

2023 IBA BACKGROUNDEERS

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

The Ballantyne Project

City: Maple Ridge

Dwight Ballantyne is the driving force behind The Ballantyne Project: a youth-led initiative bridging the awareness gap between Indigenous communities and the rest of Canada while sparking social consciousness. Growing up in challenging circumstances in a northern First Nation in Saskatchewan for 21 years, Dwight's relocation to BC in 2016 opened his eyes to the widespread lack of knowledge about life on First Nations reserves.

Launched in 2019, The Ballantyne Project was driven by his wish to inspire Indigenous youth in remote First Nations to pursue dreams and share their stories. The #WeSeeYou campaign was initiated to amplify voices from remote communities, breaking the invisibility barrier. Initially the project partnered with other organizations to establish an Entrepreneurship Program and has since evolved to hosting Indigenous youth from remote Indigenous communities during a twice-annual, week-long #WeSeeYou trip to Vancouver for an educational and life experience opportunity as one of the initiatives of the #WeSeeYou campaign.

Despite pandemic disruptions, Dwight adapted by delivering virtual presentations to schools and organizations nationwide, using his personal life experiences to raise awareness. His authenticity and vulnerability in sharing his story proved transformative. Dwight envisions expanding The Ballantyne Project's impact through employing Indigenous youth and collaborating with an ever-growing team. With unyielding commitment, Dwight plans to expand his outreach, fostering connections with diverse communities and organizations. His journey, from a remote community to a beacon of change, highlights the power of shared narratives in transforming societal perceptions.

Business of the Year: one-to-two person enterprise

Daxgedim Haanak' Nation Building

City: Comox

Marcia Turner is an Indigenous leader focused on advocating for self-determination and self-government among Indigenous peoples across British Columbia and beyond. As CEO and founder of Daxgedim Haanak' Nation Building, Marcia envisions a decolonized future where Indigenous peoples can freely embrace their culture and languages. She has a deep commitment and connection to her Gitxsan heritage as part of the Lax Gibuu (Wolf clan) and belongs to the Wilp Haijimsxw, House of Chief Haijimsxw.

With a mission that revolves around transformation and systems change at the governance and leadership levels, Marcia works alongside Indigenous communities to amplify their voices. Her goals encompass facilitating Nation re-building, revitalizing ancestral governance structures to re-incorporate matriarchs, advancing Indigenous rights and title, fostering Indigenous and non-

Indigenous relationships, while expanding her business with a team of Indigenous associates who share her vision of decolonial futures. Her journey began with small workshops on cultural safety and historical awareness from an Indigenous perspective. Over time, her business has evolved and grown significantly, showcasing her ability to collaborate with diverse organizations, governments, and educational institutions.

Hailed as a role model, Marcia is known for her efforts rooted in ancestral teachings and grounded in a rights-based framework. She focuses on creating sustainable, solutions-oriented impacts that resonate at the systemic level and underpin her commitment to meaningful change.

Business of the Year: three-to-ten person enterprise

Totem Design House

City: Courtenay

Totem Design House (TDH) stands as a trailblazing exemplar at the crossroads of Indigenous heritage and eco-conscious entrepreneurship. Founded in 2014 by Erin Brillon, an advocate for her Haida and Cree cultures, TDH has evolved from a modest start into a vibrant force. Rooted in Indigenous values, TDH is committed to crafting locally made, culturally authentic products that not only celebrate Northwest Coast art but also educate the wider world about Indigenous culture.

Erin's commitment goes beyond commerce. As a social enterprise, TDH is dedicated to giving back to Indigenous communities. Through Copper Legacy Indigenous Empowerment Society, the company supports a range of projects and programs. TDH's commitment to empowerment is evident in its exclusive employment of Indigenous staff and its focus on mentorship, with Erin taking a proactive role in coaching and supporting fellow Indigenous business owners.

By preserving cultural heritage, promoting eco-friendly practices, and empowering Indigenous communities, TDH stands as a beacon of responsible business practices. Erin's visionary leadership and the team's creative synergy have propelled TDH from a modest home-based enterprise to a dynamic and impactful force, leading the intersection of Indigenous art, environmentalism and socio-cultural empowerment.

Business of the Year: 11+ person enterprise

Jelly Academy

City: Fort Langley

Jelly Academy is a reskilling company specializing in equipping individuals with comprehensive digital marketing expertise. Its digital marketing curriculum features 11 industry recognized credentials, forming the bedrock for success in the digital arena. The academy's flagship Digital Marketing bootcamp provides expert training in pivotal sectors such as SEO, social media, digital ads (Facebook, Instagram, Google), Google Analytics, Public Relations and Email Marketing. This program boasts a remarkable track record, with high graduation rates

translating into successful career placements, driven by industry-experienced educators who offer insights and support beyond instruction.

Jelly Academy's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity is evident through its efforts in providing scholarships to over 100 Indigenous students, forging collaborations with Indigenous organizations, and empowering over 40 graduates from these communities. This commitment aligns with the academy's broader mission to foster diversity within the tech and digital job sectors.

With expanding horizons, Jelly Academy has augmented its teaching team and diversified its course selection, while forging strategic alliances with influential Indigenous organizations and many more. As it forges ahead, Jelly Academy's reskilling, diversity and excellence-focused approach is reshaping the digital landscape, paving the way for a more inclusive digital marketing industry.

