

Entrepreneurial Spirit Award Winner

Melody Kelts has been chosen by SIEF as its winner of this year's Entrepreneurial Spirit Award.

Kelts is a pharmacist and the owner of Sage Pharmacy in Yorkton. She was announced the winner at SIEF's annual general meeting on November 9 at Dakota Dunes Resort and Casino at Whitecap, Sask.

Kelts has demonstrated drive and determination to achieve success in her educational and entrepreneurial journey. These are characteristics that SIEF looks for when selecting the winner of this annual award.



"My dream of pharmacy ownership started while I was still a university student," said Kelts. She convocated from the University of Saskatchewan in 2011 and has worked for the past 12 years in community pharmacy. It took her over 10 years and a few attempts to find the ideal space in Yorkton and secure the capital she needed to open the pharmacy she envisioned.

Sage Pharmacy opened its doors in 2022 just in time to fill a local gap during the Canada-wide shortage of liquid acetaminophen, ibuprofen and amoxicillin. It was the only pharmacy in the Yorkton area with the knowledge, equipment, and infrastructure to compound the medications.

Kelts recognized others in the Yorkton area could benefit from having a compounding pharmacy closer to where they lived.

"The next closest pharmacy that does this level of compounding is in Regina," said Kelts, who knows from personal experience how having to travel to Regina for a prescription can delay a person's treatment by a couple of days. While some pharmacies opt to have specialty compounds shipped from other areas in the province, Kelts hopes that more people choose the local option.

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“I wanted to give back to my community and provide a much needed service to prevent delays in treatment,” said Kelts, a member of the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation in Ontario who was raised in Yorkton.

It was also important to her that she create a space that offers health, wellness and pharmacy services in a culturally safe and respectful environment. Kelts welcomes people needing medication and advice for both western and alternative therapies. She meets them where they are at in life and their health-care journey to provide them individualized care and attention, even helping them to access other services in the community to ensure their physical, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and social needs are met.

“We are a full-service pharmacy offering all prescription medications as well as specialty compounding,” said Kelts.

It was through her relationship as a client of SIEF that Kelts learned about the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award. SIEF has been awarding its Entrepreneurial Spirit Award to First Nation entrepreneurs each year since 2011. First Nation business owners/operators can apply for the award or be nominated. The award goes to an owner/operator who has been in business at least one year who demonstrates their business is viable and sustainable. The business must also have a focus on First Nation business/economic development.

Earlier winners of SIEF’s Entrepreneurial Spirit Award

- 2022 - *Chester and Eleanor Agecutay of Cowessess First Nation*
Tazzy’s Tire Barn
- 2021 - *3R Innovative Imaging*
3R Innovative Imaging is part of the Indigenous Youth in Business Initiative at the Almightyvoice Education Centre at One Arrow First Nation.
Jake Sinclair of George Gordon First Nation
Anytime Fitness
- 2020 - *Alfred Crain of Muskoday First Nation*
Muskoday Medical Taxi
A.C. First Nations Driving Academy
- 2019 - *Destinee Peter of Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation*
Tangles Hair and Beauty Salon
- 2018 - *Cote First Nation*
Cote Market
- 2017 - *Christopher Jobb of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation*
Jobb Tire and Automotive
- 2016 - *Ernie Scoles of Barrens Lands Indian Band*
Scoles Fine Art And Framing
- 2015 - *Points Athabasca FHQ Contracting (PAFHQ)*
- 2014 - *Lillian McKay of Canoe Lake/Eagle Lake Cree Nation*
Lil McKay Enterprises Inc.
- 2013 - *Kenneth Atcheynum of Sweetgrass First Nation*
McKenn Contracting Ltd.
- 2012 - *Matt Harper of Onion Lake Cree Nation*
Harmony Environmental
- 2011 - *Onion Lake Cree Nation*

New Board Chair

SIEF's board has a vision to expand, enhance, and diversify the micro-lending products and services SIEF offers First Nation entrepreneurs and business owners.

