

“We were
‘beeot
threateni
close dow
school”

the three ches' ng to n their

Madawaska Maliseet make no apologies for holding the line on land claims—or how they've affected neighbouring non-native communities

BY STEPHEN KIMBER

Patricia Bernard could sense the dizziness, feel the rising nausea. She'd spent way too many hours in the provincial archives today, scanning far too many whirring, flapping, dizzy-making reels of microfilm, vacuuming up every historical document, letter, artifact, map and paper scrap she could lay her hands on that referenced "Madawaska," all in search of... well, what exactly? And that map? That latest map? What did that map mean? How did it relate to the others?

It was 1996 and Patricia was in the final year of her undergraduate education degree at the University of New Brunswick. She'd been keen to focus her academic studies on Aboriginal history, more specifically on her own Maliseet history. That had been easy. And it hadn't.

The Maliseet boast a history that is rich and deep. At one time, the nomadic First Nation occupied a sprawling territory along the Saint John River Valley stretching from the Bay of Fundy in the south to the St. Lawrence River in the north and westward into northern Maine. Then came the English who assumed their land was their land. They were followed by Acadians who'd been displaced from their own territory further south by the English in the mid-1700s and eventually resettled among the Maliseet in what would become northern New Brunswick. The end result of all of that historical settling and resettling: the Maliseet First Nation got squeezed and divided, and then sub-divided again into smaller and smaller "colonial creations" called reserves. There were now six Maliseet reserves in New Brunswick: Oromocto, St. Mary's, Kingsclear, Woodstock, Tobique and Madawaska, which was where Patricia had grown up. There was yet another on the U.S. side of the border in Houlton, Maine.

Even the name Maliseet, Patricia tells me, is a colonial creation. The first Europeans co-opted a Mi'kmaq word meaning "broken talkers," and called the natives Maliseet because their words "came out differently." Although Maliseet is the official government-designated designation for their First Nation, Patricia prefers the more lyrical Wolastoq, meaning "people of the beautiful river."

"We are river people," she says.

She is, but she wasn't born on a river, or even a reserve. Her father, Stewart, who rarely spoke of his own native ancestry, grew up on the Madawaska reserve near Edmundston, N.B., but left home in the 1950s. "He endured racism and found it hard to get jobs here," Patricia explains. He made his way to Boston where he earned a living as a jack-of-all-trades construction worker. When he was 18, he fell in love with Margaret Elizabeth DiMaggio,

an Italian-American woman of the same age. Margaret's father was so incensed his daughter had agreed to marry an Indian he refused to walk her down the aisle. They married anyway. Patricia, the youngest of the couple's seven children, was born in Boston in 1967. When she was three, the family moved to Madawaska to be nearer her ailing paternal grandfather.

Despite her American birthplace and Catholic upbringing, Patricia says she has always considered herself Maliseet. Ironically, she says her sense of her heritage came, in large part, from her mother, who would later go on to serve a term as the reserve's first non-native and first woman chief (and who would, in turn, serve as the role model for Patricia and her older sister Joanna, both of whom also became chiefs). "She was a great admirer of the culture," Patricia says. At one point, her mother even ran a native craft shop. "She embraced it and wanted us to too. We were encouraged to read our own history."

Both her parents also encouraged all their children to "do whatever you want with your life." What Patricia wanted when she was 18 was to get married. By the time she was 21, with two children and a failing marriage, she realized she needed a life makeover. "I applied to nursing, but I got turned down, so I took education instead." Although that experience taught her she didn't ever want to be a classroom teacher ("I did my practicum teaching Grade 9 social studies," she laughs. "I knew right away that wasn't for me"), university did feed her fascination with her own history.

The problem was that courses on Aboriginal history were "few and far between." So, at the beginning of her senior year, she'd approached Andrea Bear Nicholas, the chair of Native Studies at neighbouring St. Thomas University, to ask if she would supervise Patricia's proposed independent study project focusing on her own First Nation. She would.

