



Native Agri Update

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*IAPO's 30th Anniversary
1984 - 2014*

2014 marks IAPO's 30th year! For those around since inception, the time has passed quickly with numerous successes advancing First Nations farming and agricultural economic development.

Since inception, IAPO's goal has been to support agricultural economic development by providing agricultural financing, business advisory and extension services, as well as access to governmental agricultural programs.

Mission Statement

"To cultivate sustainable economic growth of Ontario First Nations people for seven generations through implementation of agricultural related programs."

IAPO's start can be tracked back to the efforts of a few dedicated individuals from the London District. Working since 1976 as the London District Agricultural Committee, the group was looking to create an agriculture development program emulating the success of the Western Canadian Indian Program. From this modest start, interest and participation grew to include others from across Ontario and in 1981, the Ontario Indian Agricultural Committee was created comprised of members from six districts: Bruce, London, Brantford, Peterborough, Sudbury and Fort Frances. By the end of 1981, a proposal was submitted to Indian Affairs supporting the creation of the Ontario Indian Agriculture Program. After many months of work, in 1984 the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario was created. Funding eventually followed and by 1986, IAPO provided its first farm loan.

While there have been many successes since 1984, there have also been numerous challenges for both IAPO and the First Na-

tions farming sector. The contributions of the Board of Directors, both current and past, have been instrumental in guiding IAPO through the challenges and onward to success. The Directors, elected from districts across the province, bring local perspectives and expertise guiding IAPO and shaping programs and services. Under the direction of the Board, IAPO has had the benefit of a tireless, extremely dedicated staff working to deliver programs and supporting First Nations farmers. While the contributions of the Board and staff have been invaluable, nothing would have been possible without the support of our members, First Nations farmers.

Thank You to Our Members

Agriculture and farming is a challenging business environment. First Nations farmers, with a blend of perseverance, a work ethic like no other, business insight and a love of the land overcome the challenges. Their success and contributions extends beyond the farm, supporting their local communities, First Nations agriculture and IAPO. For their hard work and contributions, we are sincerely thankful.

Much has been accomplished in the first thirty years, but there is still an opportunity to do much more. Just as in 1984, many communities have significant agricultural resources that are idle or under utilized. As well, barriers to mainstream financing still exist and the need for business advisory and agricultural extension services grows, as does food insecurity. Lastly, there is a real need to create meaningful economic opportunities, particularly for youth in rural Ontario. I'm sure the next thirty years is going to be as challenging and rewarding as the first.

JH

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Comments and Feedback
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