

ONE > NATION

ECONOMIC FORUM



ABORIGINAL
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE INC.

Forum Report



National Congress of
American Indians



BDO Dunwoody LLP
Chartered Accountants
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Roundtable Discussions

Guided by a Professional Facilitator

In partnership with the Aboriginal Leadership Institute, Inc, the Assembly of First Nations, and the National Congress of American Indians, the One Nation Economic forum, held October 30th and 31, 2007, was the second in a three part series designed to create an environment for investment and opportunities to flourish in Aboriginal communities.

The following report is the product of the Forum and the round table discussions held on day one of the event. The roundtable discussions were lead by expert facilitators who had the opportunity to give an overview of their respective industry and company. Each session ran one hour, with ten seats at each table: one facilitator, one recorder and eight business professionals with industry/sectors in common.

The facilitators led the discussion by posing relevant questions according to that table's specific industry/sector, as shown below. Utilizing the roundtable responses from delegates, the following is the report compiled by BDO Dunwoody LLP.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why are partnerships important in Nation-to-Nation business and how can we cash in on the values of those partnerships?
2. What kind of strategies could we use to promote business/entrepreneurship as a career path for youth?
3. How can we connect business to business more effectively across our nations?
4. How can we link corporate North America with Aboriginal business owners?
5. What role does Aboriginal government play in business and how can that affect your business decisions?

Roundtable Discussion Sectors:

- Natural Resources
- Advertising and Communications
- Business and Government (Tourism)
- Business and Government
- Finance
- Education and Technology
- Gaming

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BDO Dunwoody LLP is an entrepreneurially-spirited accounting and advisory firm. As Canada's dominant firm serving mid-sized businesses with more than 95 offices nationwide, BDO has the size and strength to present clients with a full range of comprehensive professional services. Through BDO International, which has more than 20,000 professionals in over 100 countries, the firm's support extends around the globe.



One Nation Economic Forum

Round Table Discussions

General Comments:

Natural Resources Sector

- Aboriginal government: access to resources, business and community plans.
- First contact to new ventures and establish protocol.
- Different response to new business is dependent on members and non-members.
- Members need additional support from Chief and Council and non-members are in need of more control from Chief and Council.
- There is a firewall between Chief and Council and new business operations.
- Investors have “operating control” and are legally liable.
- Limit political interference.
- There must be safeguards or guidelines that are consistent and don’t change with elections.
- Governance should be a stable environment for business.
- Informed band members in support of membership must have transparency for increased support structures.

Advertising and Communications Sector

- Band opportunities are increasingly becoming mainstream.
- First Nations need to work together to get the message out so that the message that we have isn’t distorted.
- Our companies can be more successful and advertising is definitely how to do that.
- Band resources are low so advertising is a great way to promote your business and maintain self-sufficiency.
- Our business departments need to gather ideas to make improvements at the board level so we can progress.

Finance Sector

- Economics is a long-term game. You have to figure out what your next move is to keep the ball moving forward.
- Look for opportunities that are positive and right for your business.
- Regional tourism is a big boost to any business.
- Before you decide to partner with another organization, know what they can do for you.



- Does it matter how marginal your savings can be? Realistically, you pay an employee minimum of \$40,000 per year plus benefits. You can potentially only have savings of 1-3%. This is when you have to ask, what can we do better.



- Starting a business can be a big problem if you don't understand banking, lending criteria and finance.
- Important factors when choosing a bank are the service, price, personality and consistency of employees.
- A major question to ask when choosing a financial institution, is what can they do better?
- Banks are in the business of making money.



Education and Technology Sector

- Success comes by implementing culture components because nothing is preconceived and students are more apt to engage with one another.
- Help guide career paths.
- Comprehensive look at how much technology is being used and increase our technology standpoint.
- Education has to be a number one priority.
- The sooner we get what it takes to make it, the quicker we'll be able to adjust.
- What are partnerships, what are they envisioning.
- Service provider that helps another service provider.
- Post-secondary education is required to be any type of manager.
- Technology helps you to be apart of the world anywhere and location doesn't matter.
- There are negative views of education because of Residential Schools.

Gaming Sector

- Legislation and jurisdiction are really good reasons to partner. Your partner may help you break into markets that you couldn't reach before.
- Relationships can be formed and you can network and take charge of new ventures.
- Awareness of opportunities and a broader medium to promote to the industry.
- You have the strength of two businesses approaching a larger market.
- You can develop innovative ideas that will change the market in your favour.
- Joint venture partnerships have the ability to build capacity and learn the industries.