This is what had initially brought Patricia to the archives. She'd spent countless hours there, poring over letters, proclamations, documents, maps... Maps? All those maps—intriguing, contradictory, confounding—were the real puzzle that kept her eyes glued and glazed on the microfilm. She'd examined one map from 1787. It pegged the size of her reserve at about 4,000 acres. Another, from 1845, indicated the reserve covered just 1,600 acres. And there was yet another map, this one from 1860, which depicted a reserve very close to the 776 acres her Madawaska Maliseet First Nations reserve occupies today.

What did it all mean? Patricia had rummaged deeper into the archives in search of some treaty, or edict, or document that might explain when and why the band's



Like mother, like daughters (top to bottom): Margaret Bernard was the first non-native and the first woman to be elected chief of Madawaska Maliseet First Nation. Her daughters Joanna and Patricia followed in her footsteps: Joanna is a past chief and current head of the band's economic development agency; Patricia is the current chief. Photos: Bernard family



Grey Rock Power Centre

Premium Snowmobile Destination
 Accessible from the Trans Canada Hwy
 Exit 19, Edmundston, NB

COMING SOON!



VIOLETTE MOTORS LTEE



ACCOMMODATIONS
 Quality Inn (heated snowmobile garage)



DEALERSHIPS
 Yamaha
 Violette Motors - FORD



RESTAURANTS
 Valley View Restaurant • Fiddlehead Café
 Tim Hortons • Pirate de la Mer
 Subway • Burger King
 St-Hubert Express



UNLOADING AREA SECURED FOR TRUCKS & TRAILERS



ENTERTAINMENT
 Grey Rock Casino



SHOPPING
 Chaussures POP
 Pronature Edmundston
 Smoke Signal



SNOWMOBILE CLUBS
 Club #29, #44, #76



GAS STATION
 Edmundston Truck Stop - SHELL

EXIT 19

RIGHT OFF TRAIL 12

130

66 KM from
MOOSE VALLEY SPORTING LODGE



GREY ROCK Casino

Where friends come to play!

100 Chief Joanna Blvd,
 Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, NB
 Exit 19

506-735-2820

GreyRockCasino.com

GreyRockCasino

territory had shrunk. She couldn't find any explanation, nothing that would indicate there had been a legal basis to reduce the size of the reserve, nothing to show the First Nation had been compensated for what it had lost.

Unfortunately, the maps didn't seem to have much to do with her formal thesis topic ("how the New Brunswick government had favoured Indians that abandoned their traditional lifestyle and become farmers") so she reluctantly put them aside, finished her paper, graduated with her degree and began casting about for what to do next.

"A friend was taking the LSATs [the

law school admission tests] and suggested I do them too. I thought, why not?" After being accepted into UNB's law school, she and a fellow law student soon returned to those maps she'd uncovered. What if...? Over the winter of her first year, they prepared a formal land claim, which she filed with the Specific Claims Branch of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in April 1998.

That is how it began. While nothing much happened with the claim—except backlogs and black holes—her own life continued to unfold. Patricia graduated from law school, landed a job as a federal land claims analyst in Ottawa

(for conflict-of-interest reasons, she was never allowed to work on her own claim) and then spent another two years as an Indian Affairs manager in Amherst, N.S. She remarried and—at the invitation of her sister Joanna, then the chief—returned to her reserve to work fulltime on the land claim. In 2007, she was elected as a member of the band council, the first time the First Nation's chief and counsellors all were women. Six years later, after Joanna had taken over as head of the independent, non-political Madawaska Maliseet Economic Development Corp. to focus on solidifying the band's growing economic base, Patricia succeeded her sister as chief.

Meanwhile, the land claim itself meandered through the nooks and crannies of the Indian Affairs bureaucracy. Eleven years after she filed her claim, Ottawa officially turned it down, arguing—without elaboration—that Madawaska had never officially been a reserve. Patricia appealed that decision to a new tribunal, which led to yet more years of pleadings, applications, responses to applications, expert testimony, additional research, more supporting documents and then, finally, to three months of hearings in Edmundston and Halifax.

