

**2011 INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER
GRANT TAIBOSSIGAI, M'CHIGEENG FIRST NATION, ON**



Grant is from the M'Chigeeng First Nation located on Manitoulin Island, Ontario and has worked as the Economic Development Officer for the past 25 years. Under Grant's leadership, expertise and teamwork-based enthusiasm, M'Chigeeng First Nation has made great strides in building a sustainable economic base that provides opportunities and prosperity for the M'Chigeeng First Nation citizens through innovative projects such as the Mother Earth Renewable Energy wind farm project. When asked about his views on Aboriginal economic development, Grant believes that "We are moving and forging ahead with new ideas.

First Nations are taking a larger step and doing business outside of the community. The opportunities are there and we need to move on them." It is apparent that Grant Taibossigai walks the talk, and is a valued and key driver of economic development in the M'Chigeeng First Nation. Grant is certainly deserving of the ED of the Year award, and will surely continue to do excellent and inspiring work in the field of Aboriginal economic development. Congratulations Grant!

MERE Project

For the past ten years Grant has worked tirelessly on the MERE Project that envisioned establishing a wind farm on M'Chigeeng First Nation land to harness renewable wind energy that would be sold to the Ontario Power Authority for power grid distribution. After a decade of perseverance, the MERE dream has become a reality. In June of 2011, construction commenced for the erection of two 2MW turbines and is the first renewable energy project in Canada owned entirely by a First Nation. M'Chigeeng has contributed \$3 million to the \$12.5 million project. Another \$1 million has come from the Conservative Government of Canada while the Liberal Government of Ontario is providing a loan guarantee, enabling M'Chigeeng to borrow the remaining \$8.5 million. The loan will be repaid from the income received from the Ontario Power Authority, at 15 cents per kilowatt hour for 20 years. By next spring the turbines will be in place and ready to deliver enough electricity for a thousand homes.

Community Benefits

The MERE project will create over 100 local jobs, and has provided opportunities for M'Chigeeng contractors to assist with road construction, tree felling & clearing, security, landscaping, sanitation and meal & hospitality, to name a few projects associated with the construction phase of the wind farm. M'Chigeeng will use the net profits for the benefit of band members through social and development activities that contribute to the bands economic self-reliance.

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower"- Grant Taibossigai, 2011 Cando Conference