1. Why are partnerships important in Nation-to-Nation business and how can we cash in on the values of those partnerships?

Natural Resources Sector

Part 1

- Resolution process is the same model used by all bands: communication.
- Develop personal relationships between nations.
- Cooperation between nations and working together on the common front market.
- This requires a support structure to bring various nations together. This may or may not have Tribal Council support.
- Past commitments made by political parties are not fulfilled. There should be a follow through process to ensure that “promises” are met.
- Clearer parameters are important.
- Nation-to-Nation projects have great potential. Participating groups can learn from each other’s expertise.
- Leverage and cross-pollination.
- Building capacity and resources.
- Allow you to build on successes and learn from failures.
- Reinvesting monies into other First Nation projects allows for diversity and long-term stability.
- Collective resources create more opportunities and breaks down barriers.

Part 2:

- The Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce network is a great support structure.
- Aboriginal industry sector and business associations.
- National database of First Nation suppliers and resources.
- To cash in and to understand the communication needs to be Aboriginal driven.

Advertising and Communications Sector

Part 1

- We partner because we don’t have the human resource or financial resources to stand independently all the time. We work together to become stronger and united.
- Our communities want to run independently but it is impossible because of the legalities and realities.
- Another reason to partner is because of the high risk to do business. The problem in Canada is the lack of equity to get involved in the big projects.
- Media and communications need to think about where the revenue comes from.



- Skill transfer would help make the partnerships stronger as well as build capacity and generate revenue in the community. Financial and commercial services are important in business.
- A really good example of partnerships is in Gila River. A neighbouring community didn't want to participate in the video lottery any longer. So in kind, they donated the machines to another casino creating a partnership for future business.
- In British Columbia, a lot of revenue is generated from forestry and logging. We need to think of new ways to bring in dollars because that resource is being depleted and it won't sustain our communities forever.

Part 2

- Media partnerships that are important would be a Canada/US market on television that is "nation to nation". This would market itself.
- Using the media to represent the good things about all of our cultures. As an example, northern British Columbia is always showcased on television in a positive and healthy manner.
- Some broadcasting companies are sliding by the broadcasting guidelines by utilizing an Aboriginal production assistant and call in Aboriginal programming. More needs to be done to showcase our stories and promote our cultures.
- There is synergy here, and these types of broadcasts allow the general public to view us in our natural habits. This type of advertising and communication allows us to show the world what we want to see. We just have to protect our sacred areas so that they are not exploited.
- Aboriginal Tourism BC is a great resource for getting more economic development into Aboriginal northern communities.
- Dollars that our territories will generate because of the 2010 Olympics and the new highways that are being built can be reinvested into other Aboriginal communities and give them the opportunity to develop as well.
- Using billboards is an excellent marketing tool to get higher yield for your dollar.
- Dual citizenship can be a way to cash in on partnerships across the borders if you do a lot of business on both sides.

Business and Government Sector - Tourism

- Partnerships need to be created between educational institutions, tourism and business.
- Barter exchanges are one solution to cash in on our partnerships.

Business and Government Sector - additional sector group

Part 1

- Experience and capacity are needed.
- You can learn a lot if you partner with others that know the business.
- Higher leverage and dollar resources, knowledge and experience.
- Explanation of value structures is very similar.
- The opportunity to trade or do business between countries would be easier if there is an understanding of the legislations.

- When you partner with other companies, you don't have to reinvent the wheel and you can strengthen your own independence.
- If you are willing to partner and learn from others you won't lose dollars because you didn't fully understand the business and market.
- You can protect your business and investment by partnering.
- Self-government and sovereignty partnerships equal interdependence.
- We need recognition of the values that we offer.
- We rely on the credibility of our partners to open doors across the borders.
- The opportunity to invest allows you to negotiate on an equal level.
- We must use models drafted by Aboriginal people to be utilized by Aboriginal people. In order to invite others to invest in our companies, we had better make sure that our companies are prepared, because they will be looked at very closely.
- Partnering allows you to create your own management framework and determine what will work best in the partnership.

Part 2

- We can cash in by sharing our knowledge, experience, and dollars and divide our benefits with each other.
- You must understand the tax advantages and disadvantages and work with the federal governments.
- Investing wisely locally, regionally, nationally and globally.
- Having strong mental capacity and values to do the job are key in cashing in.

