

Business, Employment & Social Development

LMD Information Bulletin

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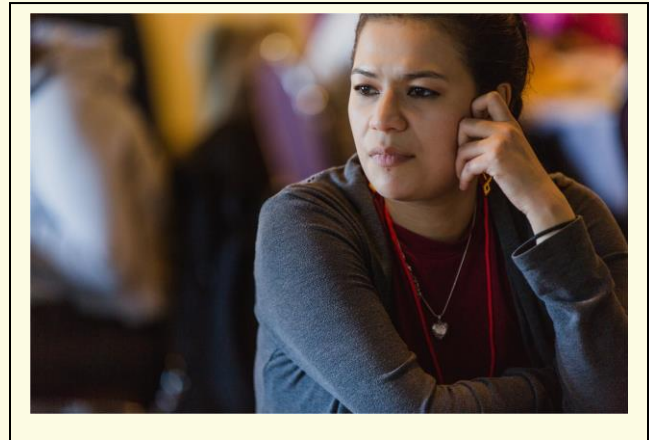
In this issue...

Successful Entrepreneurs

In this issue, we feature four successful Indigenous women from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. We hope to continue this feature and invite suggestions or self-referrals from First Nations, Inuit and Metis women across Canada at various stages in their entrepreneurial journey to be featured regularly in our quarterly issues as well as future issues dedicated to inspiring entrepreneurs who create opportunities for advancement in our communities.

ASETS Extension to 2019

Continued partnerships for training, apprenticeships and labour market entry!



Calling out to entrepreneurs...

Increasing the participation of Indigenous women in the Canadian Labour Market is critical to establishing a foundation for the reduction of poverty for Indigenous women in Canada.

Entrepreneurship can be an effective means of reducing barriers to participation and increasing opportunities for long-term self-employment as well as for Indigenous women, men and youth who live in the communities served by these entrepreneurs.

Our aim is to highlight Indigenous women at various stages in their journeys as entrepreneurs including those who are taking their first tentative steps to self-employment.

Missed out on our previous bulletins? Visit www.nwac.ca to access our complete archive.

Sharon Bond-Hogg – Kekuli Cafe

Name: Sharon Bond-Hogg & Darren Hogg
Title: CEO / CFO
Company: Kekuli Café "Don't Panic...We Have Bannock"!®
Profession: Entrepreneur
In Business for: 14 years
Workforce for: 40 years
Ancestry: NI k'mapuxm Territory, Nooaitch Indian Band, Merritt BC



What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day in the life of running a restaurant is striving to be unique! We see many wonderful Indigenous restaurants opening up across Canada now, so we have to be different and be one step ahead.

There is always something that needs tending to in business. Whether it be staff, equipment malfunctions, or customer service attention, we have to be on our toes. We have to be unique, and we are always thinking of the next move! What do we do to stay ahead of the game?

Kekuli Café was one of the first First Nations cafes in Canada; at the time of business planning and researching. I had no idea if First Nations foods would even have a place in the restaurant industry like the many Mexican, Chinese or Italian restaurants do.

With persistence, we've outlasted the corporate and local coffee brands that have surrounded us. If any bank decided to take us on, we would be the first First Nations restaurant to be a franchise in Canada. We have Net promoter cards to help us be better and it gives us an idea how the customers enjoy their experience.

Can you describe your trajectory as an Indigenous entrepreneur up to this point?

Our path is to be unique. When we first opened our doors in the Okanagan our good friend Stewart Brown, put the first digital menu board

system together for us. It was so awesome; other cafes were coming to us, asking how we did it.

We had to research and do the groundwork for our business plan to be steps ahead in the ever changing technology world. Kekuli Café was the first fast-casual concept in the Okanagan. Customers order at the till, take a seat and still receive the full customer service experience, even after they paid. Customers would want to tip the staff, and the tip is, we hope you come back and tell others to come too. With the economy up and down, food and gas costs, we strive to pay our committed staff a living wage.

How did you decide to pursue the path you're on today?

