

# AGM 2007-2008



**Miziwe Biik**  
Aboriginal Employment and Training

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Miziwe Biik Acknowledges financial support and contributions from the following:

Human Resources and Social Development Canada  
City of Toronto  
Trillium Foundation  
ALFDC  
Ontario Arts Council  
Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities

## MIZIWE BIIK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Cynthia Bird  
*Counsellor*  
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*Job Developer*  
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### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

*Project Officer*  
Eileen Meawasige  
*Project Officer*  
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*Office Assistant*  
Mavis Hazel

### ABORIGINAL BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTRE

*Manager*  
Kenn Ross  
*Marketing Assistant*  
Carol White  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Luanne Whitecrow

## Our Mission and Vision

The Mission of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training is manifold to counsel Toronto urban native people on careers and paths and opportunities, to work with employers to secure employment opportunities, to deliver federal and provincial training programs, working with both groups and individuals to achieve these endeavours.

### Mission

Miziwe Biik is committed to assisting all persons of native ancestry in the Greater Toronto Area to attain a better quality of life.

Miziwe Biik believes that community needs and aspirations are paramount. We are committed to strengthening the community through partnerships promoting equality and self reliance.

Miziwe Biik strives to provide training and employment opportunities in a supportive environment in which people can affirm their native identities and develop to their full potential.

Miziwe Biik is committed to the belief that it is through traditional cultural values, practices and resources that we will reclaim our destiny.



*Jim Windigo, a respected Ojibway Elder gave us our name. Miziwe Biik is like a body of water where a ripple effect has been created; it is the ability to reach out and make positive change in the lives of the urban native people across the Greater Toronto Area.*

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#### Cover

Carpentry Apprenticeship Program - George Brown College Carpentry Shop.  
See feature on the back inside cover and the Success Story (Carpentry Instructor- Ramsey Kicknosway) on pg. 8-9



## FROM THE PRESIDENT



JIMMY DICK

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues on the Board of Directors at Miziwe Biik for their ongoing commitment to the organization and to the community. Also, I would like to acknowledge our Executive Director Nancy Martin, and all of the Miziwe Biik staff for their hard work and dedication. For their continued support and direction, I would like to extend my gratitude to our community members and partners and wish for them and their families, prosperity and health in the coming year.

Miziwe Biik's ongoing commitment to providing training and employment for the Aboriginal community was supported this past year by an initiative to advance the need for affordable housing. The development of a trained workforce and building a cultural economy also requires that individuals and families have access to safe and affordable living spaces. The GTA Aboriginal Housing initiative in which Miziwe Biik participated, produced a report ([www.gtaaboriginalhousing.com](http://www.gtaaboriginalhousing.com)) that addressed the need for Aboriginal control over Aboriginal housing. In the upcoming year, we will be paying close attention to the renewed commitment of the Federal government to fund homelessness programs and we will be watching to see how this position addresses the needs of our community.

Thank you all again and may the Great Spirit bless and watch over all of you and your loved ones.

*All Our Relations,*

**Jimmy Dick**, President

Board of Directors

Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training

## FROM THE DIRECTOR



NANCY MARTIN

Another tremendous year, thanks to the hard work of clients, staff, board and all! This year I have chosen to show you a video of success stories, which I call Miziwe Biik Success Stories, the movie!!!!

The highlights of the year ran the spectrum from individual training accomplishments to group training courses such as the carpentry pre apprenticeship program (featured in this report). Many people were placed in jobs with key employers such as Canada Post, Adecco, and the University of Toronto.

We have consistently met and exceeded targets set out in our various funding agreements, more than 1000 people received funding interventions last year. Year after year we see the labour pool enhanced with additional skills, education levels and abilities. I truly believe it is our time to shine as a community.

Our partnerships have grown to include the opportunity for community members to study Public Administration, Law Clerk and Administrative Assistant in conjunction with FNTI and Ryerson.

Our contract with the federal government was to end on March 31, 2009 however there has been a one year extension for the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements until March 2010.

Enjoy the movie and we will see you soon!

