

Northern Ontario Business Awards program returns to Timmins

Awards presented to 10 outstanding business leaders

Sep 28, 2017 6:30 PM by: Northern Ontario Business Staff



Hundreds from across the North gathered in Timmins Sept. 28 to recognize business excellence at the 31st annual Northern Ontario Business Awards.

Northern Ontario is one of the most robust business regions in the country and home to some of the most forward-thinking business leaders on the globe. For 31 years, the [Northern Ontario Business Awards](#) program has celebrated this entrepreneurial spirit and the winning achievements of the best companies, individuals and economic development initiatives.

“Our purpose is, and always has been, to recognize excellence, to build confidence in our ability to overcome obstacles unique to Northern Ontario by celebrating the people who do it,” said Michael Atkins, president of Laurentian Publishing and Northern Ontario Business.

“But our purpose is also to build a culture of enterprise, get to know each other and have some fun.”

An engaging networking session is held the night before the awards gala, this year hosted at Collège Boréal in Timmins.

With a capacity crowd in attendance at the Senator Hotel and Conference Centre, awards recognizing outstanding contributions to the North were presented in 10 categories: Company of the Year (1 to 15 employees, 16 to 50 employees and 51+ employees), Entrepreneur of the Year, Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Entrepreneurial Community, First Nations Business Award of Excellence, Innovation, Export and Judges' Choice. A \$3,000 Union Gas Essay Scholarship was also awarded to a student pursuing post-secondary education.

The quality of the awards program is underwritten each year by a respected panel of judges from across Northern Ontario. They are asked to look at all aspects of business performance, from customer service and community involvement to human resource management and future planning. This year's judges were: Tom Laughren, director of corporate responsibility with Tahoe Canada (Timmins); Paul Reid, business development officer with the City of Greater Sudbury (Sudbury); Pat Dubreuil, president of Manitou Gold, Ctrl2Market, Magpie Relay and Let's Roll 'ideation' Consulting (Dubreuilville); and Tom Palangio, president of WipWare (North Bay).

NOBA has become the largest annual gathering of its kind in Northern Ontario since it was launched in 1986. These awards have served to heighten the visibility and influence of business in the North and bring peer recognition to the business leaders who create prosperity and economic growth. This year the [Northern Policy Institute's](#) State of the North Conference coincided with the event.

"The decision to align the State of the North event with the Northern Ontario Business Awards was one that made sense from many perspectives," said Charles Cirtwill, president and CEO of the Northern Policy Institute.

"Both organizations play an important role in bringing together decision makers and community leaders across the North to both discuss trends and forecasts, and celebrate the successes of businesses in Northern Ontario."

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) schedule their board meetings to coincide with this respected event.

The 2017 Northern Ontario Business Awards program was co-hosted by Timmins Mayor Steve Black and Northern Ontario Business vice-president and publisher Abbas Homayed. Eastlink TV will showcase the winners in a television documentary on Sunday, Oct. 22, 2017 at 8 p.m.

[2017 NOBA Winners](#)

Company of the Year (1-15 Employees)

Winner: Radical Gardens (Timmins)

Sponsored by: Timminstoday.com

Some fresh, local ingredients and a commitment to hard work led Radical Gardens to the forefront of a food and cultural renaissance in Timmins. Launched by Brianna Humphrey in 2014, the one-of-a-kind organic garden-farmers market-restaurant is increasing awareness of local food production and creating a true appreciation for quality.

Company of the Year (16-50 Employees)

Winner: Ramakko's Source for Adventure (Sudbury)

Sponsored by: Air Canada

Answering the call of the great outdoors is what took Ramakko's Source for Adventure from a small bait and tackle shop back in the '80s to a major retailer of sporting equipment today. Brian Ramakko credits his growth to a great team and one cardinal rule: "know your customers' needs."

Company of the Year (51+ Employees)

Winner: Gin-Cor (Mattawa)

Sponsored by: OLG

Luc Stang knows what it takes to become one of the most trusted names in truck manufacturing. Quality, continuous improvement and a strong focus on health and safety are the core values that led to a massive expansion in 2012 and a tripling of their dedicated workforce over the past three years.

Entrepreneur of the Year

Winner: Walter Siggelkow (Dowling)

Sponsored by: Kia Canada

Walter Siggelkow, president of Hard-Line Solutions, saw more than a business opportunity in remote control technology. He recognized the potential to make mining safer. With an ongoing focus on research and development, he weathered even the toughest economic climates with customized products and service to meet unique customer needs.

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Winner: Jeff Greco (Sault Ste. Marie)

Sponsored by: Village Media

Jeff Greco, president of Cavera Inc., was poised to become a software engineer in a larger centre outside the North after completing his education, but it wasn't long before he was drawn home to Sault Ste. Marie by the quality of life and a unique business opportunity. Today, Cavera Inc. is filling a niche market, serving small to medium businesses with his boutique digital marketing agency.

Innovation Award

Winner: Rudnicki Industrial Inc. (Thunder Bay)

Sponsored by: The Fortin Foundation

Mike Rudnicki is not an engineer by trade, but he has the mind of one. An inventor, problem

solver and mentor to budding entrepreneurs, his creative approach to challenges resulted in the diversification of Rudnicki Industrial and a catalogue of his own, homegrown niche products.

First Nations Business Award of Excellence

Winner: Attawapiskat Enterprises (Attawapiskat/Timmins)

Sponsored by: Ontario Power Generation

Attawapiskat Enterprises saw a shining opportunity for economic development on the James Bay coast that would lead to business and job creation. The corporation signed an impact benefit agreement with DeBeers Canada in 2005 and the corporation now oversees three First Nation-owned companies that employ 120 workers.

Entrepreneurial Community of the Year

Winner: Northern Ontario Mining Showcase Committee (Temiskaming Shores)

Sponsored by: Huntington University

The Northern Ontario Mining Showcase provides a stage to the world for small to medium-sized Northern companies that serve the mining industry. As one of the largest exhibitors at the annual Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) conference, the showcase provides exposure, networking opportunities and valuable business leads.

Judges' Choice Award

Winner: The Bucket Shop (Timmins)

Sponsored by: CIBC

The Bucket Shop is in the midst of their fourth major expansion in 2017. They attribute their success to a committed, close-knit workforce and their focus on growing client relationships based on mutual trust and respect. This family-owned Timmins company is now expanding into major export markets.

Export Award

Winner: Fuller Industrial (Sudbury)

Sponsored by: Export Development Canada

From the beginning, the owner of this company knew he had to take a global approach and tap into the export market. Fuller Industrial has spent decades building a reputation overseas as a go-to company for rubber lining and carbon steel pipe fabrications. Today it has sales on virtually every continent.

Union Gas Essay Scholarship

Winner: Sarah Yeo (Thunder Bay)

Sponsored by: Union Gas

Living in northwestern Ontario and feeling a true connection to the environment, Sarah Yeo believes the classroom is the place to start when preparing for the changes green energy will bring. Sarah is studying Applied Life Sciences at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay with hopes of being accepted into the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in her hometown.

The 32nd annual Northern Ontario Business Awards will be held in the Gateway City. For 2018, NOBA travels to North Bay to recognize the important contributions of business to our economy and our communities. For more information on NOBA, contact Sharon Bowes, marketing manager, at 705-698-2845, toll-free at 1-800-757-2766, or by email at sbowes@nob.on.ca.

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