The "Entrepreneurial Spirit" has been in my blood since I was kid! I guess I wanted money (but now I want happiness, joy, love and freedom)! I've always been creative and full of business ideas. I remember I would take all my hard-earned cash, buy a bunch of candy at the store, set up shop at the end of my driveway with a friend, and we sold candy. Not the typical lemonade stand, haha.

Sharon Bond-Hogg – Kekuli Café cont'd

We also had a backyard "kids school", charged the kids .25 cents to come to school, in our backyard. I thought I would be a teacher when I grew up, but owning my business was always in the back of my mind. I've had over 30 jobs in my life, and I could not find what I was looking for (my favorite job, was in the school district, working with First Nations students, it was an honour, helping kids stay in school).

My passion was the catering jobs, breakfast programs, and quite a few rejected business plans, that led me into some amazing opportunities.

Have you had any pivotal moments that made you change direction?

There were some pivotal moments that made me change my direction with Kekuli Café. The moment we opened our doors, people asked if we were a franchise from back east! So it was in our minds to franchise Kekuli Café.

Today, we are with Canadian Franchise Association, and have a package ready to go for the first lucky person. We also take advantage of opportunities that come our way; we have had some great mentors that have taken us in new directions with our café. I believe in what we receive, I can share with others, if they have the same passion I do, as an entrepreneur.

Describe the best for worst decision you ever made in relation to your business?

The best thing we ever did was open Kekuli Café Westbank and Kekuli Café Merritt.
#DontPanicWeHaveBannock

We took a chance being different, not sure who would support us, not sure if people would come but I had such a passion for owning my own business, that I just did it. The worst thing is if you don't have a defined menu, and you take things away, customers can become very unhappy. Menu planning is very important.

In the restaurant world, you have to be one step ahead, and keep the menu fresh.

You should also have an amazing accountant / bookkeeper. Make sure you find someone that gels with your business, who has experience or understands the industry.

The worst decision is not trying to at least succeed, or fail, either way, you will have learned something.

What has been the most significant barrier to you as an Indigenous female entrepreneur?

The most significant barrier in business is being an Indigenous person to the banks. Most of the banks I dealt with for 25 plus years, I could barely get a loan for a funeral, even having an excellent credit score. Some banks told me to do a food truck instead of a restaurant. With the negativity, I was thinking, yeah, I can do this. I've been thinking about a restaurant since 1992, so I'm not giving up now. I've been fortunate enough to work with companies like All Nations Trust Company and Business Development Canada for loans.

When issues keep arising and business plans aren't moving, a phone call to inspiring Chiefs always helps to get the ball rolling again. My husband, Darren Hogg and I both worked 5 or 6 jobs, to save money and get out of debt to open our first business.

If you could share one lesson with your younger self about the path you've taken, what would that be?

Lesson learned, nothing comes easy, the harder you work, the luckier you get. Treat People with Respect. My favorite: Live, Love & Laugh.

Sharon Bond-Hogg – Kekuli Café cont'd

What do you think is the key for finding a successful work-life balance?

A work-life balance is found if you love what you are doing. If you are doing what you love 24-7, then it's not work; I go with the flow, I take time off when I want it. We're always doing something and always on the go. We always make it fun, no matter what we're doing. I give a lot of credit to my husband Darren Hogg, he is full hands in the restaurant. He is smart, witty and keeps me going when I am feeling doubt.

How do you conquer those moments of doubt that so often stifle or trip or stop so many entrepreneurs with great ideas...what pushes you through?

If I have a moment of doubt, I just push through it by faking it till you make it, and never ever let them see you sweat! Put a smile on your face and go with the flow.

Business, it's like playing baseball, you see the other team having a good time and laughing and enjoying the game, and then there's the team on the bench, sulking, mad and making excuses. When you see a team like that, you know it's not too long before they go down.

I have played on some amazing teams, and I treat our staff like a team. You gotta take some heat, some criticism, to get to where you want to be, to be the best, and to give an authentic aboriginal experience. Find some networking friends, and mentors that you can look up to and talk business.

What habits would you suggest others develop in order to become a successful entrepreneur?