*In Friendship,*

**Nancy Martin**, Executive Director

Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training

# PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## Career and Employment Counselling Services

- Resume / Cover Letter Writing
- Interviewing Skills
- Hidden Job Market
- True Colors Workshops
- Basic Computer Skills Training

## Employment Resource Centre Services

- Computers/Internet
- Photocopier / Facsimile
- Telephones
- Toronto Labour Market Information
- Local, National and Native Newspapers
- Local Community Information Resources
- Educational Information / Calendars

## Employment Placement Services

- Job Board
- Local Native Organization Postings
- Federal Government Temporary Employment Placements
- Referrals to Employment Opportunities
- Summer Career Placements

## Funding Services

- Employment Insurance Funding for Clients
- Client Driven Training Projects
- Community Project Training Available
- Advocacy for Employment, Education, Housing
- Ontario Works

## Aboriginal Business Resource Centre

- Business Advisory Service
- Small Business Certificate Course
- Entrepreneur Training
- Subject Matter Experts
- Toronto Aboriginal Business Association
- Computers
- Resource Library
- Referrals to Funding Sources

# EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE SERVICES

RUBY DREGER



The competition for work is very challenging in the city of Toronto. Many of our clients may not have the necessary skills, education or experience to compete on the same level for the positions that are available in the GTA.

There has been an increase in clients interested in obtaining the GED and returning to College or University. The transitional year programs throughout the city have been encouraging for our clients to further their education.

The Employment Staff encourages the existing clients to continue using the services of the Employment Resource Centre. We welcome all of the new clients who have relocated to the GTA and as we work in partnership together we will obtain the dreams and future goals of obtaining the job that you are passionate about.

Meegwetch to all of the Employment Staff, including Employment Counsellors, Job Developer, Receptionist and the Administrative Assistant who continue to be passionate about assisting the clients in need who use our services daily. Meegwetch to all of our clients who use our services and we all look forward to another successful year.

The Employment Resource Centre continues to have a busy, challenging and exciting 2008. There has been a significant increase in the statistics of unemployed clients visiting the Employment Resource Centre from across Canada. Ten thousand (10,000) clients or more visit the Resource Centre on an annual basis and the majority of clients are searching for employment and training.

Congratulations to all of our clients who were successful in finding employment throughout the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The success rate of the clients finding employment is as high as 52% and increasing. Many students were successful in finding summer employment and were able to participate in interesting and meaningful experiences.

The clients who attend the workshops to enhance their skills in the job search techniques, are in a better position to be competitive in the workplace.

**Photo (left to right):** Cynthia Bird, Denise Davad, Theresa Desjarlais, Brenna Lafrance, Lillian Wesley, Gregg Bellerose, Joseph McQuabbie, Ruby Dreger





## Success Story

# MELANIE FERRIS

## Huntinghawk Communications

Melanie is the owner and president of Huntinghawk Communications. Built on her successful career as a writer and editor for the federal government, she launched her business in 2007.

In 2007, Melanie went to the Aboriginal Business Resource Centre to receive guidance with her vision to open a communications firm that focuses on helping government and non-profits provide plain language communications to Aboriginal people. "I had no business training but had the skills and some clients, and people kept telling me about Miziwe Biik, so I checked it out," Melanie says. Through the business centre and its manager, Kenn Ross, Melanie was able to access computers, received some business training, wrote a viable business plan, and received a wage subsidy as well as a start-up loan.

An Ojibway/Sioux woman who grew up all over southern Manitoba, Melanie is an inter-generational survivor of the residential school and foster care systems. She is committed to doing work that helps all Aboriginal people in their attempt to heal themselves. "We can lift ourselves out of poverty and create sustainable jobs if we can actually understand and access information about the wide variety of services, programs, and funding available to us," says Melanie when explaining what inspires her.

In its first year, Huntinghawk Communications developed the first pre- and post-natal classes that are designed to empower Aboriginal people. Health Canada quickly approved and bought the curriculum to use with its First Nations clients. Huntinghawk also formed its first partnership with the award-winning Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre to develop new healing programs for Aboriginal people in Toronto's Parkdale community. These achievements led to Melanie receiving the award for "business youth of the year" from the Toronto Aboriginal Business Association in 2008. ■ [www.huntinghawkcommunications.com](http://www.huntinghawkcommunications.com)

I had no business training but had the skills and some clients before starting up my company and people kept telling me about Miziwe Biik, so I checked it out.



