



Native Agri Update

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www.firstnationsag.ca

WELCOME TO THE FNAFO TEAM—NEW FARM ADVISOR FOR SOUTHEASTERN & NORTHERN ONTARIO

Gilbert Y. Leclerc: A Leader in Business and Community Development

Gilbert Y. Leclerc is a seasoned professional with a proven track record of excellence in both the business world and community leadership. With over 15 years of experience in commercial banking and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) specializing in Financial Services, Gilbert brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to every endeavor he undertakes.



As the Past President of the Prince Edward County Chamber of Tourism & Commerce for three years, Gilbert demonstrated strategic vision and leadership during a pivotal transitional period. His tenure saw the implementation of innovative policies and strategies aimed at promoting economic growth and fostering positive business relationships in Belleville and Prince Edward County.

Gilbert's extensive experience in strategic planning, policy development, and financial acumen has been instrumental in his various roles, including Vice Chair of the Economic Development Commission and President of the Board of the Prince Edward County Chamber. His ability to navigate complex regulatory environments while advocating

for the needs of members and stakeholders has earned him widespread respect and recognition.

In addition to his leadership roles, Gilbert has also made

significant contributions as a business owner, consultant, and commercial solar consultant, further demonstrating his entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to driving positive change.

Married for 20 years and a father of one son, he is living in a energy efficient, sustainably developed home. Gilbert loves to be on the land with his vegetable garden. Gilbert is an avid reader and collector of books especially to do with Philosophy, Anthropology and Geography. When not working, gardening or reading Gilbert loves to be out on two wheels. He is an accomplished Mountain and Road Bicyclist and loves his Adventure Motorcycle too and one day plans to circumnavigate the world!

2024-2025 BEGINNING FARMERS PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE

The Beginning Farmers Program (BFP) is a multiyear program designed to support new beginning First Nations farmers between the ages of 16 and 40 through all stages of their farm business startup. BFP will support the creation, development and investment in new farm businesses.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact FNAFO to discuss their new farm business idea.

- Workshops and Training
- Startup Financing up to \$50,000
- Grants—30% up to a maximum of \$15,000

Successful applicants will take part in an evaluation to establish current business and skill levels. This information, in conjunction with formal training and support, will be used by the participants to create and support of their multi-year business plan.

Applications must be submitted to FNAFO by September 15, 2024

Contact FNAFO at 1-800-363-0329 or info@firstnationsag.ca



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Contributors

Brian Bell - BB
Farm Advisor

brian@firstnationsag.ca

Camden Lawrence — CL
General Manager

camden@firstnationsag.ca

Jackie Stott — JS

FNWE Business Coach

jacklyn@firstnationsag.ca

Steven Hughes — SH

Farm Management Advisor

steven@firstnationsag.ca

Gil Leclerc — GL

Farm Management Advisor

gilbert@firstnationsag.ca

First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario

Box 100

Stirling, ON K0K 3E0

1-800-363-0329

info@indianag.on.ca



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Agribusiness

GIL & CAM'S APRIL ADVENTURE

On April 10th, Camden and I drove 7 hours north from Stirling up to New Liskeard on the stunning shores of Lake Temiskaming to attend the 2024 Earlton Farm Show. This area has a vibrant farming community that has been active since 1893 and is situated



on the Little Clay Belt, a 56-km strip of land stretching to the northwest. We were there to visit clients, to share our programs and connect with the Indigenous Farming and Business Community. We were met by Brian Bell our Livestock expert (who drove from Manitoulin Island (almost as far)).

One of our farmers happens to be a new entrant into the emerging bison livestock business which is really coming on as a niche market. This is very exciting, not only because bison are integral to many indigenous cultures, but also because bison were nearly driven to extinction in the late 19th century. Efforts to restore their populations have been ongoing since that time.

The good news is that as of January 2022, the population of bison in Canada was estimated to be 70,000. While this is good news, you can see that compared to the cattle population of approximately 12 million head, there is much room for growth.

The bison livestock business has many similarities to the cattle business but also some outstanding differences.

Historical and Cultural Significance:

Cattle ranching has deep historical roots in Canada, dating back to the early European settlers. The image of the cowboy and the vast open range is synonymous with Canadian cattle ranching culture.

