

## **2014 ABORIGINAL PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESS ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER**

### ***Acosys Consulting Services, QC***



Acosys Consulting is 100% Aboriginal owned and operated, and considers itself to be an Aboriginal business above all else. The small, twelve-person consulting firm is located in Montreal, only fifteen minutes away from the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory. Their mandate is to provide industry and government with professional, timely, and value-based consulting services in IT, Human Resources, and Aboriginal Policy Development, while building the presence and visibility of Aboriginal peoples within professional services.

Founded in 2006, the idea for Acosys was initially inspired by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's 1996 report, which stated that "many Aboriginal youth see themselves facing an economic wasteland." This quote struck a chord with labour lawyer Julie Lepage and business analyst and project manager David Acco, who co-founded Acosys together in hopes of creating employment and educational opportunities for Aboriginal youth. They have been successful to this end, as over 70 percent of Acosys' employees are Aboriginal, and they have committed to hiring 33 percent Aboriginal people on all project deliveries.

Collaboration is another major goal of Acosys, as the creative benefits of workplace diversity are emphasized. Putting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal minds together can create great success, according to Acco, who is also President and CEO of Acosys. In order to work together respectfully and effectively, Acosys acknowledges a need to change negative stereotypes or false perceptions of Aboriginal communities. As such, they offer sensitivity training to all clients as part of their strongly emphasized social mission, with educational workshops seeking to explore the history, breakdown the stereotypes, and highlight the future opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

No path is without its challenges, and constant challenges faced by Acosys have been the disadvantages that Aboriginal peoples face in the mainstream labour market. These disadvantages include lower employment rates and lower than average incomes. Since 2009, Acosys has worked to combat these factors with their Aboriginal Intern Program (AIP), part of their commitment to building the Aboriginal professional workforce. The program seeks to increase the amount of Aboriginal peoples working within the Human Resources and Information Technology (IT) fields.

It is Acosys Consulting's belief that Aboriginal peoples are ready to take on careers at the professional level, and have the ability to cultivate positive change in the private sector within policies, hiring, or organizations. Acosys seeks to help foster this change, with further hopes of Aboriginal role models in positions of influence, as well as increased capacity-building, with dollars being made off-reserve flowing back into communities.