Some of the best habits I have, is getting myself a morning "Kekuli Canadiano" to get the day

started. Look at all my bank accounts, read emails and most importantly my favourite is Social Media.

I like to find out how our staff is doing. I love to know everything, to see what they're up to; find out how life is for everyone. Then I take time to just think. What can we do better? What is our next step? When it comes to business, there is no excuse to not do or try anything.

I hear people say they need a break in their business, they can't go on today, they have to close the doors for a day to rest. If you do that, you might as well kiss your business goodbye. The moment you give up is the moment someone comes knocking and you lose. To make sure your business is successful, you have to work on it, 5 days a week 8 hours a day! That is just minimal. We work as much and as often as we can, because we love it!

Who or what has been your worst enemy on your entrepreneurial path?

When I look back on our journey, our worst enemy is not knowing what the future has in store for us, success or failure. But failure wouldn't even stop me from succeeding at anything else.

The more I know, the more I grow every day. No two days are the same. "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get" (Thanks Forrest Gump :) I have used that saying, for many years, because it is true. And if I take a bite out of a chocolate that I don't like, I put it back and try something else.

Deborah Green – Corporate Cree Consulting

Name: Deborah Green (Gopher)
Title: Founder & Owner
Company: Corporate Cree Consulting
Profession: Dynamic Diversity Specialist & Strategist
In Business for: 1 year
Workforce for: 20 years
Ancestry: Cree - Kawacatoose First Nation SK



What does a typical day look like for you?

Everything I do is based on the foundation of truth. My days are never quite the same and never typical. As I am a fairly new entrepreneur, much of my time is spent chasing new business and contracts. Reaching out, marketing, networking, and ensuring my brand is out there.

Can you describe your trajectory as an Indigenous entrepreneur up to this point?

I began with research and market viability. Then came the bible, my business plan which took some time to put to paper. I reached out to Indigenous entrepreneurs and organizations, and helped lead an Entrepreneur mentoring group for the Native Women's Association of Canada which served as a learning platform for myself as well. As I already had extensive contacts and networks from my career, I was able to market and promote my business quite efficiently. I also utilized social media, and ensured I went to events and conferences that were relevant to my business. Now I am receiving the impact of all of that, and being recognized for my work, and gaining new clients.

How did you decide to pursue the path you're on today?

After spending much of my career as an employee for corporations, and feeling stifled and boxed in with the impact and change I could drive for

Indigenous Peoples and diversity, I decided it was time to make the jump and do what I do, how I wanted to do it, for whom I wanted to do it, and without restrictions. Thus my company was born!

Have you had any pivotal moments that made you change direction?

I would say that I don't adhere to any set direction, as my niche is in my customization of services. My strength comes from being able to assess and target the root causes and gaps for my clients, and being able to design and deliver a customized service for them. I would say that I have found that partnering without diversity and/or Indigenous entrepreneurs and organizations increased my business reach, and was not something I had initially considered.

Describe the best for worst decision you ever made in relation to your business?

The best decision I have made for my business is to be home based as a sole proprietor to start. Although I have big ambitions and dreams for expansion, being a new entrepreneur and having minimal funding for startup costs, it allowed me

Deborah Green – Corporate Cree Consulting cont'd

to get my business out there, and secure contracts with little to now overhead.

What has been the most significant barrier to you as an Indigenous female entrepreneur?

I would have to say that as a traditional and authentic Cree woman, the most significant barrier I faced was being seen as capable and equal to mainstream diversity providers. Also that the content and services I deliver are not always received well with some of my clients after an assessment reveals their true gaps. However, being able to show them how addressing those gaps with solutions will benefit their company and bottom line, usually is a “aha” moment for them.

If you could share one lesson with your younger self about the path you've taken, what would that be?

I believe that our lives and paths are laid out by Creator for us, and I always live in the moment. That being said, I don't have any regrets about my life. The only suggestion I would give myself would have been to pursue more education. However, in my generation, my parents did not promote education due to the impact and legacy of residential schools. I don't feel that has inhibited my expertise however, as my lived experiences and career have made me who I am as a diversity specialist.