Bison have historically been integral to Indigenous cultures in Canada as a roaming food source, but the commercial bison industry is a relatively recent development compared to cattle ranching. Without farms looking to take up commercial production bison may have well gone extinct. Through commercial production bison have been reintroduced back into the wild.

Market Size and Production Volume:

Canada is one of the world's largest beef exporters, with a significant portion of its beef production exported to international markets, including the United States and Asia. Ontario is a major contributor to Canada's beef production, with a sizable number of beef cattle farms.

The bison industry in Canada is smaller in comparison to the cattle industry but has been experiencing steady growth in recent years. While bison meat is increasingly popular among consumers for its health benefits and unique flavor, it represents a niche market compared to beef.

Production Practices:

Most cattle raised in Canada are raised in conventional feedlot systems, where they are fed a diet of grains and forages to

accelerate growth before slaughter. Pasture-based systems are also common, particularly in regions with ample grazing land.

Bison farming often emphasizes extensive grazing on open pastureland, mirroring their natural habitat and behavior. Many bison farms prioritize sustainable and regenerative practices, such as rotational grazing and minimal use of antibiotics and hormones.

Product Characteristics:

Beef is the primary product derived from cattle, with various cuts and grades available to consumers. Canadian beef is known for its high quality and consistency, meeting stringent food safety and animal welfare standards.

Bison meat is leaner and typically lower in fat and calories compared to beef, making it a popular choice for health-conscious consumers. Bison products also include hides, skulls, and other by-products, which are utilized in various industries, including fashion and crafts.

Consumer Demand and Market Trends:

The demand for beef remains strong both domestically and internationally, driven by factors such as population growth, rising incomes, and changing dietary preferences.

While the market for bison meat is smaller compared to beef, it is growing steadily, fueled by increasing consumer interest in sustainable and ethically sourced protein alternatives. Bison's unique flavor and nutritional profile attract a niche market of health-conscious consumers willing to pay a premium for quality.

While we were in the Earlton area we visited a 3rd generation bison farming company – Bison du Nord. Owned and operated by the Belanger family and started by Pierre Belanger in 1972. <https://bisondu nord.com/>

Bison du Nord, the 3rd generation Farmers > Maintains a herd of 400 head on 655 Acres.

Bison, also known as American buffalo, roamed the plains of North America in vast numbers before facing near extinction in the late 19th century due to overhunting and habitat loss.

However, concerted conservation efforts have led to their resurgence, with the bison population steadily increasing across Canada, including Ontario. Ontario boasts a burgeoning bison industry, with numerous farms spread across the province. These farms range from small-scale operations to larger commercial enterprises, all contributing to the supply of high-quality bison meat to local markets and beyond. Bison meat is prized for its lean protein content, rich flavor, and nutritional benefits, making it a sought-after choice for health-conscious consumers.

All and all, except for the two inches of snow we got the day of the show, it was a great trip and many friends and contacts were made. Plus we got to visit with these beautiful and stoic bison heard roaming the hills of Northern Ontario.

GL

Coming Events

May 16 WIKY FARMERS MEETING

Band Council Chambers—6 pm

For more info or to book your spot contact
info@firstnationsag.ca or 1 800 363 0328

To keep up to date with all coming events and workshops hosted by FNAFO, visit our website and Facebook page at firstnationsag.ca / facebook.com/FirstNationsAg

Market Information

BEEF MARKET WATCH

Prices are courtesy of the Beef Farmers of Ontario Weekly Market Information Report for the week ending Friday, April 19th, 2024. Changes in this chart reflect the difference in prices from the week of February 12th, 2024, to the week of April 15th 2024. Weekly reports provide prices on a per cwt basis for the week but do not include Friday sale results.

Fed steers sold from \$232.02-\$244.66 cwt averaging \$239.48, down \$0.43 cwt from the previous week's trade but \$17.72 above year ago prices. Fed heifers sold in a wide trading range from \$228.12-\$243.49 averaging \$236.18 cwt down \$1.77 from the week before but \$19.18 higher than year ago prices. Auction markets reported trade as steady and firm, to \$1.00-\$2.00 cwt easier. The Ontario railgrade market has been light this week with sales reported at \$400.00 cwt dressed for steers and \$399.00-\$400.00 cwt for heifers, most at \$400.00 all with delivery the week of May 6th. Some U.S. packer interest was also noted at a slight premium to the Ontario packers. Prices have been trading in a sideways trend for ten consecutive weeks. This week's average price is \$25.00 cwt stronger than last year at this time. Last year the price traded at \$375.00 cwt dressed for five consecutive weeks starting the week ending April 20, 2023, until the week ending May 18th when the market started to move higher and topped the week of June 15th at \$414.50 cwt on average. In fact, the railgrade market spring high has occurred in the month of June in the last three out of five