On Nov. 30, 2017, the CBC reported the what-mattered outcome of all those years: "A First Nation in northwestern New Brunswick is celebrating a hard-fought legal victory in its claim to land encompassing most of downtown Edmundston," the report began. "Canada's Specific Claims tribunal said Wednesday that the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation's claim to the 3,900 acres was valid... The maximum possible compensation for a land claim in Canada is \$150 million, but a figure for the Maliseet has to be negotiated."

Patricia remembers the day the decision came down as "a day of joy that's indescribable."

Today, the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation is "one of the most prosperous and thriving communities in all of New Brunswick." No need to qualify communities with 'native'. If you drive through Madawaska, you see subdivisions full of tidy, well-tended homes, many of them modern, more of them new. There is virtually no unemployment among the reserve's 200 residents (another 350 Madawaska Maliseet live off reserve). In fact, the band itself employs more than 300 people, including locals from Edmundston. And despite the community's size, it boasts





UNB
EST. 1785
UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

ACHIEVE OPTIMAL
WORKPLACE
WELLNESS

Learn about online health, safety, and wellness courses for managers and employees. Gain skills to manage stress in the workplace.

go.unb.ca/wellness

three lawyers (including Patricia), engineers, entrepreneurs, a PhD candidate, Mounties, border security officials, computer scientists and federal and provincial civil servants.

You might assume all this prosperity is the result of Patricia Bernard's landmark land claim victory. It isn't. The economic, political and cultural consequences of that victory are still being negotiated, the total dollar value calculated. Whatever the figure—and it's likely the settlement will be north of \$150 million—there is no question it will be even more future-altering for the community.

But if you want to understand how and why the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation has become as prosperous as it already is (and why its future is in such good hands) you need to hear another story about another land claim, a story about another determined woman... and, yes, it's also a story about yet another Bernard woman.

In the summer of 2008, when Joanna Bernard, the then-chief of the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, looked at a 70-acre chunk of hilly, densely forested, deeply rocky real

estate looming above the Trans-Canada Highway near Edmundston, NB, she saw the future. A money-spinning industrial park.

New Brunswick's transportation minister? Not even close. Dennis Landry saw an undeveloped, undevelopable wasteland. Which was why, he told reporters at the time, his government was not about to waste taxpayer dollars to construct needless highway access ramps to and from an "empty field."

It wasn't the first time a Madawaska First Nation ambition had smacked up against political indifference. Or worse. In the early seventies, for example, the initial two-lane version of our national highway pushed through northern New Brunswick, cutting the reserve in two. In 1975, the then-chief and council requested the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs draw up "a plan for an industrial park, an access route to this park and a subdivision plan for future housing" on the section of the reserve orphaned by the new highway. Nothing came of their request.

If we are to be brutally honest, not much had come of generations' worth of polite requests from the leaders of the band to the city fathers in Edmundston, the

mostly white city Madawaska nestles up against, or to the government in Fredericton, the far-from-here provincial capital, or to the bureaucrats in Ottawa, who were ultimately legally responsible for all matters of "Indian affairs."

In addition to allowing the Trans-Canada to bisect Madawaska territory, various governments over the years had heedlessly approved numerous other disruptions. Provincial Highway 144 sliced through the reserve, as did an old railway line. Not to mention all those other people's power lines and pipelines, city garbage dumps and pulp mill effluent lines that scarred the reserve. No one had ever asked the community for permission to plunk any of those no-one-else-wants-them projects on their territory, and no one—including especially and significantly Ottawa—had ever factored the community's long-term economic interests into its development calculus.