Finance Sector

- You can gain up to 60% client intake by references, supporting each other's business and understanding your markets.
- Cash collateral pool to secure loans of a large denomination.
- A disadvantage of banking is the potential to lock revenue.
- Increase your access to capital and credibility with banking institutions.
- Leverage your finances.
- Intertribal trade can help facilitate smooth business transactions and ventures.
- Partnerships can create security in business and accountability.
- Partnerships can connect investment opportunities in the future.

Education and Technology Sector

- Networking leads you to people who will hopefully increase your business.
- Doubles your capacity to succeed and opens up the market for your company.
- There is a value and trust component.
- Long time to develop expertise and expertise forms a value of trust.
- Partnerships add value by bringing in resources along with expertise.



- Partnerships between education and technology are broad.
- Partnerships in education are schools and colleges helping one another.
- Most First Nations don't have a lot of money so it's important to use our resources properly.

Gaming Sector



- Target youth in junior high school.
- Utilize role model and mentorship programs to encourage youth to grow and develop their skills.
- Use sports as a medium, and healthy initiatives to get youth involved in the community.
- Give youth projects that they can manage that create experience, ownership and are self-defined.
- Create resource courses that youth can attend and excel in.
- Create awareness and allow youth to chase their career paths.
- Start encouraging them at a younger age.
- Role models and mentors catch their attention.
- Industry should have ways to promote the youth that are succeeding and encouraging those that are just starting out.



2. What kind of strategies could we use to promote business/entrepreneurship as a career path for youth?

Natural Resources Sector

- Promote long-term thinking because information is key.
- Create an Aboriginal "eBay" and teach more technology and business courses.
- Set up scholarships and trust funds for education that has criteria that must be met in order to be a recipient such as education levels and technical skills.
- Mentoring and shadowing.
- Role model programs are important. If we illustrate and shape our success stories we'll create our role models.
- Teaching youth basic business skills such as how to facilitate a meeting.
- Encourage youth to work within the band operations. This could be done as a pay back program to the band for youth that have been sponsored for their education.
- Ensure that the education that is being pursued meets industry needs.
- Workshops that youth can attend hosted in business class venues so they can visualize what success is.
- Invest band revenues into youth ventures.
- Provide a chart of wages and salaries to youth. This will allow them to see where they are and where they want to be.

- Encourage youth to network and practice public speaking.
- Exposure to various opportunities such as site visits of businesses, governments and organizations.

Advertising and Communications Sector

- As a starting point, additional Councillors are needed in the schools to help direct and guide students to make healthy choices for themselves.
- We need to look at the cost of getting youth more actively involved in business.
- Youth are always getting pushed to the bottom and used as political tools. We need to start viewing and portraying them as successes because they're the future.
- Environment is becoming a big issue.
- There is a program at UBC that has senior students mentor new students to help with the transition to University.
- That is something that we should be bringing back to our communities to encourage students to see their bright futures.
- There is another program that more and more youth should participate in, E-Spirit. The Royal Bank hosts this program and it is a national project.
- Quarterly, communities should host a "youth day". This could get different businesses involved, have the youth give direction as to what to have hosted at the events. This will allow the communities to find out what they want, how they can support the youth and stop "preaching" to them. It is important to hear from the youth and we need to recognize what they see and want because those are honest stories that will shape the decisions we are making on their behalf.
- Host a business series that is geared towards youth and business. This is an opportunity to showcase them and pull from their non-stop energies.
- As a business owner, take it upon yourself to give back to the community that supports you. Use your success to motivate others and become a role model.
- Work with youth at an early age. Start reaching the younger youth so that they too can make a difference.
- We need to start teaching the story of "Who is going to hold your hand when I am gone?" Our children need to start working, protecting and directing themselves.
- Higher curriculum in our schools is important. We need to start challenging the systems and agreeing that the bare minimum is acceptable.
- If our communities can succeed in business and do well economically, we can do better at preserving and practicing our cultures.
- We have communities that are so close and we have mixed communities. Language is an example of that, Dene/Cree.

Business and Government Sector - Tourism

- At the leadership level, opportunities for youth need to be created.
- Collectively, we should be working with national and provincial governments to tell our story. This will give identity to our youth.



- Involve youth at an early age and celebrate their successes and what they are doing for themselves.
- Provide entrepreneurial grants to youth and show them that online business is a possibility and opportunity.
- Introduce kids to agricultural processes so that they can understand harvesting, providing food for their families and respect of our earth.