Community-Owned Business of the Year – one entity

Sugar Cane Archaeology

City: Williams Lake

Sugar Cane Archaeology, wholly owned by the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN), is a pioneering First Nations enterprise led by a dedicated team of project managers, archaeologists, and natural resource experts. The company specializes in heritage management and natural resource stewardship in British Columbia, with a distinct focus on responsible industry practices.

The core vision of Sugar Cane is to uphold and advance Indigenous cultural heritage stewardship within its traditional territory, while adhering to rigorous ethical principles. Its mission encompasses integrating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and practices into the consulting sector, enlightening industry partners about archaeology, cultural heritage, and fostering ethical conduct in workplaces.

Integral to Sugar Cane's operations is an Indigenous employment strategy, which emphasizes recruiting from WLFN and neighbouring First Nations through community initiatives, job fairs, presentations, and engagement tactics. Under the stewardship of the WLFN, Sugar Cane has solidified its reputation in the Secwepemc/Central BC/Cariboo region through dynamic industry partnerships, resource development, and vital heritage management undertakings. Notably, Sugar Cane has engaged in significant projects such as the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School geophysical investigation, the Williams Lake River Valley 2020 Flooding Event, and the Cariboo Memorial Hospital Expansion project, as well as several pioneering Archaeological Inventory Surveys through the Cariboo.

Community-Owned Business of the Year – two or more entities

Tiičma Enterprises

City: Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations (KCFN) Village of Houspitas

Tiičma Enterprises, a wholly owned economic development corporation of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations (KCFN), fosters a self-reliant community through diverse economic development ventures. KCFN Holdings LP Board of Directors provides governance oversight of the commercial projects, including management services, aggregates, forestry, fisheries, mariculture, tourism, hospitality, and retail. These ventures align with the community's economic development plan, enhancing infrastructure, services, and the skills of KCFN citizens. Despite its small size, KCFN has made a significant impact through determined pursuit of economic stability, garnering praise from customers and forging successful partnerships across industries and around the world.

Since 2012, Tiičma Enterprises has seen impressive growth by responding to market demands through strategic planning, investments, and training. The Tiičma Hospitality LP is a prime example, expanding its tourism offerings by investing in upgraded facilities. These moves solidify its market presence and contribute to employment and training opportunities. KCFN's commitment to capacity building and succession planning is evident in their focus on professional development, mentoring citizens into management roles and attracting distant community members with stable careers and supporting citizen entrepreneurship whether in partnership or via procurement. The Group of Businesses also collaborates through a roundtable, uniting First Nations, stakeholders, governments, and organizations to address key issues such as pandemic resilience, climate change, ecosystem restoration, and new economic prospects, all aimed at bolstering Kyuquot's economies and resources.

Business Partnership of the Year

Shxw'ōwhámél-LandSea Limited Partnership (SLLP)

City: Hope

The Shxw'ōwhámél-LandSea Limited Partnership (SLLP) specializes in constructing and operating diverse workforce accommodations within the Shxw'ōwhámél traditional territory in Hope, BC. Its focus extends beyond providing basic shelter, aiming to ensure the well-being and productivity of on-site workers through quality living conditions and appealing food options. SLLP places paramount importance on environmental stewardship, striving to create economic opportunities for its community while fostering a sustainable future.

Established in 2019, the partnership has grown steadily, offering increased job opportunities while navigating the challenges of the COVID pandemic with resiliency and adaptable practices. A significant achievement was the completion of the \$20M worker's accommodation complex, Sqémél Lá:lém, providing temporary workforce housing in the territory while showcasing a dedication to Indigenous employment and community engagement. Notable project initiatives have included five Pre-Employment Hospitality Work Skills Training programs held for Indigenous community members, the integration of Indigenous language and art into the lodge

name, logo, signage, and documentation, and other cultural programming such as site and meal blessing ceremonies. The project has further maintained an average of 36% Indigenous employment throughout its lifetime.

SLLP's dedication has extended to substantial community contributions, donating annually for local initiatives, and providing construction assistance to Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation. Forward-thinking and driven by Indigenous values, SLLP's projects are designed to impact its community. As an example, the Sqémél Lá:lém complex is poised to become a lasting housing development after the Trans Mountain expansion project's conclusion.

Award of Distinction

Teara Fraser

City: Richmond

Teara Fraser, founder and CEO of Iskwew Air, embodies inspired leadership in every aspect of her life. Her remarkable path mirrors the resilience and tenacity defining Indigenous entrepreneurs. From her 2012 IBA recognition for Kísik Aerial Survey Inc. to spearheading Canada's first 100% Indigenous woman-owned airline, Teara shatters industry norms, empowering Indigenous women to overcome barriers and develop economic independence. In a bold move, Teara founded an aerotech venture, elibird aero, in January 2023, aiming to be one of Canada's first all-electric flight training units spanning electric and hydrogen technologies, immersive flight and maintenance training, RPAS (remote piloted aircraft systems) and airspace integration, digital transformation, and battery infrastructure.

Teara's industry leadership extends to improving access to remote Indigenous communities and promoting responsible land stewardship. Her efforts open doors of opportunity for Indigenous youth, dismantling traditional stereotypes and nurturing careers in aviation and entrepreneurship. Engaged for over a decade with the British Columbia Aviation Council and serving as a Board Director for Aerial Evolution formerly Unmanned Systems Canada, Teara's influence extends further as she sits on the Board of Directors for the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. As a proud Métis woman, Teara is a bridge builder, igniting inspiration among the next generation of women through her work as the founder of the LIFT Collective while simultaneously empowering Indigenous communities worldwide. Her multifaceted leadership is a resounding testament to her commitment to fostering positive change.