

# ACCESS

## MANITOBA

October - December 2002

### Success From the Ground Up

by Myleen Aco

For over 10 years, the Swan Lake First Nation has been digging up success with its potato farm, an operation that boasts such clients as Midwest Foods Company Ltd.

The **Swan Lake First Nation Potato Farm** had its share of challenges. Like many other businesses, financing was the biggest concern. Thanks to assistance from the **Dakota Ojibway Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)**, they developed their business plan and received a loan to purchase farming and production equipment. They now make annual loan payments.

The for-profit operation creates much-needed economic development in the small southwestern Manitoba community with a high rate of unemployment.

"The potato farm is quite the success," said Kim Bullard, general manager of the Dakota Ojibway CFDC. "It creates employment and builds the strength of the community."

The increased cost of fungicide spraying and the influx of potato beetles in the region are challenges the potato farm has had to face. Bob Green, a manager at the farm, says that



*The view of the Swan Lake potato fields.*

the operation deals with problems daily and has learned to prepare for them.

"You should know your business, know the pitfalls and anticipate the problems," said Green. "The Dakota Ojibway CFDC was there to help from the start, when Swan Lake First Nation first wanted to get involved in potato farming."

CFDCs assist rural and northern areas to develop their economic potential and strengthen their communities.

The Community Futures Partners of Manitoba (CFPM), representing the Community Futures Development Corporations within Manitoba, is a member of the Western Canada Business Service Network, and is financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. There are 16 CFDCs throughout rural and northern Manitoba. For more information, visit CFPM's Web site at: [www.cfpm.mb.ca](http://www.cfpm.mb.ca). ♣

## Around the Bend...to a New Start!



*Larry Smykalski of Prime Auto Sales stands in front one of his cars.*

*by Myleen Aco*

He's hit some speed bumps along the way, but Larry Smykalski is living life in the fast lane with his new business, **Prime Auto Sales**. This is thanks to a loan he received in May from the **Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC)**, under the **Urban Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (UEDP)**.

Prime Auto Sales is a home-based business which purchases cars wholesale, and upgrades them by adding customer-specified detailing such as pinstriping or new rims. In the first month of operation, Smykalski detailed and sold two cars.

"This business is already a success," Smykalski says. "I have a new outlook on life, and a feeling of dignity and self-worth. My body may be disabled, but not my mind."

The road to success wasn't easy. He faced the challenge many small business owners face – lack of money. On top of that, he spent nine years unemployed and suffering from a back disorder and Crohn's disease. Even now, Smykalski remains on medication and can stand for a total of only three hours a day.

Smykalski used the loan to pay the start-up expenses of his business such as advertising, overhead for a home office and service charges to the contractors. He also received business advice from the **Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre (C/MBSC)**. He attended workshops that helped him develop his business plan, and to research industry and market trends.

"There are organizations like the C/MBSC and the ILRC willing to help you," Smykalski says to other disabled entrepreneurs. "They give more than information and loans. They care for you as a person. Now I offer the same personalized service in my own business."

For more information about the services offered by Prime Auto Sales, call (204) 885-7899.

The UEDP is a loan program funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) that supports the federal government's commitment to help reduce barriers and increase self-employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities. For more information, visit the ILRC Web site at: [www.ilrc.mb.ca](http://www.ilrc.mb.ca).

The C/MBSC is part of the Western Canada Business Service Network and is financially supported by the governments of Canada and Manitoba. Visit their Web site at [www.cbosc.org](http://www.cbosc.org). ♣

# Dialing into the Future with Telecom Options

by Myleen Aco

The world of changing technology challenges small businesses to become economical with their telecommunication costs while still focusing on the core aspect of their business. Marielle Decelles-Brentnall has made it *her* business to make this easier for Canadian entrepreneurs.

Decelles-Brentnall is the president of **Telecom Options Inc.**, an innovative company providing independent telecom management services. They offer competitive rates for local lines, long distance and voice mail systems. Telecom Options also installs phone systems, sells equipment and arranges special services such as conference calling or cellular phone use.

In the last two years, Telecom Option's sales increased 300 per cent. Originally started as a home-based business in 1996, the company has expanded twice. Its recent expansion created two new jobs. Company clients are small and medium-sized businesses, but it also has larger clients such as U-Haul.

Decelles-Brentnall's biggest challenge was financial. The company mainly provides a service, not a product, which made finding financing difficult. Expanding into a new office was another challenge for her, as is keeping staff. "It's hard for small businesses to retain staff," she indicated. "Larger companies can pay higher wages. It's hard to compete."

While Decelles-Brentnall finds being a woman in a technology-based business was never an obstacle, she anticipates other women entrepreneurs may face those challenges and recommends seeking help from the **Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba (WEC)**.



*Marielle Decelles-Brentnall sits in the boardroom of the Telecom Options offices.*

WEC provided loans for two Telecom Options projects. The first helped to purchase equipment for a telecommunications installation in a multi-tenant building. The second loan, which has since been repaid, was for leasehold improvements to the company's facilities.

"The Women's Enterprise Centre was a valuable resource," Decelles-Brentnall said. "They were thorough and excellent to work with. Women should see what they offer."

For information about the services offered by Telecom Options Inc., call (204) 233-6100 or visit their Web site at: [www.telecomoptions.com](http://www.telecomoptions.com).

The Women's Enterprise Centre is dedicated to helping entrepreneurial women start and grow their own businesses. They offer innovative support and opportunities throughout Manitoba, and are part of the Western Canada Business Service Network and are financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. Visit the Women's Enterprise Centre Web site at: [www.wecm.ca](http://www.wecm.ca) or call 1-800-203-2343. ♣



## Ryte on Track and Heating Things Up!

by Myleen Aco

The path to success wasn't easy, but Henry Marion is heating things up in Montcalm, a rural community in southern Manitoba.

Marion owns **Ryte Heating Systems**, a small business that manufactures and sells boilers specifically suited for heating garages, workshops, large barns and chicken coops.

Marion marketed his first boiler about a year and a half ago, but started designing the prototype eight years ago. Today, the company manufactures boilers that burn agricultural pellets, coal, low-grade grains and corn or wood pellets. He prefers the use of agricultural pellets because they are more environmentally-friendly.

Marion says that his biggest challenge was finding money to start up his business. Most banks didn't want to finance him because he wasn't selling a "proven product" and he wasn't a "proven business."

The **Conseil de Developpement Economique des Municipalites Bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM)** helped Marion with his financial plan and development of his business plan. "A good product will carry you out," said



*Henry Marion, owner of Ryte Heating Systems, stands in front of one of his environmentally-friendly boilers.*

Marion. "CDEM strongly supported my idea and that gave me confidence while trying to find the financing."

After experiencing problems obtaining financing to start up the operation, Marion is achieving success. His company employs Marion and one other employee. To produce the boilers, steel is bought in Winnipeg and shipped to Montcalm. And, he boasts clients from across Western Canada, and has had enquiries from the north central United States.

"I would like to put out about 40 boilers in a year," he indicated. "Many companies compete in this market, but my boilers are one of

the only units to be clean and efficient. I expect sales to go up."

For more information about Ryte Heating Systems' products and services, call (204) 746-8351.

The Conseil de Developpement Economique des Municipalites Bilingues is part of the Western Canada Business Service Network and is financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. Visit their Web site at: [www.cdem.com](http://www.cdem.com). 🍁