

Benefits from the December 5, 2012 Business Exchange Day – Summary of the Study

The Secretariat to the Cree Nation – Abitibi-Témiscamingue Economic Alliance commissioned AECOM to conduct a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the benefits from the Business Exchange Day held December 5, 2012, in Val d’Or. As in previous years, the Business Exchange Day brought together businesses¹ owned by First Nations² (primarily Cree) and businesses located in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and the James Bay territory (hereafter “the Region”). Essentially, this summary is based on the same survey methodology and questionnaire used to assess the benefits of the Business Exchange Day held a year before, on December 1, 2011.

Participants at the Business Exchange Day were surveyed in February and March of 2013, to assess benefits from the event. A total of 61 Region businesses and 24 First Nations businesses responded to the survey, and participation rates were identical (57% and 56% respectively). Region respondents represented all RCMs in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, with the exception of Témiscamingue, with stronger representation from Vallée-de-l’Or, and the James Bay area. Businesses from 8 of the 10 Cree communities in the Eeyou Istchee Territory participated in the survey.

Number of survey respondents

	Region	First Nations
Number of businesses that attended the Business Exchange Day	107	43
Number of businesses that responded to the survey	61	24
Survey participation rate	57%	56%

Region respondents represented the following sectors: professional, scientific and technical services (19.7%), retail trade (18%), and manufacturing (14.6%). First Nations respondents included professional, scientific and technical services (21%), construction (21%) and band councils (17%).

NETWORKING AND CONTACTS

Networking is clearly the main benefit of the Business Exchange Day, for both Region and First Nations respondents. Several businesses reported that they were able to meet with existing clients and partners and others stated that the event was an opportunity to seek out new contacts. Many appreciated the fact that they could meet with a number of key stakeholders within a short period of time.

For half the participants (50%), the Business Exchange Day was a chance to build on existing relationships, and for 75% of Region businesses and First Nations businesses, the event provided an opportunity to make new contacts.

¹ In this document, the term "business" includes commercial businesses, municipalities, Indian bands (within the meaning of the Act) and any other organizations that participated or could have participated in the Business Exchange Day.

² The expression "First Nations" is used in this document to mean businesses owned by Crees in the Eeyou Istchee Territory or in Ontario and one business owned by the the Algonquin Nation.

Key benefit of the Business Exchange Day - 2013

Benefits	Region	%	First Nations	%
Networking or contacts	51	84%	14	58%
Contracts	7	11%	8	33%
Jobs/Training	1	2%	0	0%
More than one response	2	3%	2	8%
Total number of respondents	61	100%	24	100%

The following comments are revealing:

We kept up-to-date with existing contacts and met new ones.

We were able to make new contacts and to reconnect with people we already knew as well. [Translation]

We met two chiefs and this connection is going to bring us two contracts. [Translation]

JOBS AND TRAINING

The Business Exchange Day opened up new employment opportunities for 30% of Region businesses and 17% of First Nations businesses. Seven businesses stated that new jobs were created as a result of the Business Exchange Day.

The survey showed that 44% of First Nations businesses and 10% of Region businesses implemented training as a result of the Business Exchange Day. Little detail was provided regarding the number of persons who received training or the type of training provided.

CONTRACTS AND SALES ASSOCIATED WITH CONTRACTS

Of the businesses that responded, 93% of Region respondents (57) and 96% of First Nations respondents reported that the event would likely be good for their business. The Business Exchange Day opened up opportunities for new business in the future for about 75% of businesses, while strengthening existing business for 25% of participants and fostering new business for 20% of respondents. Approximately 10% of respondents reported that they had consolidated existing operations, developed new business and opened up new opportunities.

At the time of the survey, 33 Region businesses, (53%) and 16 First Nations businesses (67%) were anticipating or had already signed contracts for 2013, resulting wholly or in part from the Business Exchange Day. On the other hand, 14% of businesses indicated that they were not anticipating any contracts, while others were not in a position to obtain contracts, namely, development organizations.

For 2013, 10 of the Region businesses who responded with an amount were either anticipating signing, or had already signed, contracts totalling \$725,000. Of the First Nations businesses, two reported contracts with an estimated total value of \$270,000. The actual figures will be considerably higher because there are still many contracts and agreements to come and because many of the respondents either did not know the amounts involved or were unwilling to disclose them.

Of the Region respondents, at least 32 reported that they do business with Cree businesses. Most of their transactions are in the professional, scientific and technical services (10), retail trade (7), and manufacturing (4) categories. For 10 of these respondents, this business accounts for 10% or more of their sales in the Northern Quebec region.

It is interesting to note that 11 Region respondents do business with the Inuit, and that this business accounts for between 1% and 70% of their sales in the Northern Quebec region.

Ten (10) Cree respondents (42%) reported sales to Abitibi-Témiscamingue or James Bay area businesses: for six of them, Abitibi-Témiscamingue accounts for 10% to 40% of their total sales.

PARTICIPATION AT THE NEXT BUSINESS EXCHANGE DAY

When asked how likely they would be to participate in the next Business Exchange Day organized by the Secretariat, 87% of respondents indicated, without hesitation in many cases, that they would definitely (51%) or probably (36%) be attending. Broken down by respondent group, this accounts for the intentions of 84% of Region businesses and 96% of First Nations participants. Specifically, 28 Region respondents (46%) and 15 First Nations respondents (60%) indicated that there is a 100% chance that they will attend the next Business Exchange Day. These responses are an important indicator of the level of importance that both Region and First Nations businesses attach to this activity, given the time required and expense incurred to attend.

THE SECRETARIAT’S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE EYYOU ISTCHEE AND NORTHERN QUEBEC REGION

Respondents were asked the following question: "[Translation] In your opinion, does the Secretariat contribute to the economic development of the Eeyou Istchee and Northern Quebec region?" Almost all answered yes. Several participants indicated that, in various and significant ways, the activities encourage closer relations between the two regions. For instance, one participant said: "[Translation] The Secretariat develops business and helps to foster ties between people in the south and people in the north. They point us in the right direction." However, two respondents stated that Abitibi-Témiscamingue reaped most of the benefits.

Secretariat’s contribution to economic development of the Eeyou Istchee and Northern Quebec region

The Secretariat contributes	Region	%	First Nations	%
Yes	58	95%	22	92%
No	1	2%	0	0%
Don’t know	2	3%	2	8%
Total	61	100%	24	100%

IN SUMMARY

The 2002 signing of the Paix des Braves (Agreement concerning a New Relationship between the Cree Nation and the Government of Quebec) opened up many opportunities for business development between Region and First Nations businesses. These opportunities are based not only on geographic proximity, but also on the leaders’ understanding that it is in their economic

interest to develop business relationships with the other region. The survey results clearly show that the Business Exchange Day participants share this vision and are striving to make it a reality.