Joanna Bernard was determined to change all that. Like her younger sister, she'd been a single mother ("I spent a long time on welfare") who finally returned to school in 1999 for a diploma in hotel and restaurant management. The program became her coincidental

Tourism Edmundston & region

Take care...of business!

www.tourismedmundston.com 1 866 737-6766

<p>(506) 735-5525 www.travelodge.com</p>	<p>(506) 739-8361 • 1 888 739-8361 www.choicehotels.ca/cn240</p>	<p>(506) 739-0000 • 1 888 735-0001 www.bestwesternedmundston.com</p>	<p>(506) 263-0000 • 1 877 595-2952 www.daysinmedmundston.com</p>	<p>(506) 739-7321 • 1 800 576-4656 www.fourpointsedmundston.com</p>
--	---	---	---	---

WHAT'S GOING ON BEHIND THIS GREEN DOOR?



The Madawaska Maliseet's Grey Rock Power Centre is home to a profitable mix of retail, hospitality and entertainment facilities that ensure the band's continued prosperity.

crash course in accounting, business planning and entrepreneurship, useful preparation for her soon-to-be careers as a politician and economy booster.

When she decided to run for chief in 2003, at a time when the officially prescribed elected term was just two years, Bernard plainly told voters she was running to be their chief for the next 10 years. "There was a lot to do," she explains simply today. And over that next decade, Madawaska voters dutifully re-elected her every two years.

What was the economic situation in the community at the time, I ask? "None," she answers. "There wasn't one. At that time, Madawaska wasn't even on the map. We were like ghosts."

So the first and most important item on Joanna's to-do list was to get seed-money compensation for the many and various bad deals Ottawa had made on the First Nation's behalf. In 2008, after four years of negotiation, Ottawa finally agreed to pay the Madawaska Maliseet

First Nation \$5.7 million for so obviously having failed to protect its interests in approving some of those earlier schemes.

The good news was that, unlike some other First Nations, Madawaska had historically been "financially responsible," Patricia notes proudly. "We were never in debt. There was never any risk of the government imposing co-management." She pauses. "But did we have the resources, the revenues to do what needed to be done? No."

Now, suddenly, they did.

Joanna knew immediately how she wanted to divvy up the proceeds: half would go directly to the First Nation's members as treaty credits to spend as they wanted, which would help boost the local economy, including that of neighbouring Edmundston. The other half would be set aside to invest in "our highway project."

"Our highway project" was how Joanna referred to that 40-year-old dream of a new industrial park on the other side of the Trans-Canada. For Joanna, the project became the Holy Grail, the band's chance to prime its own economic pump for a self-sustaining future. But achieving that grail/goal required convenient access ramps to bring traffic to and from her imagined industrial park.

And the government still said no.

And that was that.

End of story.

Well, not quite...

"Joanna is a go-getter and she doesn't take no for an answer," Patricia says with a laugh. When they were growing up, kids from the reserve often faced taunts at the local public school that served both the reserve and neighbouring Edmundston. "War whoops, shooting pretend arrows in the air, stuff like that," Patricia explains. "You develop some tough skin, you become more aggressive." She stops for a moment, then adds meaningfully: "Joanna was feared by boys twice her size. And when people are afraid of you, you become brave and confident."

Joanna was certainly brave. And she was confident.

She and her two-member all-female band council (Patricia and Brenda Wallace, a former band manager-turned-first-time-councillor) decided to play "hardball" with Fredericton. They had a not-so-secret weapon. Back in the 1980s, school planners had inadvertently located Edmundston's Cité des Jeunes A.-M.-Sormany high school partly on reserve land. At the time, the band agreed to lease the land back to the province. But that lease was now up for

renewal.

So... No access ramps, no lease renewal, Joanna calmly informed the province. Classes were scheduled to re-open at the school in less than a month. If the band exercised its legal right to reclaim the land, the fate of the school—and the new school year, and all that that entailed—could be in jeopardy. The clock was tick-talking.

Uh... "Some people didn't like our tactics," Patricia admits. She doesn't apologize. The local newspaper, *Acadie Nouvelle*, even published a front-page story about their "threats" to expropriate part of the school, accompanied by a menacing photo of the band's three female councillors. "We were the three 'beotchies' threatening to close down their school, saying we want our property back," she jokes.