What do you think is the key for finding a successful work-life balance?

Making the effort. You have to set your own personal boundaries for yourself and commit to them. Like the medicine wheel, if one area is out of balance and another area gains too much attention, the other areas suffer. Your health, family and happiness are vital to your existence...work is what we do...it's not who we are.

How do you conquer those moments of doubt that so often stifle or trip or stop so many entrepreneurs with great ideas...what pushes you through?

FAITH! Because of my strong traditional beliefs and faith in Creator, I never allow much doubt or negative influences in my life and mind. I trust that I am exactly where I need to be, and what is meant to be...will be. Also the passion I put into my work is always for the future generations, so that they can walk an easier path in life. I have to keep going and trying, and ensuring what I do will leave a legacy for them.

What habits would you suggest others develop in order to become a successful entrepreneur?

To network constantly, learn as much as possible through all means available, keep up with trends in your industry, and do your market research in the business you operate in. Most importantly though, do not be afraid to ask for help! We have one life to live, so do not live it with regrets. An entrepreneur can try many different businesses, and they may all fail, but at least they tried; failure is just a way to learn. “Think big, and think outside of your comfort zone, your community, your family, your small town... Know what you're good at, and don't let anything or anyone's opinions limit you.

Who or what has been your worst enemy on your entrepreneurial path?

Competition. Others that claim to offer similar services, but are only in it for the profit, or don't have the rights, experience or knowledge to do the work authentically. It can increase stereotypes, and misinform clients. My uniqueness is that all my work is based in truth, always. My work is based on an entire career, lived experiences, and knowledge.

Marilyn Tanner-Spence – Teekca’s Boutique

Name: Marilyn Tanner-Spence BN, MA.
Title: Proprietor
Company: Teekca’s Boutique, Teekca’s Aboriginal Boutique & Myleen’s Treasures
Profession: Entrepreneur
In Business for: 23 years
Workforce for: N/A
Ancestry: Ojibway, Waywayseecappo Band MB



What does a typical day look like for you?

Every day brings new challenges and each day is totally different from the day before. Each location for the business has its own challenges. I work 6 days a week from early mornings on the computer processing emails, paying bills, arranging shipments, ordering, etc. This is a typical day.

Can you describe your trajectory as an Indigenous entrepreneur up to this point?

I started with one location in Norway House Cree Nation and within a year expanded by taking the space next door and opening the wall between to join the space. Soon an opportunity across the hall came up and my second location opened within two years of the first location. Another year passed and I opened a location in Thompson, then another in The Pas, and finally one in Winnipeg. That made a total of six locations. However, each location is unique. Many people think that if they see something in one location they can get the item in another but because the demographics are different each location is tailored to the area. I have since sold one business and have closed one and amalgamated one location where I had two stores in one mall. Today I own and operate three locations.

How did you decide to pursue the path you’re on today?

It happened by chance. My husband and I moved to take jobs in Norway House. I was working as a nurse and my husband worked on getting the

mandate for Child Welfare. There was one spot open in the new mall that was being built that year we moved to Norway House. We put a letter into the Band to see if we could open a store in the space that was available. They said yes but it had to be ready within two months for the grand opening of the mall. We had to get the raw space ready which was a challenge. I hired some people to get work done but it was always delayed. My product arrived with nowhere to put it. I soon fired them and found someone to work with me to finish the space. I worked full time for the band while setting up the location after hours. I can honestly say both my husband and I worked more than 16 hours a day to get the location ready.

Have you had any pivotal moments that made you change direction?

Not sure how to answer this one but each location has to have change in what it does. Internet has become a way of buying for more and more people every day. So, in order to survive, you really have to adapt and adapt quickly. In one location, for instance, we do lots of services: lottery, phone cards, memorial ordering, bulk ordering, wreath making, picture printing, engraving, etc. This was needed and, in order to have people keep coming to us, we had to change our business to include services that were not in the community.

Marilyn Tanner-Spence – Teekca’s Boutique cont’d

Describe the best or worst decision you ever made in relation to your business?