Business and Government Sector - additional sector group

- Develop modules for our youth to learn about self-government, business and all that they entail. Incentives to complete the modules might be a strategy.
- Utilize tribal dollars to invest into youth for employment.
- Mentor young entrepreneurs.
- Youth encouragement to attend tribal and band meetings is important to get youth involved. This also allows them to have a role in the community.
- Open doors to youth and allow them to feel comfortable and apart of the band government.
- Work with youth to understand and deal with dollar resources so that they can manage financing, accountability and economics of the community.
- Create a program in your community that gives youth education and skills to deal with all of these issues.
- Create an Aboriginal Business Incubator” that is housed in a common area that youth can utilize and learn more about what business entails and means for their futures.
- Involve youth in summer programs and replicate a small business so that they can learn how to leverage their dollars, financing processes and marketing.
- Encourage youth to participate by highlighting their successes.
- Create a long-term strategy for youth to stay in school.
- Aboriginal funding for education.
- Entrepreneurship can work within cultural practices.

Finance Sector

- Forestry, as an example can expose youth to different opportunities.
- Most follow a path that has already been set for them, whether it is from family or community influence. Lets give them a new path to follow like sciences, math or meteorology.
- Give them options that are more then the status quo.
- When youth hear success stories from role models and the steps that it takes to reach success, that’s motivation. It allows them to see that you don’t have to shoot to the top; the small steps make you humble and appreciate your success. Use external role models because the message is going to be received better if the youth don’t know the other youth personally.
- Junior achievement programs like the E-Spirit program created by the RBC encourage youth to follow different career paths.

Education and Technology Sector

- Reaching kids at 10 years old and planting a seed for their future that can be fun.

- Aboriginal Science Camp converted into an Aboriginal Youth Business Camp where tools of business can be introduced.
- Entrepreneurs have to be promoted and we can do that by providing some funds to a specific age group.
- Interest, support and consistency are important to youth.
- Youth ages 14-30 from across Canada and the States in a forum like the One Nation Economic Forum with a context on business conference.
- Leave the community to get educated but when they come back there aren't any jobs waiting for them.
- The youth of today are very analytical and are meeting workforce requirements.
- Role models are needed to successfully promote education.

Gaming Sector

- To encourage trade across our nations we need to utilize our communications better. Our public relation departments need to advertise and market us in a way that will reach the larger markets.
- The lack of awareness only creates more problems. Not enough revenue is generated, higher stress and relationships are tested.
- To promote ourselves we should go back to the basics. We should be reaching our own communities first.
- Networking across the country, training in communities, public relations and relationships are a start to connect our businesses.

3. How can we connect business to business more effectively across our nations?

Natural Resources Sector

- Better use of the Internet and its capabilities.
 - Video conferencing;
 - Software training; and
 - Blackberries.
- Strategic nation/business meetings.
- Video production: used to educate bands that are unable to attend workshops.

Advertising and Communications Sector

- There are international legalities that must be understood better in order to do business across the borders successfully.
- We should be pressuring major corporations to do business with us because we have goods and services that they want and need. We can maximize our profits if we go to these companies direct rather than having third parties involved.



- If there was a database that connected both US and Canada markets that was broad and easy to use, more business could be done in the sense of successful marketing strategies.
- An international tradeshow may be a way to connect businesses as well. Similar to the 1999 Nexan Trade Show.
- Manufacturing your product can be expensive and you need to look at what market is going to allow you to make the most of your dollar. You need to research those markets so that you can pull out in front of the competitors.

Business and Government Sector - Tourism

- Teach usefulness of technology to business and get all levels involved.
- We need to utilize our communication streams more effectively such as, Grassroots News, NCI, APTN, etc.
- Geographic distances are a problem for Aboriginal communities. We need to implement a better system that is more usage friendly and adaptable to the communication tools that we are using in the communities.

Business and Government Sector - additional sector group

- Create direct relationships and market our companies better to large corporations.
- Set up an Aboriginal eBay called "iBay".
- Procurement Strategies and joint partnerships with 51% ownership.
- Strategies for economic development and an educated, skilled workforce start with supporting our strengths, developing and identifying our weaknesses and getting the entire community involved.
- Offer templates and agreement samples.
- Learn to "assist" each other to move forward.
- Look at management agreements so that training can take place and better business can happen.
- Utilize all parties that are involved when working agreements.
- Set up our own processes instead of using someone else's.

Finance Sector

- To connect businesses across borders, regulations need to be consistent.
- Information technology personnel that can be utilized for business support.
- We need to set up a system similar to a Chamber of Commerce that can be national and regional that we can use to network.
- Tradeshows are helpful.
- Create an Aboriginal directory and a recruitment office that is open to the public.