Melvina Aubichon is Dene from the English River First Nation (a.k.a. Patuanak) in northern Saskatchewan.

Aubichon has over 30 years of experience in the administration field. She is continuing her education after earning numerous certificates as well as a diploma and a degree.

She earned a business administration diploma from SIAST (now Sask Polytechnic), a certificate in adult and continuing education from the University of Saskatchewan, a land management and election officer certificate from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (now Indigenous Services Canada), a certificate in Indigenous business administration from First Nations University of Canada, a professional Aboriginal economic development certificate from Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers and a Bachelor of Commerce degree with a major in human resources from the University of Saskatchewan. She is currently completing her Master of Business Administration in community economic development with Cape Breton University.



Melvina Aubichon

Aubichon currently serves on committees and boards including Hatchet Lake Development Limited Partnership (current board member), Dés Nedhe Development Corporation (current board member), and SIEF (current board member).

In the past, she was involved as a board or committee member with Northern Career Quest, Saskatoon Trades & Skills Centre, Saskatoon Industry and Education Council, SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards of Excellence and Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers.

Aubichon is honoured to be a part of Dené culture and enjoys speaking her language fluently. Aubichon feels privileged and acknowledges all the formal and informal teachings she received from her parents, paternal and maternal grandparents and mentors, which has honed her career and lifelong learning opportunities. She embraces every learning opportunity to be well-versed in her Dene culture. It is significant to her that she be knowledgeable in her Dene culture as it forms her identity.

SIEF has existed over 35 years, evolving with the ebbs and flows of the Saskatchewan economy. The focus of SIEF is to improve and boost the First Nations economy by offering micro-lending products and services to achieve economic self-sufficiency in our Saskatchewan First Nations homelands.

Follow SIEF

Follow our social media accounts to see our latest news and learn more about opportunities for First Nation entrepreneurs.

SIEF has accounts on:

- Facebook @sief.sask
- LinkedIn @siefsask
- Instagram @sief.sask

Like and share our posts to help grow the visibility of Indigenous business success.



New Board Members

TIM ISNANA is a member of the Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation. Currently, he is working as a full-time lecturer with the First Nations University of Canada.

Isnana is a third-year Doctor of Business Administration Student with Athabasca University (AU), has obtained his master's in business administration from AU and a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Saskatchewan – AACSB accredited institutions in Canada.

Isnana brings over 20 years of business Industry experience to SIEF as a board member, while sharing his wealth of knowledge and expertise developing future Indigenous leaders with the business fundamentals applicable to their future careers. Primary research area focus includes Indigenous stakeholder partnerships and collaboration.

ROSS MACDONALD is a rancher and professional agrologist from Lake Alma, Sask. in Treaty 4 Territory where he operates 98 Ranch Inc. with his wife and family. The ranch is focused on conserving the grasslands and managing grazing livestock to produce grass-fed beef while supporting habitat for wildlife populations and bio-diverse soils.

MacDonald has an Animal Science degree from the University of Saskatchewan



Tim Isnana

(1998) and a Masters of Science degree in Animal & Range Sciences from Montana State University (2000). He has extensive grassland and livestock management experience including professional agrologist work for Peepeekisis First Nation, Yellow Quill First Nation, Willow Cree Health, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, Canadian Hereford Association, Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada and A&W Food Services of Canada. He is currently working with Ducks Unlimited Canada on the habitat management team near his ranch.

A director on the board of Canadian Western Agribition for 10 years (2009-2019), MacDonald had the opportunity to participate on several committees with highlights being Commercial Cattle Committee Chair, Rodeo Committee Chair, Select Horse Sale Committee Chair and Indigenous Ag Summit Committee Chair. He currently serves on the board of Regeneration Canada.



Ross MacDonald

MacDonald is a student of the horse and the grasslands and is an advocate for grassland and wetland conservation and their connection to food production. He is also working on improved treaty relationships in the communities he is connected to and is actively working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Regeneration Canada, and the Treaty Land Sharing Network to assist with land-based connections and knowledge transfer.