Worst decision was to hire some to look after things so that I could focus on different parts of the business. No one will ever take care of your business the way you would. Best decision was to listen to the customers. They give you the best ideas and tell you what they need.

What has been the most significant barrier to you as an Indigenous female entrepreneur?

Being Aboriginal. When I first started, vendors pointed out that I was Aboriginal. I would say yes and I see you’re Black or Jewish or whatever they were. I have since become very well respected by the many vendors who thought I would last a year or two. Now, when I go to a trade show to buy, they get me coffee and get me comfortable and bring whatever I need to get the ordering done. The ones that treat me well get most of my business. I had to prove that I could do run a business. As many know, 85% of businesses fail in the first year.

If you could share one lesson with your younger self about the path you’ve taken, what would that be?

Learn a little about accounting. Running a business requires a good knowledge of day to day operations. What you’re spending and what the revenue is should leave some room for your pay which sometimes is not always there.

What do you think is the key for finding a successful work-life balance?

Owing a business is like having a child. First you go through the learning years or baby years. Babies learn the most in the first five years, how to walk, language, etc. It is the same for business. You learn to build your business day by day. You learn to balance your money, merchandize, put sales on, listen to customers, order product; then you learn to let the work go and have supper

with your family, go for walks with your daughter. Life gets better once you grow with the business.

How do you conquer those moments of doubt that so often stifle or trip or stop so many entrepreneurs with great ideas...what pushes you through?

Sometimes others make you think you can’t do it. I had so many people say, “You won’t last. You will be closed within a year.” This happened in my third month of operation. It was January and sales were slow. I started to think the comments people made were right. I am not a business person, I am a nurse, and I let myself feel that pressure. But, because I like to read more than most, I found literature on retail and found out that all retailers have slow Januaries. I read as much as I could about retail and learned tips and secrets shared by other retail owners. January is clearance time. YES. That was a lesson for me. The lesson was: Do not let others lead your ideas about yourself. Think positive and learn from everything that you can.

What habits would you suggest others develop in order to become a successful entrepreneur?

If You Think You Can Do It, DO IT. Because, when others influence you, you start to think the way they do. GOOD or BAD. Take the good and shake off the bad. Become a duck; just let the bad roll off your back.

Who or what has been your worst enemy on your entrepreneurial path?

I would say I am my worst enemy. I sometimes second guess myself. When I think something is great and should be a part of the business, I let it sit too long before I put it in play. Like getting a web page or adding a new part to the business. It took me a while to put my \$40,000.00 engraving machine in place but it paid for itself in 6 months and continues today to be a big part of sales for that location.

Patrice Mousseau – Satya Organic Skin Care

Name: Patrice Mousseau
Title: Founder/Owner
Company: Satya Organic Skin Care
Profession: Former National News Anchor, APTN
In Business for: 4 years
Workforce for: 30 years
Ancestry: Ojibway, Fort William First Nation ON



What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day is a combination of trying to find time between being a mom and being a business owner. I get my daughter out of bed and ready for school, single mom kind of stuff interspersed with checking email and trying to get a handle on business related things using my phone. Ultimately, each day is completely different depending on the needs of the company and what needs to be done in my daily life as a mother.

Can you describe your trajectory as an Indigenous entrepreneur up to this point?

Business has doubled or tripled for me ever since starting up Satya Organic Skin Care so, for me, it's been a great trajectory!

How did you decide to pursue the path you're on today?

I decided to pursue the path I'm on today because my daughter needed me to do something to help her with her Eczema.

I originally became involved in journalism because I wanted to make a positive change in peoples' lives and I find that doing what I'm doing now allows me to do that in a much bigger and more personal way.

I am always receiving great expressions of gratitude from people who my skin care product has helped or whose mother, father, sister, brother or other family member has benefited from using the balm.

Have you had any pivotal moments that made you change direction?

I originally developed the balm for my daughter. When I decided to sell it, I thought people might want to use it as a balm for diaper rash. I took it to farmer's markets but there wasn't much interest in it as a diaper rash product.

