their lives that may be a barrier to employment. Together, they develop strategies to



Tahgahoning Enterprises:

## A collective farm in a First Nations tradition

One of Ontario's most prosperous First Nation farming operations is Tahgahoning Enterprises, on Walpole Island First Nation, near Wallaceburg.

It is one of Walpole Island's most cherished community run businesses.

The farm operated with just 200 acres when it first started more than 27 years ago. It runs now with about 4,700—a success built mainly on the production of soy beans, grain corn, and seed corn.

However, it's not acreage or output that sets Tahgahoning apart. This is a collective farm organized in the spirit of a communal or "collective" enterprise. Here's why it is known as a "collective" farm:

- Land use. Tahgahoning makes significant investments to regenerate and protect the land.
- Members of Walpole Island were consulted extensively prior to the business start-up. Year end profits are turned back to the community through farm reinvestments and improvements.
- Tahgahoning is owned by the Walpole Island First Nation Council. This means that it is indirectly owned by the Walpole community. Tahgahoning leases the land from the band council.
- Tahgahoning operates under the guidance of a 10 member Board of Directors. A farm committee provides liaison between the First Nation Council and the Board of Directors.



*Tahgahoning's harvest of sugar beets.*

The board submits annual reports to the community.

*For more information, please contact Tahgahoning Enterprises at 519- 627-0881.*





*A Tahgahoning staff member surveys one of the farm's crops high up on a storage tower.*



*This picturesque photo shows one of the local drainage ditches.*

### The Cost of Soil

Tahgahoning's rich farmland makes for ideal growing conditions. But it comes with a hefty price. Due to the high water table around nearby Lake St. Clair, Tahgahoning's farmland tends to get water logged. Without proper drainage, excess water clogs the airspaces in the soil, drowning roots and killing plants. To overcome this problem, Tahgahoning's farm manager Peter Hensel estimates the farm has spent more than \$1.5 million on a drainage system that sits underneath more than 3,500 acres of earth, drawing moisture away from the soil. "It is a necessity for us," says Hensel. "And it makes business sense. We take our responsibilities to the land seriously. Our survival as a business is based on the land."

### Tahgahoning Enterprises Collective Farm

**Farm Size:**  
About 4,700 acres

**Ownership:** Walpole Island First Nation owns 3,900 acres  
Individual First Nation families own 800 acres.

**Years in Operation:**  
About 27

**Crops:** Commercial corn, seed corn, commercial soy beans, seed soy beans, canning peas, sugar beets, and chickory

**Sugar Beets:** Experimental crop started three years ago on 60 acres of land

**Seed Corn:** Planted on 500 acres

**Chickory:** First North American commercial production

### Employment:

Five full time positions

### Seasonal Employment:

Eight hired spring through fall; two or three hired in spring for two weeks as casual labour

### Actual Full Time Jobs:

Grain Elevator, Office Administration, Field Foreman, Maintenance, Manager



*Skyline view of Tahgahoning Enterprises.*





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