Arrange a Community Visit

SIEF's office is in Saskatoon on the Asimakaniseekan Askiy Reserve, but our staff are available to visit your organization or community. Invite our staff to present information and answer questions about starting, acquiring or expanding a business in Saskatchewan. We also visit clients' businesses across Saskatchewan.

Call our office to find out more.
306.955.4550



Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of SIEF was held Nov. 9 at the Dakota Dunes Resort and Casino. Two board members were thanked for their service at the AGM. Trevor Acoose and Audrey Ahenakew have long served SIEF and their contributions are greatly valued.

TREVOR ACOOSE served on the SIEF Board of Directors for 12 years. He joined in November of 2011.

Trevor is a member of the Zagime Anishanabek First Nation within the Treaty Four Territory in Saskatchewan. Trevor has been active in the advancement of entrepreneurship for First Nations on a personal and corporate level for many years.

He has experience as a politician and provided a well-balanced approach in his role as a director for SIEF. In 2009, Trevor was elected as Councillor of Zagime Anishanabek First Nation (which was known as Sakimay First Nation at that time). He was given the economic development portfolio and has since accumulated a wealth of knowledge around economic development.

Trevor is currently employed by the Yorkton Tribal Council as the Director of Operations after accumulating years of experience as a manager, working for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. He worked at the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and at the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority. He gained management experience from both organizations.

Trevor also worked for Kahkewistahaw Economic Management Corporation (KEMC). Trevor saw the success and growth of this corporation and, in 2013, Kahkewistahaw Economic Management Corporation was the successful winner of the CANDO Economic Developer of the Year award in the Community Category.

Trevor has been involved in many organizations and currently is also a member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Association of Native Development Officers (CANDO) as well as a director for Zagime Management Authority Limited.

Trevor has achieved his Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer (PAED) designation from CANDO. He continues to be involved in economic development and looks to further advance the First Nation business success. Trevor strongly believes in providing First Nation communities with the benefits of economic development.

SIEF acknowledges and appreciates the work and dedication that Trevor has brought to the table of the SIEF Board of Directors. Thank you, Trevor!



Trevor Acoose and
Audrey Ahenakew

AUDREY AHENAKEW joined the Board of Directors of SIEF in February of 2008. Audrey has brought an extensive array of experience to her board position with SIEF over the past 15 years. Audrey recently served as the chairperson for the Human Resource committee as well as being a member of the Finance and Audit committee and the SIEF Equity Contribution Program committee of the Board of Directors.

Audrey is a member of the Ahtahkakoop First Nation.

Audrey had a very successful career with the Royal Bank of Canada of over 40 years (44 to be exact). Audrey was tasked with starting the Aboriginal Banking division with the Royal Bank of Canada. After retiring from the bank, Audrey worked for seven years at starting CESO in Saskatchewan.

Audrey's insight into the Indigenous business industry has given SIEF the necessary edge to a good understanding of issues facing the business community.

We acknowledge and appreciate the work and dedication that Audrey has brought to SIEF. Thank you, Audrey, for consistently bringing your relevant and valuable skills, experiences, connections, and ideas to the table to help create a long-term vision for SIEF.



MLA Reception

Members of Saskatchewan's legislature were invited to a reception hosted by SIEF to learn more about First Nation entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan.

They heard stories of First Nation entrepreneurs who have overcome barriers to successfully start and grow their businesses, benefiting themselves, their families and their communities through economic development. Numerous MLAs attended the reception held at the Saskatchewan legislative building in Regina on Nov. 7.

SIEF board member Trevor Acoose welcomed the MLAs and introduced them to the concept behind SIEF. He explained the history of First Nation entrepreneurs being unable to acquire the capital they needed to start their own businesses. That is why a fund was created to use for loans for status First Nation entrepreneurs with that capital being managed by First Nations.

General manager Terry Brodziak helped to further explain what SIEF offers those looking to start or grow a business. He also introduced

the SIEF team as well as those business owners who attended, which were Jacob Sinclair, owner of two Anytime Fitness locations in Regina as well as CEO of Cowessess Ventures Ltd., Corie Amundson, President/CEO of Granite by Wednesday and Destinee Peter, owner of Tangles Hair and Beauty Salon.



From left to right: Corie Amundson, President/CEO of Granite by Wednesday, SIEF General Manager Terry Brodziak, Destinee Peter, owner of Tangles Hair and Beauty Salon and Jacob Sinclair, owner of two Anytime Fitness locations in Regina as well as CEO of Cowessess Ventures Ltd.

Growing the Indigenous economy to \$100 billion

There is a goal in Canada of growing the Indigenous economy in this country to \$100 billion a year.

That \$100-billion goal was explained by Carol Anne Hilton in recent media reports. She explained to CBC that figure comes from looking at Canada's GDP (which Statistics Canada states was about \$1.98 trillion in 2021) as well as five per cent of Canada's population being Indigenous people.

Hilton is a member of Hesquiaht First Nation in British Columbia. She is the founder of the Indigenomics Institute and organized a conference held in Toronto in late November called Indigenomics on Bay Street where this goal was a focus.



That \$100-billion goal is considered a target for the Indigenous business community to work towards achieving. While the latest data puts the value of the Indigenous contribution to Canada's GDP at almost \$50 billion in 2020, that value is growing. More growth is expected as procurement policies and other initiatives bring Indigenous businesses more fully into participating in the Canadian economy. Hilton and others believe the \$100-billion goal will be reached in a few years. You can find out more about what is driving this optimism by searching online for the CBC News story headlined "Indigenous economy surging toward \$100B, Indigenous leaders say".

Calling All First Nation Economic Development Officers

Helping First Nation entrepreneurs succeed by working together

SIEF encourages economic development officers working for First Nations across Saskatchewan to contact our business development officers.

Our business development officers help First Nation entrepreneurs access programs, services and capital to start, acquire or expand a business in Saskatchewan. These services have been developed to effectively enhance the entrepreneur's ability to succeed.

We support:

- First Nation individuals,
- First Nation communities,
- First Nation organizations

who have start-up businesses and existing businesses operating in Saskatchewan.

Economic development officers can play a critical role in helping entrepreneurs successfully obtain the capital they need to start or grow their businesses.

Encouraging and supporting these entrepreneurs as they complete the requirements for accessing capital through SIEF can help turn their dreams to reality.

Learn more about how SIEF can help those entrepreneurs you are working with as well as what SIEF has to offer, including:

- commercial and agricultural lending;
- SIEF Contribution Program, which is a needs-based, conditional grant program for First Nation entrepreneurs and businesses; and
- Indigenous Women Entrepreneur (IWE) Program, which assists First Nation women wanting to start or grow their own business in Saskatchewan. This includes the IWE Micro-loan Program.

Contact any of the staff members listed here.

306.955.4550



Diane Peepeetch



Lorrie Murphy



Jennifer Sutherland



Melanie Sunchild

SIEF turns dreams to reality. It is growing the First Nation entrepreneurial and business spirit by being leaders in providing innovative financial products and services.

Our goal is to continue to assist in the creation of jobs and to foster economic growth for First Nations because a strong Indigenous business community means financial independence for all First Nation people.



All the best in 2024

SIEF's Board of Directors, management and staff hope everyone had a joyful holiday season as we look ahead at the coming year.

Thank you to everyone we had the opportunity to work with in 2023. We look forward to what successes will be achieved in 2024 by First Nation entrepreneurs in our province.

Our wish is for peace and prosperity for all in the year ahead. Looking ahead, we at SIEF are eager to work with those new to entrepreneurship as well as those continuing to build successful businesses who are contributing to developing a strong economic base among First Nations in Saskatchewan.



Staff Directory

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