When I pointed out that I originally developed it as a treatment for my daughter's eczema; that turned out to be the real driver. Going back to its origin was the pivotal moment.

Describe the best for worst decision you ever made in relation to your business?

The best decision I have ever made was to trust my own abilities.

Also, it was understanding that I don't need to hire others to run the business for me. Nobody knows the business the way I do and understanding that and keeping control of decision making was the best choice I ever made.

The biggest thing to look out for is people who want to ride on your success without putting much in. Don't give sweat equity without skin in the game.

Patrice Mousseau – Satya Organic Skin Care cont'd

What has been the most significant barrier to you as an Indigenous female entrepreneur?

Two problems:

First, women entrepreneurs only get about 4% of the venture capital that's available out there, for Indigenous women or women of colour, their share of venture capital is even less! It's extremely difficult to get someone to invest in your business if you're an Indigenous woman entrepreneur.

Second, people will always try to second guess you. They'll do that by suggesting that you've succeeded because you got handouts from the government or have benefited in some other way that is only available to Indigenous people.

If you could share one lesson with your younger self about the path you've taken, what would that be?

I would tell myself that there's a reason for why everything is happening to you right now; it's bringing you to a really good place. I'd also say be a little kinder to yourself.

What do you think is the key for finding a successful work-life balance?

I'll let you know when I find it. I'm working on it right now. I'm always telling my daughter to follow her own dreams so it's important to me, as her role model, to demonstrate to her that I am following and realizing my own dreams. It's also important to help her understand that it's important to take care of herself, too.

How do you conquer those moments of doubt that so often stifle or trip or stop so many entrepreneurs with great ideas...what pushes you through?

If you're not comfortable with risk or uncertainty; don't quit your day job! If job security is important to you, life as an entrepreneur is not going to work for you.

Sometimes I freak out; sometimes I get willful blinders on too but, in the end, it always works out.

Most importantly, while I needed to maintain control of my business, I discovered that I can't be a control freak AND a successful entrepreneur, too. If you find that AB & C are not working for you, you have to be able to consider that maybe going with EF & G might be the right answer.

Be open to the possibilities. Everything happens for a reason.

What habits would you suggest others develop in order to become a successful entrepreneur?

Learn to reach out to other entrepreneurs and people you know will support you in your venture because entrepreneurship is isolating especially if you're working from home. Reach out to other women in business and other business groups because talking to people who are living your life means you don't have to have long drawn out conversations. They get it. You've got someone who understands, who knows what you're going through and they don't need to give you any answers, they just provide support by letting you know they've been there too and survived.

Who or what has been your worst obstacle on your entrepreneurial path?

Insecurity...which made me question myself and ask "Who am I to open a business?"

Self-doubt is something I no longer have to deal with.

Lessons are learned. You're gonna fail in some small or big aspects as you build your business. That's reality and, honestly, if you're not failing every once in a while, it's because you're not pushing yourself or your limits hard enough.

ASETS Extension to March 2019

ASETS

NWAC's role as an Indigenous agreement holder under the ASETS (Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy) is pleased to learn that it has been extended to March 2019. The KETO Database has also been extended for another year to March 2019.

ASETS Services

The extension means that NWAC's Provincial/Territorial Member Associations can maintain existing partnerships and continue to create new partnerships that will lead to increased opportunities for Indigenous women to access: skills development, training opportunities for high-demand jobs, job-finding support, child-care to increase participation in the labour market, programs for Indigenous women with disabilities and programs for Indigenous youth.

Stay tuned for the second issue of volume #4, featuring stories on....!

Have an idea or concept for our newsletter? Know somebody who we should showcase in our newsletters as an Indigenous women entrepreneur? Let us know!

Submit your ideas or profile referrals via e-mail to:

Marshall Ballard: m.ballard@nwac.ca

NWAC continues to look for ways to deliver programming and supports to Indigenous women who are embarking on careers as entrepreneurs so be sure to explore our website for information on projects and services we are developing in partnership with government and business.

Canada

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