Education and Technology Sector

- Every Province should have a conference like the One Nation Economic Forum that is more intimate and everyone could hear the speaker.
- Video profiling of First Nation Businesses.

- Using leverage of technology to help spread your source.
- Short-term strategies to connect our nations are newspapers, websites and forums.

Gaming Sector

- Technology can be used differently to increase dollars.
- Awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal relations.

4. How can we link corporate North America with Aboriginal business owners?

Natural Resources Sector

- Supplier meetings with bigger corporations that would be willing to bring in Aboriginal businesses.
- Smaller scale operations.
- P.A.R and having First Nations involved so that they can be the hiring pool.

Advertising and Communications Sector

- A benefit to Nation-to-Nation business is that we don't charge a state tax. We have a General Sales Tax of 6%, which is decreasing in January of 2008, whereas in the United States, there is a State Tax of 8.5%.
- A better understanding of the linkages between the markets is important. We can't promote cross boarder tourism if we aren't 100% familiar with the market.
- US and Canada businesses should be comparing profiles to maximize the potential output by the partnerships.
- If our companies are listed as supplies, we can purchase the products we need at a cheaper price.
- If there was a coordinating body between the NCAI and AFN to market these partnerships as a sub committee, we could really start something big and do well at it.

Business and Government Sector - Tourism

- Joint ventures and partnerships that build capacity.

Business and Government Sector - additional sector group

- A database of Aboriginal businesses and an up to date buying list are simple things that can connect our businesses. Inventory of goods and services that are in demand.
- Catalogue our businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Policies need to be created to direct buying to our Aboriginal businesses.
- Marketing strategies need to be extremely competitive.
- Legislation that helps small companies work better with large companies.
- Provide networking opportunities between non-Aboriginal organizations, governments and the private sector.



- Teach non-Aboriginal businesses to develop their own Aboriginal procurement strategies.
- Export ready businesses and trade internationally.
- Acknowledge experience and note successes.
- Establish our own institutions to create certainty and know your limits before you've lost control. An example is an Aboriginal Development Corporation.
- Understand the different cultures, histories and unique competencies of all Aboriginal people.

Finance Sector

- Networking on procurement from the government.
- Contracts to supply water to the United States.
- Use dual citizenship to export goods and services.
- Learn more about importing and exporting so that you can establish a position to take advantage of the global market.
- Connect the crop boarders and farmers.

Education and Technology Sector

- More aware of First Nation issues and the laws between countries.
- Help people in technology and art fields.
- Tools to connect our nations are awareness and reasoning.
- We could offer tax incentives or dollars to businesses that work with Aboriginal businesses.
- Global economy provides everyone with an opportunity.

Gaming Sector

5. What role does Aboriginal government play in business and how can that affect your business decisions?

Natural Resources Sector

- Support businesses but needs to limit interference.

Business and Government Sector - Tourism

- Separatism of business and politics is important.
- Independent dispute resolution is also really important.
- Our nation is only as strong as our weakest link. Some communities need help to achieve accountability.

Business and Government Sector - additional sector group

- Federal and provincial government need to understand the authority and impact of their roles in our governments and communities.

- Our companies need to learn how to distinguish between business and politics.
- Develop your own strategies and internal politics to work with government but maintain your own values.
- Governments need to assist with program development and not set up barriers.
- Governments are like businesses; they need to have systems and policies in place. We need to understand those systems in order to thrive.

Finance Sector

- Political turnover is very expensive, even more expensive than employee turnover.
- Adopting uniform tribal economic law and treaties to create stability is an un-tribal transaction.
- Setting up tax laws is a role of our governments.
- Clear lines between projects and politics need to be set. This should be a task of the Chief Executive Officer.

Education and Technology Sector

- Separation of business and politics is needed for an independent resolution so that every business is not enwrapped with one another.
- Need for rules if there's a dispute that can be settled in a way that is fair.
- Government is business and business is government.
- First Nations go anywhere from very sophisticated to people who don't have access to the Internet. We need to understand the cultural differences and structures of our own people.

Gaming Sector

- The history of Aboriginal government is non-supportive. It has been negative and passive and is in a new era of aggressive change.
- Our governments provide rules and decisions that benefit the current leaders and are always changing.
- The hardest challenge in Aboriginal business is to separate the actual business from politics.
- Our leadership can create opportunities with the governments by providing incentives that lead to better socioeconomic levels in our communities.
- Governments have a tendency to give contracts to larger corporations.
- Checks and balances need to be in place that separate politics and reduce their influence in business to create a stable business environment.

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