But it worked. The provincial government had an instant change of heart. In exchange for giving up title to the school property, the province agreed to build the ramps the band had been demanding and also agreed to offer it other tracts of land next to the reserve to replace the school lands.

They'd won. And that was the beginning, the real economic turning point for the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, the one that came before whatever Patricia's land claims victory will eventually generate.

First, you take Exit 19 (which is what the infamous "empty-field" off-ramp is now more prosaically called) off the Trans-Canada Highway, then turn left on Chief Joanna Boulevard. Naming the new industrial park's main drag after the former chief represents a fitting tribute. Even before she became a counsellor, Joanna had begun the lengthy process—16 modules, two per year over eight years—to become certified as a native community economic development officer. In 2013, the year she switched roles from chief to head of the band's independent economic development agency, Joanna was awarded the Order of New Brunswick "for her tireless efforts to ensure the well-being and economic prosperity of the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation as well as all First Nations communities in our province."

Drive 200 metres along Chief Joanna Boulevard and you'll find yourself in the middle of the still in-development \$13-million Grey Rock Power Centre, the industrial park formerly known as that "empty field," which is now aptly named after the layers of grey rock

that had to be blasted to make way for it. Grey Rock has become home to an eclectic, income-generating collection of successful businesses, with more projects under construction and in the planning stages.

To make its “huge infrastructure project” a concrete reality, the band had to cobble together proceeds from Joanna’s initial land claims victory, funding from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, grants from a variety of federal and provincial sources and its own-source revenues from on-reserve VLTs and other commercial ventures. Even then, it had to negotiate a \$5-million bank loan to cover the difference. “We paid off the loan in five years,” Patricia says proudly.

Before we get to the “how” of that, let’s start our Power Centre tour at the Grey Rock Entertainment Centre, a stylish casino that boasts 190 slot machines, room for 400 bingo players and soon, says its owner John Bernard, gaming tables to satisfy the most sophisticated gambling enthusiast.

Bernard? Yes, another one. John is an older brother of Joanna and Patricia. (Intriguingly, all band members are connected in one way or another to

the band’s four original families: the Bernards, the Wallaces, the Cimons and the Francis’s. Back in 1986, a previous band council became the first in the Maritimes—there’s a theme here—to strike a deal with Ottawa to control its own membership, a tentative first step on the road to self-governance. The federal formula had been “arbitrary,” Patricia tells me, so the band created its own based on both official status and community relationships to the band’s first families.)

As for John, after graduating with a computer science degree in the early eighties, he ended up in Ottawa where he worked as a civil servant specializing in technology. But he always considered himself an entrepreneur at heart: “I can’t tell you how many businesses our father started.” So, in 1996, John and two non-Native partners launched Donna Cona, a full-service, proudly Aboriginal, Ottawa-based technology consulting company. Donna Cona designed computer systems for native bands, trained indigenous workers in systems management and, in 1999, wired the then-new and sprawling territory of Nunavut. *The Globe and Mail* described him as “an internet millionaire, national

role model and self-styled prophet of the digital age... the ‘Preacher of Connectivity.’” When Sierra Systems Group acquired part of his company in 1999, John personally pocketed \$2 million, but then agreed to stay on as Donna Cona’s president and majority shareholder.

He still is, but he’s no longer based in Ottawa. “At first,” he remembers, “I swore I’d never come back home. There was so much welfare. It was a way of life.” But then he saw what his sisters and others were trying to build. “After 20 years in Ottawa, I wanted to come back to my own First Nation.”

In 2003, he lent the reserve money to renovate a building on the reserve that became his first, not-quite-so-glamorous Madawaska Entertainment Centre. The band repaid him after it got its first land claims settlement and, in 2013, he upgraded and relocated to the Power Centre, where he says more than half of his casino customers come from outside New Brunswick. Quebecers, he says, are his casino’s economic “oyster.”

