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Trust, mutual respect and cultural sharing are essential ingredients for successful Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business partnerships. ***Examining Business Partnership Arrangements between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Businesses***, an Aboriginal driven research project, did ten case studies in the Atlantic region to understand what makes these partnerships successful. Findings suggest that Aboriginal approaches to business tend to have a strong cultural element and a strong tie to Aboriginal communities. There is an obligation to 'give back' for the sake of future generations. Aboriginal perspectives on business are distinctive from 'bottom-line' driven business practices. They incorporate Aboriginal principles to guide partnerships without sacrificing profit.

The benefits of partnering are multiple. For the Aboriginal partner, the benefits include partnering with a more established and/or experienced company that can and open access to capital and large-scale opportunities. Other benefits include creating employment and developing a skilled labour force in the community, improving access to technology, nation building and the re-establishment of management over natural resources. Many non-Aboriginal business partners seem to be motivated by a desire to be better corporate citizens and build more meaningful relationships with Aboriginal communities. They tend to have a sense of social responsibility toward Aboriginal people. Other benefits of partnership for non-Aboriginal partners include wanting to access a new labour pool, widening their customer base, increased tax benefits, or taking advantage of resource opportunities on Aboriginal lands. There is often a transfer of business skills and capacity from the non-Aboriginal partner to the Aboriginal partner and vice versa.

The ten case study participants represent a diverse range of business experience, and as a result, the study offers a substantial amount of advice for Aboriginal entrepreneurs, non-Aboriginal business people seeking partnerships with Aboriginal people, and government-based policy makers. The report outlines a set of 'notable practices' for both individual and collective enterprises to help guide future initiatives.

The report also finds that one formula for all Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal business ventures will not work. The development of a partnership is situation-specific and should reflect the unique situation and context of the partners and their socio-economic, cultural, and community milieu. Aboriginal communities, organizations, and people differ from one another and are not a homogenous group with only one set of values. Successful Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal business partnerships begin with trust and mutual respect and both partners should share authority, investment, and responsibility and be actively engaged in the partnership and the business. The risks as well as the benefits must also be shared.

The main recommendations for how to strengthen Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal partnerships include promoting and improving access to business development resources, offering targeted workshops and networking opportunities and establishing Aboriginal business associations and trade missions.

Examining Business Partnership Arrangements between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Businesses is one of five new research reports on Aboriginal economic development funded through the Atlantic Aboriginal Economic Development Integrated Program, AAEDIRP. The research project was completed by Lori Ann Roness Consulting, with two principal researchers: Lori Ann Roness and Mary Collier of Potlotek (Chapel Island) First Nation. The AAEDIRP is a unique research program formed through a partnership among the 38 member communities of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC), plus the Inuit, 12 Atlantic universities and 4 government funders, both federal and provincial. The AAEDIRP conducts research on Aboriginal economic development that is relevant to communities, builds Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research capacity, holds workshops on Aboriginal economic development and is developing a database on Aboriginal economic development. The APCFNC is a policy research organization that analyzes and develops culturally relevant alternatives to federal policies that impact on the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu Aboriginal communities and peoples.

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