## Success Story

# RAMSEY KICKNOSWAY

## Carpentry Partnership Instructor

Transitioning to a college environment is a challenge for some students, but they get a lot of support from Miziwe Biik.

Along with a graduating class of forty participants, Ramsey Kicknosway was a Miziwe Biik success story 13 years ago when he completed the Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship program, offered in partnership with Native Child and Family Services. He is featured here for his work as the instructor of the Level 1 Pre-Apprenticeship Carpentry program delivered in partnership with Toronto Council Fire and George Brown College.

After completing his Pre-Apprenticeship program, Ramsey returned to school in a number of Union sponsored programs, completing his qualifications becoming a Journeyman carpenter. He applied his trade in a number of commercial and industrial positions, including some projects in Michigan, but felt more at home as a framer and builder in his home community of Walpole. He also worked in the Toronto area, where, as a youth, he had spent some time on the streets, before moving to Ottawa to complete his High School education, and accepting a Youth Worker and Board position at the Odawa Friendship Centre.

Ramsey's career advancements have always included an elements of giving back and capacity building within the Aboriginal community. He believes that his experience, both working and living on reserve and in the city, help him to relate to his carpentry students, who come from varied backgrounds. Transitioning to a college environment is a challenge for some students, but they get a lot of support from Miziwe Biik. The program officers do a lot of follow-up and they make sure the students get to their classes. The commitment is on a one-to-one level. Eric McGraw and Cynthia Bird work with the college and the students to try and remove any obstacles that might otherwise interfere with attendance and program advancement.

This year, 21 of the 23 students who started the program, graduated. Ramsey remarked that he would love to work with the same students in the next phase of their program, or teach a new group of aspiring carpenters – whichever opportunity comes first ■





# ABORIGINAL BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTRE

## KENN ROSS



### Aboriginal Businessman of the Year

Joseph Sagutch, artist-entrepreneur;

### Aboriginal Youth in Business

Melanie Ferris, Huntinghawk Communications  
(featured in this report).

The ABRC wishes to acknowledge the financial support of RBC and the City of Toronto.

**Photo (left to right):** Luanne Whitecrow, *Admin. Assistant*, Ken Ross, *Manager*, Carol White, *Marketing Assistant*

Miziwe Biik's Aboriginal Business Resource Centre (ABRC) opened 113 client files in fiscal 2007; 73 male and 40 female. A total of 975 client contacts used the ABRC computers, printer, fax, copy and library facilities (includes repeat contacts).

The ABRC hosted 12 workshops with a total of 96 participants covering subjects such as marketing, effective communication and tax planning for small business.

The ABRC also ran four iterations of its popular Small Business Certificate Course for 39 participants as well as an intensive four-week Aboriginal Small Business Program for 20 participants.

The ABRC also managed a micro-loan portfolio for Aboriginal entrepreneurs. In 2007, \$23,500 in loans were made to clients in ventures such as communications consulting and food handling advisory services.

March 2007 saw the 6th annual Toronto Aboriginal Business Associations Awards (the TABAs), sponsored by RBC. The Awards are worth \$1000 each and recognized achievements in Aboriginal business development. The 2008 Toronto Aboriginal Business Awards recipients were:

### Aboriginal Businesswoman of the Year

Diana Therrien, Canadian Food Services Training;

## PROJECT BUDGETS

**CONSOLIDATED  
REVENUE FUND \$1,780,269.45**

### Breakdown of funds by Program:

Targeted Wage Subsidy  
\$650,079.58  
Direct Course Purchase  
\$594,058.89  
Stay In School Initiative  
\$89,434.00  
Employment Assistance Support  
Measures \$321,546.25  
Local Labour Market Partnerships  
\$89,276.00  
Self Employment Assistance  
\$21,114.80  
Youth Work Experience  
\$14,760.00

### SPONSORS:

- Native Child and Family Services
- Native Women's Resource Centre
- Big Soul Productions
- Nishnawbe Homes
- Red Sky Performance
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- University of Toronto
- Amberlight Productions Inc.
- Spirit of the People
- Ontario First Nations Technical Services
- Anishnawbe Health Toronto
- First Nations House (UofT)
- Centre for Indigenous Theatre
- Anduhyaun Inc.
- Native Men's Residence
- Toronto Council Fire Cultural Centre
- Red Pepper Spectacle Arts
- Seventh Generation Midwives
- Kevin Boudewyn Consulting
- Small Theatre Administration Facility
- Toronto Bail
- Neegan Burnside
- The Brow House
- Youthlink
- Native Woman in the Arts
- Individual Client Requests

