

# Bio of Chief Clarence Louie

## Osoyoos Indian Band



Graduated from high school 1978. Attended the University of Regina, (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) Native American Studies Program. Continued Native American Studies at the University of Lethbridge, from 1979 to 1982.

Since December 1984 when first elected as Chief of the Osoyoos Indian Band, part of the Okanagan Nation in south central British Columbia, Clarence Joseph Louie has consistently emphasized economic development as a means to improve his people's standard of living. Under his direction (36+ years), the Band has become a multi-faceted corporation that owns and manages 11 businesses, 7 joint ventures and employs a thousand people. In 1998 the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation was formed to manage and provide strategic direction to the existing businesses and as well as seek out new economic opportunities. Clarence was appointed C.E.O.

Other achievements under Chief Louie's tenure include the negotiated settlement of three Specific Land Claims, the successful negotiation of over 1,000 acres of lease developments, the acquisition of hundreds of acres of land to add to the reserve, the purchase of a viable off-reserve cement company, the financing of a major golf course development, the initiation of the Osoyoos Indian Taxation By-law, the financing and building of a new pre-school/daycare and grade school/gymnasium, construction of a new Health Center/Social Services building and in 2008 the building of a Youth Centre.

The Osoyoos Indian Band has modeled not only sustainable business development, but also socio-economic development, whereby the community's social needs are improved. Chief Louie's constant message is, "Socio-economic development is the foundation for First Nation self-reliance, our communities need to become business minded and begin to create their own jobs and revenue sources, not just administer underfunded government programs. Each of our First Nations must take back their inherent and rightful place in the economy of their territory. Native people must change their mindset from; *Spending Money To Making Money*".

As confirmation of the Osoyoos Indian Band's commitment to business, and social economic development the Band owns and operates a diversity of businesses on the reserve, including: vineyards, retail stores, a Read-Mix company, a championship golf course, eco-tourism businesses and activities in the Forestry. In 2002 the Band opened the first Aboriginal winery in North America-Nk'Mip Cellars. The winery is a joint venture with Arterra Canada.

Although economic development is the means to achieving self-sufficiency, Chief and Council continues to emphasize the importance of maintaining the Okanagan language and culture in all aspects of the band's activities including business. The establishment of the Nk'Mip Desert & Cultural Center is a testament to this commitment of balancing business while investing time and money in culture. This eco-cultural center provides visitors an opportunity to experience the Okanagan culture and explore the desert lands that are a part of their traditional territory. The Nk'Mip Desert & Cultural Center is also an example of the continued growth of the band's businesses.

Chief Louie believes that job creation and increasing business revenue in a responsible manner will bring back what he describes as, “our First Nation working culture, the self-supporting lifestyle of our ancestors.” And further, First Nation leaders have a responsibility to incorporate First Nation’s language and culture in all socio-economic initiatives as the means to improve and protect your First Nation’s heritage. In 2002, Chief Louie played a key role in the successful negotiations to return a sacred cultural site, “Spotted Lake,” to the Okanagan Nation. Chief Louie’s efforts have been widely recognized in Canada and the United states.

- In 1999, he received the Aboriginal Business Leader Award from All Nations Trust and Development Corporation.
- In 2000, the Advancement of Native Development officers (CANDO) named Chief Louie the “Economic Developer of the Year”
- In the same year Clarence was chosen to join the Governor General of Canada in the 2000 leadership tour.
- In 2001 Chief Louie was appointed to the Aboriginal Business Canada Board (later renamed National Indigenous Economic Development Board) and in 2007 was appointed as Chair of the Board to 2021.
- In 2002- Aboriginal Tourism B.C. awarded Chief Louie the “Inspirational Leadership Award.”
- Maclean’s Magazine listed Chief Clarence Louie as one of the “Top 50 Canadians to Watch” in their January 2003 issue.
- More recognition came in 2003 as the U.S. Department of State selected Clarence as 1 of 6 First Nation representatives to participate in a 2-week tour of successful American Indian Tribes.
- In April 2004 the Aboriginal Achievement Foundation presented Clarence with the award for “Business and Community Development.” The National Achievement Awards represent the highest honor the Aboriginal Community bestows upon its own achievers.
- Past committee member B.C. Region Indian Affairs (Forestry and Economic Development)
- First Nation Boards – Denendeh Investments (Yellowknife – 2007), Stsailes Dev. Corp. (Chilliwack – 2009)
- 2006 – Order of British Columbia
- 2008 – Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year
- 2011 – Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business - Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame
- 2015 – Destination B.C. Board of Directors
- 2015 – B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority Board of Directors
- 2016 – Order of Canada
- 2018 – Canadian Business Hall of Fame
- 2019 – B.C. Business Hall of Fame
- 2019 – Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (Federal Board)
- 2021 – B.C. Hydro Board

A lifelong student of “Native American Studies”, Clarence shares his experiences (Key Note Speaking) and best lessons learned to Native people, Government and Corporate agencies across the U.S and Canada as well as overseas – Australia, New Zealand, Germany and France, in a simple direct business smarts approach, “Every First Nation comes from a working culture. Our ancestors worked hard for a living. Today life is as complicated or messed up as you make it. To improve your quality of life, you either go to school or get a job. Words without action, excuses and blame, leads towards more welfare dependency and poverty. It’s hard work and making money that improves one’s standard of living and provides for First Nation social needs.”

Chief Louie believes that “Aboriginal people and government must make Economic Development - self-sustaining job creation and business growth an everyday priority. A real decent paying job that provides real opportunity is the very best social program on any Rez!”

The Osoyoos Indian Band’s corporate motto is “In Business To Preserve Our Past By Strengthening Our Future.”