years. Larger volumes of cull cows sold through auction markets this week at 2,161 head which is the largest volume recorded since the week ending February 1, 2024. This week's volume is up 247 head from the previous week but 32 fewer than last year at this time. Cows sold from \$121.87-\$168.44 cwt averaging \$142.36 down \$3.53 cwt from last week but \$27.89 higher than year ago prices. Auction markets reported trade as active at higher prices to start.

Category	Price Range \$	Ave Price	Top Price	% Change
Rail Steers	400			
Fed steers	232-245	239	271	+2.6
Fed heifers	228-243	236	260	0
Cows	122-168	142	215	+12.7
Bulls	154-199	176	230	+6
Stocker steers				
700 – 799	323-376	350	399	+1.7
600 – 699	350-409	382	450	+2.4
500 – 599	343-443	401	508	+7.5
Stocker heifers				
700 – 799	278-326	306	359	+4.4
600 – 699	302-338	337	400	+11.5
500 – 599	313-389	351	426	+3.2

All prices are on a hundred pound basis (cwt)

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CROP MARKET

Adapted from Market Trends Report Apr & May 2024 by Phillip Shaw GFO www.gfo.ca

Corn

Corn prices are at a 31-month low which isn't good for any farmer psyche. There are differences between old crop and new crop but still we are where we are. Some might develop a strategy to sell on strength in the market that might come in momentarily but that has been scarce.

How will strengthening in the market happen at this point? Some might point to problems with weather and getting crop planted. However, keep in mind that in the past we have seen how fast a crop can go in especially with the new technology available today. As of now, it looks like there are no problems ahead and this crop is going to get planted in time.

The Dec 2024 corn contract is currently priced at 12.75 cents below the Mar 2025 contract which is a bearish indication of new crop corn demand. Seasonally, we know that corn prices tend to peak in early June and bottom out in early Oct. The Dec. 2024 futures contract is at the 33rd

percentile of the past 5-year price range.

Soybeans

The nearby soybean contract has had a very hard time getting above the 50-day moving average, which serves as a benchmark for funds holding short positions. Sure, there are other reasons but if the nearby could get above the 50-day and show signs of improving you would give the non-commercial demand players reason to cover and send this market higher.

As it is, that's a slow boat to row. It is no secret that soybean prices have declined with the May contract closing down just under \$0.30 lower from Tues to Tues in the week ending Apr 20. The July contract was down 27.75 cents in the same time frame. This is happening in a fundamental environment where American soybean shipments are 95 million bushels short of the pace projected for total shipments in this marketing year.

The Nov 2024 soybean contract is currently priced 11.5 cents below the Mar 2025 contract which is considered neutral to bearish for new crop beans. Seasonally, soybean prices tend to peak in early July and bottom out in early Oct. The Nov

2024 soybean contract is currently at the 45th percentile of the past 5-year range.

Wheat

We continue in the classic mode, there's too much wheat everywhere, even though ending stocks are lower in many countries. In fact, hopefully, we're at the end of a 2-year trend in wheat prices. There's got to be some sunshine somewhere. However, wheat continues to come out of the Black Sea amid all the war tension and this tends to continue to put a cap on rallies in the wheat market. Western European farmers are also not happy about the amount of wheat and other grains that are being transported into their areas. This wheat market needs some very fresh news.

There will be less wheat in Ontario this year mainly because there are less acres than the year before. Of course, we also do not know how the crop is going to fare with spring and summer weather ahead of us. As it is now, the good thing is the crop does look good and there probably will not be much abandonment from over winter and early spring.

Gardening Information

STARTING YOUR OWN GARDEN

You may have considered planting your own garden. Many individuals and communities are gardening, more now than ever! There are innumerable benefits from gardening, ranging from providing you and your family or community with delicious, healthy, and locally grown food to the positive effects on your physical and mental health. This article will outline a few tips to consider when planning and planting your first garden. An incredible amount of gardening information exists along with a multitude of tips. Don't feel intimidated—start small and with each season your knowledge will grow along with your garden! One great source of gardening guidance is the Master Gardeners of Ontario. Their website is <https://mgoi.ca> Free gardening advice is available by contacting a group near you or by visiting them on Facebook.