That shouldn’t be surprising. “If you draw a circle around Madawaska,” notes Patricia, “there’s Bangor, Quebec City and Fredericton, all within a 300-mile radius.”



CRAFT FOOD CRAFT BEER SOCIAL TIMES



Green Door
Restaurant & Bar
709 237-3667/8
www.greendoornl.ca



Maliseet women are powerful leaders. We are strong, brave and confident, and not afraid to stand up for what we believe in. We get things done.

Close to 10,000 vehicles a day whiz along the Trans-Canada past the Power Centre—15,000 at the height of summer. Many of those vehicles, of course, are fully loaded 18-wheelers filled to the roof with the life-blood of modern life: frozen French fries, home furnishings, new cars, fancy clothing, industrial bits and bytes, all of it coming from and going to somewhere else. Because its on-off ramps are conveniently located just minutes from New Brunswick's borders with Quebec and Maine, the Power Centre has become (just as Joanna envisioned) an ideal pit-stop for those truckers.

The Power Centre's 24-hour Edmundston Truck Stop and Shell Service Station—one of the largest in Atlantic Canada—provides \$1,000-fill-ups at one of its 14 pumps while also catering to truckers' other needs and desires: complimentary showers, laundry service, free Wi-Fi, a convenience store, a car wash, even pet wash facilities. Plus, of course, there's an inevitable, conveniently close-by Tims and a constellation of popular fast-food fill-me-ups. Not to forget, of course, slot-machine relaxation at the nearby casino for those so inclined.

The entrepreneur behind the truck stop is Vicki Wallace-Godbout—another woman, another lawyer, another member of the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation. Wallace-Godbout, who also grew up on the reserve, ran a full-service law firm in Moncton until she was lured home in 2010 to develop the truck stop business.

Besides those key anchors, the Power Centre also boasts a strip mall, and there are serviced lots for an 80-room hotel and a snowmobile dealership. John Bernard, who's also behind the snowmobile dealership, tells me he hopes to turn the Power Centre into a snowmobilers' tourist destination. He's already made his casino snowmobile friendly and he's pushing for a heated garage for snowmobiles as part of the new hotel.

In part to give them the ability to negotiate with private businesses, the band has been slowly wresting control of more and more of its governance from

Ottawa. In 2013, it took over its own fiscal management, key to negotiating long-term leases with potential Power Centre tenants. Last year, it added land management to its economic development quiver. According to Patricia, jurisdictional questions (should businesses be striking deals with the band, Fredericton, Ottawa?) "had created uncertainty, which was a huge detriment to development. We can now create our own zoning laws, our own environmental laws that apply on reserve."

Although she acknowledges creating all that infrastructure has been time-consuming and labour intensive, it's been worth it. Last year, Violette Motors, a non-native-owned Ford dealership, opened in the Power Centre—the first, they hope, of many such enterprises. Given the band's small numbers, Patricia and Joanna always knew they would need outside entrepreneurs in the mix.

All the existing businesses, and those to come, will be critical to keeping the First Nation's cash flow flowing. While the businesses pay the band to lease property in its Power Centre, they also generate tax revenues, most of which come back to the band too. It eventually pockets roughly 95 per cent of all the gas, cigarette and sales taxes collected by reserve-operated businesses, up to a cap of \$8 million, and then 70 per cent after that.

In 2017, those total revenues (about \$13 million) not only helped the band keep expanding the Power Centre but also allowed it to dole out \$6 million directly to band members, provide loans to reserve members to build and renovate their homes, offer grants for post-secondary education, free daycare and even operate a recreation centre and gym for members.

Because the band considers education so critical to its future, it supplements a federal policy that covers tuition costs for native students attending post-secondary institutions with a living allowance to make sure there are no financial barriers to students' educational success. And the band also recently—and

perhaps not coincidentally—launched a new scholarship program specifically for single mothers who want to continue their education.

