

First Nation Land Governance Registry Open House – Prairie Region

February 5-6, 2025

First Nation Showcase Panelists

JODY MERRICK

Lands Director – Long Plain First Nation

My name is Jody Merrick, and I am a member of Long Plain First Nation located in Southern Manitoba, in Treaty 1 territory. I am both Ojibway and Dakota and I am currently the Director of Lands at Long Plain First Nation Lands Department. I have been with the Lands Department for 4.5 years and in that time, I have held various positions from administrative assistant, assistant lands manager, lands manager and finally director of lands. I am very grateful to my First Nation for trusting me in this position as well as supporting me throughout the time I have been training. I enjoy working for my nation in the lands management area and strive to make our community a better place for our people now and for our future generations. I am a Certified Lands Manager and a member of the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association. I have a Diploma in Office Management through Assiniboine College and I have completed training with the University of Saskatchewan's Kanawayihetaytan Aski program and NALMA Level II Professional Lands Management Certification Program as well as various training through LABRC.

TRACEY LAFOND

Lands Manager – Whitecap Dakota Nation



Tracey is a proud member of the Whitecap Dakota Nation and has worked for her community in the lands department for the past 9 years. Currently the Lands Manager, Tracey oversees several functions in the department including: leasing, land law development, property taxation, planning and development.

Tracey holds certifications in the Kanawayihetaytan Aski (KA) program from the University of Saskatchewan, NALMA, and the First Nations Tax Administration program from Thompson Rivers University and the Tulo Centre and recently completed their Applied Lands Management program. She is currently enrolled in the First Nations Applied Economics program. Furthering her education and knowledge in the area of First Nations land management is vital to her role and how she serves her community.

Economic Panelists

CARIE SANTO

Owner - Santo Consulting and Advisory Services Inc.



Carie has 20+ years of experience in First Nation land governance and administration in both a First Nation and federal government setting. She currently works with several First Nation communities in Alberta, assisting with additions to reserves, Land Code implementation, and capacity development initiatives. Carie was born and raised in Calgary and lives in Edmonton with her husband and two daughters.

ANDRÉ LE DRESSAY

Director – Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics



André Le Dressay is the Director of the Tulo Centre of Indigenous Economics, the Director of Fiscal Realities Economists, and an economics professor at Thompson Rivers University. He has worked with Clarence (Manny) Jules, and over 300 First Nations communities and leaders across Canada for the last 30 years to support economic self-determination by implementing First Nation fiscal powers and jurisdiction. He has written numerous academic and consulting reports in his areas of expertise: building the legal, administrative, fiscal, and institutional framework to support indigenous jurisdiction and economic growth.

He co-authored a book which was nominated for the Donner Book Prize in 2010. He was the principal author of the Tulo Centre online textbook—Building a Competitive First Nation Investment Climate (2015). He has also authored the closing chapter, Unlocking First Nation Wealth: Past Efforts & Future Opportunities, in a compilation entitled, Unlocking the Wealth of Indian Nations (2016). His working paper Renewing Indigenous Economies Through Creative Destruction has been available on the Tulo Centre website and has been downloaded over 800 times. He led the development of the curriculum for 14 original courses in First Nation Tax Administration and First Nation Applied Economics for the Tulo Centre and has taught over 400 First Nation students. André has received a distinguished alumni award from Thompson Rivers University and a lifetime achievement award from the First Nations Tax Administrators Association.

He received his PhD in Economics from Simon Fraser University, a Master of Applied Economics from the University of Victoria, and an Honors degree in Math and Economics from the University of Regina.

ROBERT (BOBBY) DANIELS

President/CEO – Misty Ventures Inc.



Robert worked for 11 years with the Provincial Government with Social Services in various positions such as Young Offenders, Child Protection, Family Preservation, and a Judicial Interim Release worker. In 2005, Robert moved away from the social work field to obtain his Business Management diploma through SIIT. The next step in his career, with his strong background and work experience, took him on his path to achieving his MBA from the University of Saskatchewan in 2008. After graduation Robert started at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies as part of the Senior team as a Director in Marketing and Communications. After 8 years of working in the Education and Training field and alongside some strong mentors Robert decided it was time to take his practical and life experience to assist his own nation Mistawasis Nêhiyawak.

In 2016, Robert (Bobby) Daniels became the President/CEO of Misty Ventures, the economic development arm of Mistawasis Nêhiyawak. This position included a lot of challenging work ahead from the team in Mistawasis Nêhiyawak that included the Chief and Council, the creation of an Independent Board of Directors, and with the help of several professional colleagues Misty Ventures Inc. became a reality.

From 2016, the first business for Mistawasis was a gas station named Misty Petroleum and is the “flagship” of Misty Ventures. Misty Ventures has grown to own its second 100% owned entity RST Maintenance as of Sept 2022.

Today in 2024 the community of Mistawasis Nêhiyawak has created a strong foundation of economic development with 11 successful entities that are part of the Misty Ventures Group. The portfolio of group of companies is primarily Mining, Oil & Gas, Engineering, Retail, Property Maintenance, Self-Storage, Water Solutions, Renewable Energy, Electrical, Hydro Vac Trucks, Directional Drilling, Fiber Optics and General Construction.

With his years of business experience, involvement on numerous boards, and large network of contacts, Bobby is a fundamental asset and catalyst for Misty Ventures now and into the future.

Legal Panelists

JOHN DOOLAN

Senior Lawyer – Miller Thomson LLP



John Doolan is a senior lawyer in the Vancouver office of Miller Thomson LLP. He is working with the First Nation Land Management Resource Centre on the development of the First Nations Land Governance Registry Regulations and related matters. Mr. Doolan has extensive experience in Aboriginal business law matters. In addition to the Resource Centre, his clients include Tkemlúps te Secwépemc, Tsawwassen First Nation, Tsuut'ina-Canderel Land Management Limited Partnership (the developer of the Taza project in Alberta), the First Nations Tax Commission, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (as project lender to the Señákw development on Squamish Nation lands at the south end of the Burrard Bridge), the Toronto-Dominion Bank (on lending to projects on First Nation land) and the Government of British Columbia (on its Attainable Housing Initiative with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations in the BC Lower Mainland). Mr. Doolan is the leader of Miller Thomson's Aboriginal Business Law Group and his practice is almost exclusively related to Aboriginal property law, business law and economic development matters.

SYDNEY THOMSON

Lawyer – MLT Aikins LLP



Sydney Thomson is a lawyer practicing at MLT Aikins LLP. Sydney advises First Nation and Métis communities on financial administration, share and asset transactions, limited partnership agreements, joint venture agreements and corporate structuring of Indigenous-owned businesses.

She also advises on asserting and exercising jurisdiction over core areas of governance including law and policy development. In particular, Sydney assists Indigenous clients in drafting their child and family service laws, membership laws, election acts and other community bylaws.

Prior to completing law school, Sydney worked in policy development for the federal government as well as in public affairs in both the public sector and for various traditional as well as renewable energy companies.