Picking a gardening site is important. If you must choose between a sunny spot or a convenient one, pick the sunny one. The best location for a new garden is one receiving full sun (at least six hours of direct sunlight per day), and one where the soil drains well. If no puddles remain a few hours after a good rain, you know your site drains well. After you've figured out where the sun shines longest and strongest, your next task will be to define your garden goals. Even in your first season, you may be able to grow a significant portion of your family's produce needs. In the case of my garden in Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island, we have 1,200 square feet under cultivation, which yields more than enough for the two of us. We end up giving a lot away to friends and neighbours. If your garden harvests taste good and make you feel good, you will feel more motivated to keep on growing. Start with what you like to eat. You can experiment later with one or two new crops per year that aren't necessarily favorites for the sake of having diversity in the garden.

Preparing the garden Site. If you are starting your garden on a patch of lawn, you can build up from the ground with raised beds, or plant directly in the ground. Building raised beds is a good idea if your soil is poor or doesn't drain well, and you like the look of containers made from wood, stone, or corrugated metal. This approach is usually more expensive, however, and requires more initial work than planting in the ground. Whether you're going with raised beds or planting directly in the ground, you'll need to decide what to do with the sod. You can remove it and compost it, which is hard work, but ensures that you won't have grass and weeds coming up in your garden. If you're looking to start a small or medium-sized garden, it's possible to cut and remove sod in neat strips using nothing more than a sharp spade and some back muscle. For removing grass from a larger area, consider renting a sod cutter.

Planting a Garden: Where, When and How? Sketch out a garden plan of what will be planted where, when, and how. To do this, you need to get familiar with the vari-



ous edible crops and what they like in terms of space, water, soil fertility and soil temperatures. Read the seed packets for details on days to maturity, depth of planting, row spacing, watering needs and growing zones. Keeping a gardening journal is a good idea. Oftentimes that carrot variety packet you liked so much and performed well got misplaced or blew away! When the time comes to plant your garden, you'll need to decide which plants to start from seed and which to buy as transplants. Many gardeners choose to plant all their crops from seed for a variety of reasons, including lower costs, greater selection, and the challenge and satisfaction of seeing a plant go from seed to soup bowl. But whether you're a greenhorn or a green thumb, there's no shame in buying seedlings. Doing so increases your chances of success, especially with crops such as broccoli, peppers and tomatoes that require a long growing season.

After you've sown your seeds or planted your plants, introduce yourself to the gardener's best friend, mulch. Just about any organic matter you can get your hands on — straw, hay, grass clippings, shavings, shredded leaves, can be used as mulch. Mulch plays three main roles: It deters weeds, helps retain moisture, and adds organic matter to the soil as it decays. I apply it to the pathways between my crops. Fruits and vegetables are made mostly of water, so you'll need to make sure your plants are getting enough to drink. This is especially important for seedlings that haven't developed a deep root structure. You'll want to water them lightly every day or two. Once the crops are maturing, they need about an inch of water per week, and more in sandy soils or hot regions. If Mother Nature isn't providing that amount of rain, you'll need to water manually or with a drip irrigation system.

Sun and rain willing, fast growing crops like radishes and salad greens will begin to produce crops as early as 20 to 30 days after planting. Check on them regularly so you get to harvest them before someone else does! (Insects, slugs, groundhogs, racoons, deer, birds, etc.) You may require various protective barriers. If you have trouble with deer as we do, you will need a garden fence.

Getting the most pleasure and production from your garden comes from learning about succession planting. Rather than trying to "get your garden in" during one busy week-

end, space your planting out over the course of several weeks by using short rows. Every time you harvest a row or pull one out that has stopped producing, try to plant a new one. Succession plantings lead to harvests spread out over a longer time period. As you gain new confidence and skills, you may look for ways to include perennials like asparagus and rhubarb in your garden.

Finally, periodically test your garden soil. This is a service that FNA provides. We also have a presentation on Introduction to Gardening that is available upon request. Best of luck with your garden projects!