Fittingly, in late October, the national Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando) chose the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation from among 634 Native communities across Canada as its Community of the Year for its success in developing the Power Centre and its ongoing efforts to become self-sustaining.

All of this prosperity has, perhaps surprisingly, also smoothed the Madawaska Maliseet's relationship with next-door neighbour Edmundston. "The mayor and I have a great relationship," Patricia tells me. "We always have projects on the go so we're always hiring local contractors. And most of the people who work at Grey Rock are local people from off reserve."

Mayor Cyrille Simard agrees. It was, he says, "abnormal and unhealthy that we have lived together for two centuries without really knowing each other mutually." He's been at pains to note publicly that the Madawaska band's 2017 land claims victory is actually a good thing for his city too. Even though the courts ruled much of Edmundston sits on Madawaska Maliseet territory, he says, the band has made it clear it isn't looking for the land back, and any financial settlement will ultimately come from Ottawa, not Edmundston. "Whatever else happens with money, we know one thing," he says. "That money will obviously be invested largely in our local economy [and that] will necessarily have a positive impact on everyone."

The band's latest project (likely to be another job generator for the community) is a partnership with BeeHighve Inc., a new Newfoundland company whose business plan is to mix cannabis with honey to produce cannabis-infused honey and consumables for national and international markets. The Madawaska band, which recently announced it will become the first First Nation in New Brunswick to become a licenced cannabis producer, is a major shareholder

in the company. When edibles become legal, probably next year, BeeHighve will cultivate its cannabis in a facility near the Power Centre. The CEO of BeeHighve? A woman, of course. An Aboriginal woman. Connection? Rita Hall, a Mi'kmaq from Newfoundland, used to work for John Bernard's Donna Cona. "She left to open a consulting business and then started Beehighve," Patricia explains. "She approached the council looking for partnership and we accepted."

As for the Bernard sisters, they're far from done doing. Although both harbour personal ambitions—Joanna talks fondly about her original, pre-politics plan to put her hotel management diploma to use by launching a four-season resort and Patricia muses wistfully about her dream to raise horses—they still have their eyes very much set on the prize: making their Madawaska Maliseet First Nation self-sustaining and self-governing.

"For now," says Patricia who was re-elected band chief in 2015 for a four-year term (the band was the first Aboriginal community in Canada to opt into a new First Nations Elections Act that provides for those longer terms), "I'm focused on the growth of our community, the governance of our community."

And, oh yes, negotiating the final financial terms of her land claims victory.

What is it about Maliseet women? The all-women council? The CEO of the economic development corporation? The owner of the truck stop? When I put that question to Patricia Bernard, she points me in the direction of Sandra Lovelace. In the 1980s, Lovelace almost singlehandedly shamed the Canadian government into changing a law that deprived Aboriginal women of their status if they married non-Aboriginals. She is yet another Maliseet woman, from the Tobique reserve. Today, she is a Canadian senator and Order of Canada recipient.

"Maliseet women," Patricia points out, almost unnecessarily, "are powerful leaders. We are strong, brave and confident, and not afraid to stand up for what we believe in. We get things done."

They do.

FEEDBACK

✉ dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com
 🐦 [@AtlanticBus](https://twitter.com/AtlanticBus); [@askimber](https://twitter.com/askimber); [#Madawaska](https://twitter.com/Madawaska)

OLD ORCHARD INN Conference Resort & Spa



Annapolis Valley Conference Facility & Resort
 With over 12,000 sq.ft. of meeting space
 and only one hour from Halifax. Local activities
 include golf courses, wineries and Hall's Harbour
 lobster pound for the complete Maritime experience



oldorchardinn.com 1-800-561-8090 meetings@oldorchardinn.com
 Hwy 101, Exit 11 153 Greenwich Rd. South, Wolfville, Nova Scotia



ALWAYS IN VOGUE

**The Next Chapter
 In Luxury**



167 Water St. • St. John's, NL Canada • 709.722.9432
voguefurriers@nl.rogers.com • alwaysinvogue.ca

FOLLOW US ON
  