

Community Economic Development Questionnaire

February/March 2003

Introduction

Chief and Council recently held a Community Economic Development Summit to set direction for the future of the Blood Tribe and to start the process of building a long term plan. Chief and Council want to involve the members of the Blood Tribe in the process of forming the plan and are seeking the member's ideas and input.

The Plan will focus on ways to develop and exploit business opportunities on the reserve and to provide employment for band members. Once the comments and ideas are gathered they will be written up into a report and shared with Chief and Council along with the membership.

This is an extremely important undertaking by the Chief and Council. They realize that the reserve population is nearing the 10,000 mark with projections pointing to 15,000 to 20,000 in a few years. This is why they are embarking on a strategic long term and carefully thought out economic development plan.

The success and positive growth of our future generations will be guided by the preparations that we make today. It is imperative that we make a strong commitment to develop economic initiatives that will provide employment and revenue for the long term, but there is also an immediate need to address our current situation of high unemployment and social ills that plague the reserve.

Report to Blood Tribe Economic Development Survey

April 2003

1.0 Executive Summary

On February 20, 2003 we were retained by the Department of Economic Development of the Blood Tribe to conduct an Economic Development home survey comprising of approximately 1200 residences situated on the Blood Reserve.

1.1 Mandate

The purpose of the survey was:

- to inform tribal members on various proposed economic projects being initiated by Chief and Council
- to obtain meaningful and constructive input from members on projects
- to compile and prepare the results of the survey and to submit a final written report to the Economic Development department.

1.2 Success Rate

Although our mandate called for a relatively short time frame, we managed to contact and receive feedback from 735 homes. In our view we felt we had accomplished our objective given the short time frame, the complex and lengthy nature of the questionnaire, and the large geographical area to cover.

1.3 Obstacles

During the course of the survey, we were fortunate to meet many members who were willing to give forth their ideas and suggestions and for this we are grateful for their input.

We did however encounter people who were very reluctant and suspicious and who did not want to participate. Many individuals were of the opinion that this is just another survey that would amount to nothing. Others thought that the whole questionnaire was too lengthy and too difficult

to understand. I know that when the writer filled out the form, it took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

We had difficulty in contacting home occupants. Several visits were often made without success and to those we did contact, we were often told to come back at a later date. Then the ones that we did manage to interview, it usually took several hours to complete. At times, language barriers came into play as some older people did not understand the wording of the survey and needed some translation into Blackfoot.

The weather was also a factor. Initially, we encountered bad weather and the bad road conditions resulted in vehicle breakdowns. Also due to the widespread geographical zones, traveling time became an issue.

1.4 Recommendations

For future surveys such as these, I would recommend that:

- a longer time frame of at least three months
- utilize a questionnaire that is short and simple
- utilize the participatory action consultation process (train people to do it)
- conduct small group or district gatherings and invite an elder to insure that such meetings do not get out of hand
- ensure that those members who reside off the reserve are included. We met many individuals who felt left out or forgotten
- the next questionnaire should not be prepared by outsiders
- the most important recommendation is to make every effort in getting the message through to our youth. They are our future leaders and will be given the task of looking after us. We need to go out to the schools, and provide them with hope and encourage them to finish their education.

2.0 Demographics

In order to accomplish our objective our strategy entailed that we divide the reserve into zones. Take into account the size and population of the reserve, its diverse communities, socio-economic implications, and individual land holdings and non-land owners. As mentioned previously, the number of residences contacted amounted to 735.

2.1 Age Group

• 1- 15	3%
• 16-25	19%
• 26-35	20%
• 36-45	25%
• 46-55	20%
• over 55	13%

2.2 Gender

• Male	45%
• Female	47%
• No response	8%

2.3 Land

• Land Occupant	Yes	43%
	No	49%
• No response		8%

2.4 Employment

• Employed	Yes	40%
	No	53%
• No response		7%

2.5 Full Time Employment

	Yes	32%
	No	60%
• No response		8%

2.6 On Reserve

• Yes	67%	No	21%
• No response	2%		

3.0 Response to the Questionnaire

It is important to note that the number of respondents amount to 735, however there are variations in the number of votes for each category. In some instances they would indicate all the categories as their first choice, in others there would be no votes at all.

3.1 Five key business development opportunities were identified at the Economic Summit.

Out of 859 votes, the following are the results:

• Agricultural Development	31%
• Small Business Development	27%
• Resource Development	20%
• Tourism and Recreation	13%
• Development of reserve lands For business development	9%

Most thought that the greatest potential for economic growth lies within the agricultural sector. The land that we have and our human resources that are readily available are our greatest asset. We need, however, adequate training and sufficient financial support to succeed.

3.2 Agricultural Development

• Encourage Blood Tribe members to farm or ranch	51%
• Develop new business opportunities through BTAP or KABC	28%
• Partner with outside industry to develop agricultural Processing	21%

Again, people selected to farm and ranch. They focused on the area of ranching as it was much easier to get into. Many thought that they could farm, however due to its high cost and risk, it was pretty well ruled out.

Many people took a dim view of BTAP as only a few people are employed there on a regular basis. As far as the processing plant, the wages paid were too low (sweat shop rates).

As for partnering with outside industry, it would be a good idea so long as it is not another hay processing plant arrangement where outsiders benefit the most.

3.3 Resource Development

- Focus on oil and gas development 55%
- Focus on ammonite mining 15%
- Focus on wind power 30%

There was a lot of interest in the oil and gas industry especially among the younger respondents. If the tribe is successful in taking it over they hope to get employment.

On the question of the ammonite, the greatest concern was to successfully market the product. Many individuals recall the demise of the Sundance gemstone project. Many felt that if we are to pursue this, it should be on a joint venture with some outside company with a good track record.

There was a great deal of interest in wind power as it is anticipated it would create both short and long term employment. Excess electricity generated could be sold for a profit or possibly help reserve consumers alleviate their energy bills.

3.4 Recreation Development

- Development of a golf course 21%
- Development of a hotel and casino 37%
- Cultural based tours 42%

A golf course would provide enjoyment and recreation for all age groups. Employment will be limited and revenue created would be questionable.

Many thought the casino would be a good investment provided it is located near a large urban area such as Calgary. If it is managed properly it could provide revenue as well as employment.

On the question of cultural based tours it garnered the most votes. I am suspecting that many people misinterpreted this to mean going on various trips and tours.

3.5 Development of Reserve Lands

- Develop land designations 37%
- Develop land designations to encourage outside industry on long term leases 23%
- Address issues of land occupancy relating to Economic Development 40%

This probably is the most difficult issue. As we all know, the land is the most sensitive issue, given the large number of outstanding disputes. Many could not understand what a Head Lease was and were very suspicious of long term leases.

3.6 Small Business

- Small business on the reserve to serve band members 56%
- Businesses on reserve to serve regional markets 21%
- Businesses on reserve to serve international markets 23%

The majority of the respondents felt that small businesses are a priority. However, many felt that the market is not sufficient enough to sustain them. i.e. gas bars. It was the consensus that they are not competitive.

As far as expecting our surrounding neighbors to patronize reserve businesses, it is not very likely. They cite racism and bigotry as the main reason. With the exception of Lethbridge, many small businesses suffer due to poor markets.

Many were of the opinion that if the reserve could attract large employment based industry to come onto the reserve, it could be very positive. Kainai Industries did it and it could be done again. If several big industries were to be developed it would also create opportunities for small service businesses to thrive and prosper.

4.0 Other Issues Relating To Economic Development

- Should the Band allow franchise operations on the reserve?
80% yes 20% no
- Should the Band encourage big business to move onto the reserve and take long term leases?
67% yes 33% no
- Do you think the Blood Tribe should try to establish partnerships and joint ventures with non-native companies?
72% yes 28% no
- What type of small business would you use if they were located on reserve?

Bookstore	Bulk Fuel	Electronics
Restaurants	Music Store	Pay Day loans
Fast Food	Dollar Store	Meat Plant
Bakery	Wal-Mart type	Cannery
Car Wash	Delivery service	Wholesale foods
Grocery Stores	Furniture	Insurance
7-11 types	Theaters	Ammonite Store
Variety Stores	Recreation center	Pet store
Video	Meat market	Flower shop
Sports Shop	Tire shop	Arcade
Clothing of all types	Courier service	Pawn shop
Hair Salon	Fabric store	Bottle depot
Auto repair & parts	Computer	Pool hall
Office Supplies	Smoke shop	Novelty shop
Stationery	Laundromat	Bottled water
Fitness Center	Arts & Crafts	Mini golf
Pharmacy	Tanning Salon	Health foods
Appliance repair	Oil Changers	Hotel/casino
IGA type	Coffee shop	Water park
Farm supplies	Locksmith	Shoe store
Internet cafe	Liquor store	Photo shop

- Where do you think new businesses should be located?

Central/Standoff	36%
Moses Lake/Cardston	10%
Proposed North Development	17%
Anywhere on Reserve	37%

5.0 Issues or Barriers to be Addressed

The comments received were numerous and varying. Some were negative while others were constructive with varying degrees of suggestion. For this exercise I have attempted to list the ones that seemed most helpful.

- Lack of financial assistance was the most common concern. There never seems to be enough to adequately support the demand.
- Lack of preparedness e.g. education; training skills development, for those that have small businesses. More dollars are needed to prepare and train. Develop on site training for potential entrepreneurs.
- Lack of on-going monitoring of new businesses. We need to ensure that Economic Development provides after care services to help promote the success of these businesses.
- The market on the reserve is simply not large enough to accommodate existing businesses, e.g. gas bars. Many respondents question why the Blood Tribe School Bus Co-op decided to build two new gas stations when the market was already saturated.
- The failure to attract customers from surrounding communities, e.g. Fort Macleod, Cardston, etc. Many people believed racism, jealousy, and bigotry were key reasons. The other reason is that these towns are also experiencing economic leakage to the big centers like Lethbridge and Calgary.
- The reserve desperately requires a major cleanup. If we are to attract outside business, we must have an attractive environment. At the moment there is garbage everywhere. The reserve landfill needs a major overhaul and maintenance similar to Spring Coulee and Hillspring. The loose animals on the reserve must be dealt with and the solution to this would be an animal shelter. The question of garbage disposal is a serious one and needs to be addressed. One suggestion was to privatize it and have a system in place for each district.
- A serious concern was directed at the present financial outlets that currently provide lending. The existing bank, it is felt, charges high rates and too many fees. The agricultural lending outlet situated in Calgary charges 11.5% interest

rates, plus fees and is operated and managed by non natives. Our bank on the reserve only makes demand loans and is nothing more than a parasite. Why can't we have our own financial institution (owned and operated by educated and trained personnel from our community) to serve our needs. This institution could be modeled after the Credit Unions concept.

- The Chief and Council are not doing enough to promote our reserve. There is a need to conduct a publicity campaign, as chambers of commerce in other communities do. Our reserve is very diverse with a rich and colorful culture.
- The inability to settle outstanding land disputes is a major barrier to individual agricultural enterprises.
- Perhaps the biggest barrier to the reserves economic development is the leakage to the outside communities. Why are we making Bully's, ABS, and bingo halls in Lethbridge prosperous. Millions of dollars originate on our reserve and yet a l l of it is supporting non-native businesses.
- Are we not capable of having those kinds of businesses on our reserve. Why can't we reverse this situation?
- Many people are questioning our so called "Big Claim". What stage is it at? Who is responsible or what department is handling it. Everyday we hear in the media of big land settlements to small reserves. Our land claim was launched in the 60's and yet we don't know whether a settlement is possible, near, or a dead issue. If a settlement is awarded to our reserve, it will go along way to assisting with our economic needs.
- Many individuals had a concern over the qualifications of the BTA staff and the number of non-natives working in key positions. We now have many qualified and educated members who can't get jobs on the reserve.
- Some are unemployed and some are forced to work off the reserve. They are suggesting the whole system of hiring practices should be reviewed.
- The department of economic development should have a higher profile. Explain to the people what their mandate is, what they offer now and what their future plans are. Provide hope for the youth and all those who are seeking jobs.
- The problem of jealousy that exists on the reserve must be addressed. There needs to be more healing workshops conducted and especially targeted to the youth. They are the future leaders. By pulling each other down, rather than supporting and encouraging, this will remain a serious barrier to future economic growth
- The problem of drugs and alcohol is a serious one on the reserve especially for the youth. These are our people who are already in the job market or will be. What expectations do we have of them for improving our economic plight? In addition to existing programs, more effort is required to curb this problem. More

counseling, more recreational facilities, and more educational programs along with more parental input will go a long way in resolving this situation.

- The current system of education on our reserve is a serious question. Many students are denied their basic right for a decent education as it exists in the rest of Canada. Why are so many students not sponsored. What is the real role of Red Crow College? This institution's role should be re-evaluated and determine whether it's worth its existence. There should be incentives provided such as the establishment of an Education Foundation to send our brightest students to the best schools, universities, in the country.
- The housing on our reserve is in desperate condition. The people are expecting Chief and Council to show more leadership to resolve this serious and growing problem. We are told that we owe the federal government 18 million dollars and this must be repaid before new houses can be built. This is an extremely difficult and hopeless situation. Where are we going to find 18 million dollars? We need not only to have the government forgive this loan but also to inject hundreds of millions of dollars to bring our housing up to standard. A skilled negotiating team must be established to address this problem. Think of the employment opportunities that would be created as a result.
- There is a major concern that the Chief and Council do not fully support tribal entrepreneurs. Many outsiders are still conducting brisk business at the reserve's expense. The schools are doing business with outside suppliers, BTAP's forage plant is hiring outside truckers, KRI oil and gas is transported out by outside truckers, even the small gas bars are using outside truckers. All the farmers use outside trucking to transport their product. If all of this could be eliminated our entrepreneurs will thrive and create new jobs.
- As our reserve population increases so does the need for more land. The Chief and council have no alternative but to acquire more land for future generations. This would be a wise investment and would lead to wealth and job creation.
- Every effort should be made to develop and invest in businesses off the reserve to ensure that those members living there would at least have a decent chance of gaining meaningful employment.
- The security of the reserve must be increased. Each district should be provided with well trained and equipped personnel to deal with their problems. Our police force is undermanned, under funded and too overworked to adequately provide the necessary security.
- There are those who expressed the concern that there are too many outside consultants that could easily be replaced by our own members. Why is the reserve relegated to one big expensive law firm? There are consultants and lawyers from our reserve and other local firms that could be utilized at much lower cost.

6.0 Values Directing Economic Development

6.1 When deciding to go ahead with an economic development project or initiative how important would you rate the following factors?

Factor	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Creating jobs	672	11	
Making a profit	556	84	3
Owned & Managed By Blood Tribe members			
	538	90	12
Follows principles of Kainaiissiya			
	370	126	30
Does not damage land	539	61	8
Provides training for Young people on or off Reserve			
	634	22	

7.1 How can Economic Development best help to sustain the future of the Reserve?

- Creation of employment
- Skills development and training
- Develop a long and short term economic development plan
- Assist in acquiring more monies for development
- Develop an awareness campaign to draw attention to our economic plight from the government and the general public
- Aggressively pursue employment based industry to locate on reserve
- Too much money spent on outside consultants

- Try different ventures
- Create a business a centre
- Re-open Kainai Industries
- Start up Band Farms again
- Develop our Timber Limits
- Provide better services for our elderly and disabled
- Monitor and advise small business
- Pursue opportunities for employment for off-reserve residents
- Establish closer relations with all BTA departments
- Establish closer liaison with all companies to encourage the hiring of reserve members e.g. Utilities, oil companies, suppliers, farmers, ranchers, highway construction and maintenance, consulting companies, auto dealerships, computer firms, etc.
- Develop a foundation to supplement funding from present sources. There are over 10,000 foundations in North a geared to helping underprivileged groups
- Establish an on-site job skills program with outside industry
- Network with other reserves

7.2 What direction would you give Chief and Council when they are developing a plan for economic development?

- Re-open Kainai Industries
- Develop a comprehensive short and long term economic plan
- Encourage employment based industry to locate on the reserve, e.g. assembly plants, food processing, and meat packing plants, etc
- Invite community members to participate in planning development.
- Make the members a priority.
- Maintain our culture but use new ideas and stick to the budget, do not waste money
- Expand economic development into the urban areas
- Include tribal members more just like in this survey
- Create markets to keep money on the reserve
- Eliminate welfare or institute a work for welfare program
- Establish more rehab facilities
- Clean up our reserve
- Do proper research on proposed future projects
- Obtain input from members on major issues
- Use this survey to guide decision making
- Do less traveling and listen to your people
- Focus on trades skill training
- Ensure proper housing for everyone
- Create an office for each councilor so that they can be accessible
- Lawyers and consultants are running the reserve

7.3 Other Comments

- Chief and Council must be more visible to the reserve members
- This survey is too complicated, the people should be the ones to provide the questions
- Do a survey on Education
- Think of future generations. Create employment and try to bring in big industry
- Use this survey and the suggestions seriously
- This survey should not be shelved. Use it as a guide for development of jobs
- Develop the north area for future residential, commercial, recreation, and tourist development
- Encourage our youth to stay in school by providing incentives such as scholarships
- We need to consider a new system of government, one that is developed and planned by our own people and not outsiders.
- This survey should have been done a long time ago
- Chief and Council should inform the members of their accomplishments and report results of their travel
- Chief and Council were elected to govern and set policy and obtain funding, not to be the administrators
- Utilize your administrators and directors to the fullest extent. Make them accountable by providing accurate and up to date information along with their recommendations
- Please include the youth. We are your future. What happened to BTAP? Where are the monies going?
- Chief and Council must give out more information

8.0 Summary

There was an expression of hope on the part of the community. Many believe that this survey will not be shelved or forgotten, that something positive will come out of it. The following are key issues regarding the survey.

- A short and long term strategic plan has to be developed
- There must be a comprehensive plan included to educate, train, and develop expertise for our youth to prepare them for new employment opportunities as they are created
- The tribe has to attract and encourage industry to locate on the reserve. By doing this it would create employment opportunities in all levels. This would also create service oriented small businesses.
- The tribe has to resolve the problem of housing. Suggestions were made to negotiate with the government to forgive our outstanding debt and negotiate special funding for creation of new housing projects.
- Chief and Council must involve members concerning new economic initiatives
- The Chief and Council must begin the task of cleaning up our reserve
- The Chief and Council must embark on a publicity campaign to improve the image of the reserve and attract outside investment
- The Chief and Council must examine our present system of government and replace it with one that is in touch with the new technology. One way might be to divide up the reserve into district representation.
- To solve the housing crisis, the Chief and Council could consider the SIKSIKA model. Small communities consisting of families or clans.
- Our educational system must be reassessed. Many people question the justification of the existence of Red Crow College