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Crop Information

WORKING WITH COMPOST

Working with compost in an agricultural setting is starting to become more commonplace in Ontario. With the development of municipal organic waste diversion programs, and more utilization of animal waste being composted, there is increasing volumes of compost that are available for both the agricultural and horticultural industries. In 2012-2016, a study was completed by Peel Region, Soil & Crop, OMAFRA and multiple co-operators and researchers, using their Green bin-Derived compost, using it on farms with different rotations and various soil conditions. This article will use some of the findings from this study as well as other discussion points.

The key organic amendments that are often applied to agricultural soils include manure, which is “fresh”, cured compost and immature compost, which is compost that has not undergone the curing process. The differences between cured compost and immature compost is that the compost has “cured” for six months to a year in a pile. This material is more stable, with limited amounts of available “inorganic” nitrogen, the majority is in an organic form which needs to be broken down by microbes to become plant available. The volume of cured compost is reduced by 40-50% by the process, but one thing to keep in mind is that the concentration of nutrients like phosphorous and potassium are doubled, as they are not affected by the curing process. When using immature compost, there are more risk to some crops. There is a higher amount of ammonia nitrogen, which can lead to plants like strawberries being more susceptible to winterkill or salt injury.

In the Peel Region trials, results were promising in that compost was shown to help to re-build soil structure and create healthier soils. With the addition of natural nutrients and organic matter to farm soils, soils are realizing increased microbial activity, enhanced moisture control and soil structure, helping produce healthier plants more resistant to drought, pests and disease. The benefits of compost use are very similar to the benefits of solid manure use for soil. As sources of manure in Ontario decline, the contribution of compost for organic matter is increasingly important. It takes time to build healthy soil, a multi-year effort in fact, which fundamentally includes the ongoing addition of compost to return organic matter back to the soil. This, in addition to more well-established best management practices such as crop rotations, cover crops and no-to-low tillage, must become more and more essential for long term soil health improvements and sustainability. (*Improving Organic Waste Diversion through a Field Test of Greenbin-Derived Compost Report*)

To achieve the benefits of compost requires considerable up-front investment with the financial return being realized over the course of multiple years with continual effort and commitment by farmers to their soil.

The benefits of adding compost to soil are numerous. It provides major nutrients that plants require, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, as well as secondary nutrients like sulphur and magnesium, micronutrients and beneficial organisms. The soils structure is improved as well the ability to cycle nutrients and the soils moisture holding capacity.

The compost also contributes to soil health by its influence on soil's physical, chemical and biological properties. The physical



benefits include organic matter to improve soil texture and soil aggregation, and also reduces susceptibility to compaction and improved water-holding capacity. The chemical benefits include releasing nutrients slowly, buffering pH (soil acidity) and improved availability of other nutrients. The biological benefits include more carbon and nutrients for soil microorganisms, providing more microorganisms, and

providing habitat for these microorganisms.

As we become more aware of the benefits of compost and its use continues to grow, there is still opportunity and need to build the overall market. The compost supply is growing as more municipal and provincial governments introduce programs to divert organic materials from landfill. Compost is popular in horticulture, landscaping and home gardening and for erosion control projects. The end use markets are not yet large enough to consume all of this material. Compost producers are seeking to expand into new markets to build a portfolio of market options and optimize returns on their efforts, which leads to agriculture as a desirable target market.

It should also be noted that not all compost is created equally, and often the price of the compost is reflective of the nutrient content. The parent material of the compost often reflects the nutrient content, and thus the final pricing. For the research study that has been referenced, the parent material is food waste sourced compost. Compost that has a parent material of poultry manure will have a much high nutrient content, and as such will generally harbour a higher value. Yard waste compost would generally have a lower nutrient content, and as such should be valued lower than a compost derived from poultry manure. The other key factor with compost is the cost of trucking and application. Delivery can be very expensive, and be a significant portion of the overall cost of compost. In conversation with the OMAFRA specialist, a recent pricing was \$42/tonne plus \$7/tonne delivery for mushroom compost.

When dealing with compost rates are generally in the neighbourhood of 10-20 tons per acre. Yield benefits from higher rates of compost are not seen in the first few years, as the lower rate seems to be able to match the higher rates. Also, when dealing with high nutrient using crops like corn, compost will not generally be able to supply enough nitrogen to feed that crop. Adding commercial fertilizers is often necessary to top up the nutritional needs of the crop. It takes multiple years before the compost becomes fully available.

