

An article on Dave Tuccaro in the August edition of Alberta Venture.

Five Alberta legends who show what it means to be an entrepreneur
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ABOUT BUSINESS

Dave Tuccaro

Role Model



Illustration Charles Raymond Burke

A member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation in Fort Chipewyan, Dave Tuccaro, who was born there in 1958, is the president and CEO of seven successful companies. As a result, he's often known as Alberta's real "oil sands millionaire."

Running a business is hard for the average person. But for aboriginal entrepreneurs it's doubly difficult given that they face obstacles that others usually don't have to overcome. For example, since most are first-generation business owners, they lack startup capital that is often provided by friends and family. And because they typically operate in isolation, they often lack the access to networks that's needed in order to allow them to deal with financial issues or identify growth opportunities.

For oil sands entrepreneur Dave Tuccaro, there were other obstacles as well – growing up in Fort Chipewyan, he lacked a college education when he started working with the Mikisew Cree Tribal Council. His isolation was not only figurative, but literal as well – there was no road leading in or out of Fort Chip. And when he bought his first business from his band, he was the proud new owner of a company that had been mismanaged and was at risk of going under. But he didn't let any of that stop him. "He's tenacious. He's a guy who doesn't quit," says Clint Davis, vice-president for aboriginal banking at TD Bank Group. "He's an individual that sees an opportunity or sees a project and pursues it to its ultimate end."

Today, although Tuccaro is perhaps best known for owning Tuccaro Inc., a group of companies worth more than \$100 million, Davis says Tuccaro's greatest achievement is his commitment to mentoring young aboriginal business leaders.

"Dave has always been a very ardent proponent of economic development and entrepreneurialism as a key to pulling aboriginal people out of the state of abject poverty," Davis says. "He has a strong social conscience, a sense of identity as to who he is as an aboriginal person and the desire to give back to his community."

In addition to sitting on the investment committee for the Capital for Aboriginal Prosperity and Entrepreneurship fund (which provides mentorship to aboriginal businesspeople), Tuccaro has volunteered in the Yukon with Habitat for Humanity and been inducted into the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame.