

Newsletter:

The Reestablishment of Traditional Trade and Commerce

Ec. Dev. Portfolio Treaty #3, Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation, Mr. Percy Bird, Dr. Richard Herbert
May 31, 2006

Traditional trade and commerce roles and industries in our Nations have virtually been wiped out and replaced by looking to jobs for provision and prosperity. Life revolves around jobs and the wages they bring into the home and community. Remove jobs and our Nations are left without a national trade and commerce foundation to adapt their economy for the continued pursuit of prosperity and self-sufficiency.

Both Provincial and Federal governments push a “jobs-jobs” model for economic development. The jobs model is wrong! That approach will prevent trade and commerce from emerging in our Nations. We need “roles”, not jobs. Roles are jobs “owned” by our people.

Jobs are formed within a business that someone else owns. While a region may have an industry that industry is developed through businesses that use the region’s resources. If businesses close, the region quickly loses jobs and the industry associated with those closing businesses. Roles, and the industries they support, cannot be lost because they belong to the region. Nonnative communities are beginning to feel job loss for the same reason; their regions do not own their industries, a business does. With a mill closure in Kenora, the region is quickly learning it does not own the logging industry. The same pattern is happening all over Canada. Nonnative communities are also beginning to look for a solution. The solution is traditional trade and commerce. Traditional trade and commerce replaces jobs with roles, corporate ownership with community ownership, INAC funding with trade and commerce revenue, and it replaces Federal dependancy with independence, all within an Elder-guided traditional business system.

The status quo is not good enough. We cannot stay the same. Our citizens are

desperately looking to our leaders to find the solution. We have the solution. We just need to step out of the “INAC box” to see it. We had everything we needed. If we can remember how to respect the land while harvesting for trade and commerce, she will provide for us again. We need to make old ways new. We need to be who we are in the 21st century.

Our Elders carry the knowledge we need to reestablish our traditional trade and commerce. We begin where we are because Elder teachings indicate that everything we need to rebuild our nation is already here. Social development agreements, federal and provincial transfer agreements, treasury boards, and other similar initiatives are part of our function as a Nation. But our national agenda must include a deliberate effort to rebuild basic societal foundational structures inherent in our traditional trade and commerce institutions. Then, our reborn economy can provide for our nationhood. Still, we start with what we have; Elder guidance, rights, governance structures, communities, and citizens.

To rebuild our trade and commerce systems we needed a pilot project that identified missing roles in our traditional trade and commerce structures as the project developed. The pilot project would be the mechanism of change whose mandate was to restore the national foundation of Elder-guided roles, businesses, and industries by “speaking” into the Nation. In this way, the pilot project would pioneer the development of business structures and their industries. The business network that would be reestablished by the pioneer pilot project could then be used to establish other new and vibrant economic activity streams within the Nation. Once developed, the pilot project would become a national trade and commerce engine which would provide Nation governances with the regulatory framework, structures, and the

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financial capital to effectively manage their own economy.

The pilot project needed to meet certain requirements to have enough power to pioneer all that is in front of us. First, it needed to start with what we have. In this regard, we have the inherent right to live on the land and support our families, Treaty rights to our avocations of hunting and fishing, legislated rights within the Indian Act to hunt, fish, and manage wildlife on reserves, and we have the international right to harvest and retail wildlife with the United Nations. The pilot project had to have the maximum economic development, revenue, multiple industry, and role potential possible so there would be enough power to push change. It had to be something that no one else was doing so that we would not fight to take it from another group. Finally, it had to have a very firm cultural and historical foundation to make its development both technically and adaptively easier in the Nation. The surplus wild deer harvest pilot program from the Treaty #3 veterinary infrastructure development was chosen as the pilot project since it met all the requirements for a pilot project capable of pioneering the reestablishment of traditional trade and commerce for the Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty #3. Including; 400-1,200 roles and \$20-60 million in potential gross revenues.

The same traditional trade and commerce framework, established with the pioneering surplus wild deer harvest pilot project, will be used for the future development of an inland fishery, to market lumber, harvest other surplus wildlife, and *etc.*. The economic and employment windfall of a fully developed, culturally-defined, tribal-based, national trade and commerce infrastructure in Treaty #3, is staggering, \$150-250,000,000 per year. After development, the new veterinary, wildlife, and tribal business infrastructures can be adapted to share prosperity with the rest of our Nations in

Canada. Conservative estimates suggest a 39-65 billion dollar annual windfall across Canada.

Settler governments never anticipated that hunting and fishing would become valuable international trading commodities in the 21st century. They appropriated lumber and minerals but clearly left us with our avocations of hunting and fishing. Both Federal and Provincial governments are very aware that we have a right to sell what we hunt and fish. They just never explained that we simply need to build our paperwork trail of protocols to harmonize with the global economy's regulation system. However, the sleeping giant has awakened.

We have submitted funding initiatives for various aspects of the project. However, it is possible that not either the Federal or Provincial governments will fund any aspect of the early work on this pilot project. It may well be seen as a threat to their sovereignty. While we must hold these governments accountable by pursuing funding appeal processes, we cannot let funding issues bog down this opportunity to rebuild our Nation. We must also look to ourselves for the resources and to our leaders for the commitment to move our Nation forward.

Our citizens our caught in a grip of poverty that our traditional trade and commerce "roles" model of economic development can release them from. We cannot continue as we have been. We must start the process of change. Once started, it will finish. Left unstarted, it will never happen.

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