For soils that have been lacking organic amendments for some time, organic compost is a way that can be considered to boost the soil. Though it is an expensive up-front cost, the benefits of the compost should be weighed out over multiple years. The producers that participated in the study found that the fields that had compost applied increased crop yield in both the year of application and in subsequent years. Producer testimonials stated that there was improvements in the resiliency of the soil in dry periods as well as wet periods, but comments to the overall soil-health improvement would take longer than the four year study to fully document.

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Other News

FIRST NATIONS WOMENS ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario (FNAFO) is pleased to offer two exclusive programs tailored for First Nations women aged 18 and above. Our First Nations Women's Entrepreneurship Program offers a combination of micro-loans and grants of up to \$20,000 for eligible farm, agribusiness and business activities. Your venture can be either full time, part time or a side hustle. Participants will also benefit from comprehensive training workshops and personalized business coaching.

FNAFO is also proud to offer our Grant and Mentorship program, designed to pair eligible candidates with accomplished First Nations women entrepreneurs for a 6-month mentorship. Mentees will receive financial support of up to \$3,000 for eligible business expenses.

For further details or to access an application, please visit our website at www.firstnationsag.ca. Alternatively, you can reach out to us via email at fnwe@FirstNationsAg.ca or by calling 1.800.363.0329.

Take advantage of these valuable opportunities to advance your business endeavors.

FNWE

THE SUCCESS OF CRYSTAL KOHOKO & KOHO-KOMPANY MEATS

In the heart of Pikwakanagan First Nation, a beacon of entrepreneurial spirit shines brightly. Crystal Kohoko, the owner and operator of Koho-Kompany Meats, has not only transformed her business, but is a symbol of empowerment for First Nations women entrepreneurs. Her journey, facilitated by the First Nations Women's Entrepreneurship (FNWE) Program, serves as a testament to the power of tailored support and unwavering determination.

Crystal's involvement with the FNWE program began in March 2023, as she sought assistance to expand her home-based business. Specializing in quality meats and deli

products at affordable prices, Crystal had a vision to not only grow her enterprise, but also to incorporate traditional Algonquin harvests of wild game, enriching her offerings with cultural heritage.

With the support of the FNWE program, Crystal accessed vital resources and financing, enabling her to invest in equipment and materials essential for business expansion. This strategic allocation of resources allowed Koho-Kompany Meats to meet growing customer demand and diversify its product range, thereby setting the stage for unprecedented growth and success.

Reflecting on her journey, Crystal emphasizes the transformative impact of the FNWE program. Beyond financial assistance, the program provided invaluable mentorship and coaching, with dedicated professionals, offering guidance and motivation every step of the way. For Crystal, this support was instrumental in overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities for growth.

"I would highly recommend other First Nations women to the program because it is important to have the support and guidance that is provided by FNWE," says Crystal. Central to Crystal's success is her unwavering commitment to preserving cultural heritage while embracing innovation. By incorporating traditional Algonquin harvests into her product line, she not only honors her roots, but also taps into a niche market, catering to the unique preferences of her community and beyond.

Looking ahead, Crystal envisions a bright future for Koho-Kompany Meats, with plans to open her own butcher shop to serve clientele both on and off reserve. With an anticipated 50% increase in sales, Crystal's story is a testament to the transformative potential of entrepreneurship when coupled with targeted support and unwavering determination.

The FNWE program stands as a beacon of hope for First Nations women entrepreneurs, offering a combination of microloans, grants, workshops, and mentorship opportunities designed to foster economic empowerment and community development. Crystal Kohoko's success story serves as inspiration, illuminating the path forward for aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to make their mark in the world of business.

As Crystal continues to blaze trails and redefine success on her own terms, her journey serves as a reminder of the resilience, creativity, and boundless potential of First Nations women entrepreneurs. With the right support and unwavering determination, the possibilities are limitless, and the future is bright.

The FNWE program offers a combination of microloan and grant up to \$20,000 for a variety of eligible business expenses. There are no payments for the first year and then five years to pay off the loan at 6% interest. The FNWE program also offers workshops, coaching and mentorship.

If you're a First Nations woman looking to start or expand your business, email fnwe@firstnationsag.ca or call: 1.800.363.0329 for more information.

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