**EMPLOYMENT  
INSURANCE FUND \$1,987,583.80**

### Breakdown of funds by Program:

Targeted Wage Subsidy  
\$1,027,734.40  
Self Employment Assistance  
\$79,657.60  
Skills Development  
\$215,547.74  
Employment Assistance  
Support Measures  
\$387,252.96  
Local Labour Market Partnerships  
\$104,566.50  
Stay In School Initiative  
\$172,824.67

### SPONSORS:

- Centre for Indigenous Theatre
- Anishnawbe Health Toronto
- Anduhyaun Inc.
- Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- Toronto Council Fire Cultural Centre
- Reel World Film Festival Inc.
- Native Women's Resource Centre
- Aboriginal Business Resource Centre
- Spirit of the People
- Association for Native Development in the Arts
- D. Bruce McChesney
- Lifestyle Information Network
- Nishnawbe Homes
- Individual Client Requests

**YOUTH FUNDS \$431,751.10**

### Breakdown of funds by Program:

Individual Skills Enhancement  
\$27,650.00  
Work Experience  
\$404,101.10

### SPONSORS:

- Native Child and Family Services
- ImagineNative
- Evergreen
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- Purple Hearts
- John Howard Society of Toronto
- Harbourfront Centre
- Big Soul Productions
- GAA Dibaatjimat Ngaashi
- Spirit of the People

### SUMMER CAREER PLACEMENTS

**Total Allocation \$76,342.00**

### SPONSORS:

- Toronto Council Fire Cultural Centre
- Gizhaadaawgamik Daycare Centre
- Japanese Canadian Centre
- Native Child and Family Services
- Artic Co-Operators
- Red Pepper Spectacle Arts
- Noojimwin Health Authority
- University of Toronto
- Ontario First Nations Technical Services
- Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training



**Project Staff (left to right):** Mavis Hazel, Eileen Meawasige, Vickie Labranche

# Miziwe Biik and the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle ALFDC

Miziwe Biik is a member of the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle (ALFDC).

The ALFDC is an umbrella organization for member First Nations and urban boards.

The ALFDC is the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement holder between the First nations and the Federal Government.

The ALFDC administers the funding, reports to Human Resources Development Canada, develops programs, policies and procedures for members, and lobbies for funding. The Board of Directors of the ALFDC is made up of representatives of the member First nations and urban boards. Membership of the ALFDC is comprised of twelve First Nations and two urban boards. The ALFDC is chaired by Steve Williams.

Individual training is eligible to be taken at any recognized training institution/organization or delivered by an employer with on-the-job experience.

The type of programs and services offered are able to be adjusted to local situations and requirements, yet they must relate to both, a) the skills development interest of the individuals and b) current labour market needs.



## Feature Program

# CARPENTRY PROGRAM

The Carpentry Training Program is a partnership between Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, and George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology. The project is funded through the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The 33 week program is structured around three components; Academic Upgrading a Level One Basic Carpentry course and a work placement.

In this, the second year that the program has been offered, there were a number of improvements including, increased screening requirements, the provision of training and transportation allowances, lunch programs, paid work placements, employer subsidies through Youth Employment Services, and the recruitment of an Aboriginal Instructor, Ramsey Kic-knosway. Ramsey is featured in this report as a "Miziwe Biik Success Story" (pg. 8-9).

As a result of these changes, there has been a considerable increase in the number of successful work positions obtained following the program.

Another factor that has contributed to the program's overall success has been the active communication between the project officers, Eric McGraw and Cynthia Bird, with George Brown College, the instructor and the students. Results from these discussions and from constant program monitoring has included the provisions of additional math tutoring and one-on-one assistance to improve attendance.

Anticipating new funding, some exciting new opportunities are being developed for next year including, partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, for more 'hands on' job experience and a partnership with the school board, for Ontario High School graduation certificates.

Stay in touch on the web for program updates.  
[www.miziwebiik.com](http://www.miziwebiik.com)



