

# BEST BUSINESS STORY

The winners in this category separated themselves from the pack by developing narratives that satisfied the requirement for detail while engaging the reader in compelling business stories that were both recognizable and significant locally. Honourable Mention goes to Jeremy East of the Nation ("These boots were made for walking") for a splendid job in integrating clever turns of phrase to demonstrate he was on top of the subject matter, and in capturing the soul of the practitioners behind the business he described.

## 1

### Court orders Kahnawake business to close

**DANIEL J. ROWE**  
The Eastern Door

Brought in from Sorel to hear a breach of conditions charge, Quebec Superior Court justice Denis Noel released local businessman Floyd Labache from custody Friday, but in the same breath ordered the First Nations Winery operation halted, its bank account closed, and the federal license held by the owner canceled.

Labache, the sole proprietor of the winery, was notified on October 7 that a warrant for his arrest was issued, as he had allegedly broke a condition not to have any involvement with the wine industry after his initial arrest for fraud May 12 as part of Project Malbec.

Crown attorneys argued that Labache had signed cheques and a license renewal for the business, as well as contacted acting winery manager Kawisenhawi Diabo a number of times.

"We gave him a chance, and he didn't take it," said crown attorney Philippe Vallieres-Roland in his closing arguments last Friday. "If your mode of life is fraud and you make so much money, you will continue."

When Labache turned himself into the court October 16, he was held in jail for the week, while the trial went on.

Labache denied having breached his condition to stay away from winery business on the stand.

"Nothing whatsoever," said Labache when asked what he did with the business since May 12.

Diabo admitted contacting Labache more than the 37 times in 36 days, after the crown asked her on the stand.

"I definitely contacted him way more than that," said Diabo on the stand, adding that the two were friends and calls were of a social nature. "He never asks me any questions about the winery," as for the cheques, Diabo and

**FIRST NATIONS  
KAHNAWAKE  
WINERY**

**DANIEL J. ROWE THE EASTERN DOOR**

Labache said they were pre-signed and that Diabo filled out all the information on the blank cheques stored in the winery's safe.

Labache admitted to signing the renewal for the winery's federal license, but that he didn't discuss the business. He just signed the renewal form.

Justice Noel did not find Labache or Diabo credible witnesses after a direct and aggressive questioning session from Vallieres-Roland found contradictions in testimonies related to finances. Noel said, however, the original condition to not be involved in the business was vague.

Labache's lawyer Roberto Delabato was equally aggressive in defending against what he thought was a baseless charge and detention.

"Our opinion is that there was no breach and that his detention was completely unwarranted," said DeMinto.

"We are dealing here with a Mohawk citizen, a North American Mohawk citizen that has absolutely no priors, no links to any criminal gang or organization whatsoever, is a father of six, a good family man, an ex-NHL hockey player that has an impeccable reputation in the community. We do not feel that his detention is justified."

Labache remained calm in the courtroom, and said he just wanted to return to his home in Kahnawake.

"I'm very disappointed about being treated like a criminal," said Labache on the stand. "I'm not a criminal, but first of all, I miss my kids."

Labache was released from prison Friday evening.

A condition to check in with Chateaugay Police every Friday was also added.

**Kahnawake on trial:** The three days of testimony heard not only the breach charge, but also a great deal about the 1999 agreement between Quebec and Kahnawake related to alcohol, the creation and status of the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) board, the Peacekeepers policy in relation to warrants and other jurisdictional matters for the business community.

The trial Tuesday and Friday heard testimony from Mohawk Council of Kahnawake grand chief Joe Nouron, former council chief Peggy Mayo, negotiator Alwyn Morris, as well as Labache and Diabo.

Morris explained how an amendment to the 10 agreements in 1999 was added to account for manufacturing of alcohol, as manufacturing was not part of the original agreement.

Morris testified that the negotiating team knew that alcohol manufacturing would be an issue in 1999, and negotiated a separate liaison committee in 2005 to deal with the issue.

"We have an ABC board that has a federal permit, and argues the charge goes against the community's jurisdiction to manage its own business industry."

"We have an ABC board that says that I can manufacture wine, that's the Mohawk government,"

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### DANIEL J. ROWE

#### The Eastern Door

What makes this story stand out is solid reporting and clear navigation through the reeds of a curious legal case that has implications beyond the plight of the local businessman on trial. Rowe has served his readership well by offering a well-sourced and well-balanced account of a legal dilemma particular to his local business community.

## 2

### Not such a warm welcome for B&B owner

**By Ben Bulmer**

A Labrador curled up by a roaring fire and a kind host serving delicious homemade breakfasts is what most would think of when it comes to a good bed and breakfast. But one soon-to-be Wakefield resident and B&B owner says his reception here has been far from warm.

Claude Weil and his partner, Lucie Theoret, bought a vacant Burnside Drive lot, having viewed Wakefield as the perfect place to retire.

"I've been going to the Wakefield area for well over 30 years," said Weil.

The couple have children in Ottawa and Montreal and cited Wakefield as a great rural place to retire but still be close to their kids and 10 grandchildren.

The retired engineer says he and Theoret don't want to be fully retired, so after careful thought and "very thorough market research" decided on opening a bed and breakfast.

The lot at 21 Burnside Drive is zoned for residential use, with an addition to allow up to a five-bedroom bed and breakfast providing the owners live in the property.

The couple, who currently reside in Saskatchewan, decided a small bed and breakfast in Wakefield was the ideal retirement project and bought the \$100,000 lot in December 2014.

The couple rented a property on the street and applied for all the required permits so construction could start. At that point, Weil says, rumours started to fly.

"There were suggestions

### Residents debate ethics of GN staff running a business

**"If they want to run businesses, they should get out of government"**

**JANE GEORGE**

CAMBRIDGE BAY — If you work for the Government of Nunavut in Cambridge Bay, you're probably better paid and receive more benefits than other workers in this western Nunavut town of 2,000.

But many here say they resent that some GN employees will double-dip, by running businesses on the side.

They allege that some of the businesses are closely linked with what these territorial government workers do in their jobs, take their attention away from their jobs during work hours or while they're on government duty travel, and undermine the local business community.

"If they want to run businesses, they should get out of government," said a resident.

who, among others, sought anonymity for this story due to possible repercussions in this government-driven hub for Nunavut's Kitikotam region. "It has to stop."

Another said these GN business-owners should quit their day jobs and see how hard it is to survive in the trenches of business where your salary is never guaranteed.

Critics of these on-the-side business ventures also say their owners should hire local people to run their businesses and, in that way, they could increase employment in town.

"Some people in town also say they're confused about what these GN employees really do for a living when they see them out and about at the airport picking up freight or non-government-related personnel or driving around during GN working hours — are they working for the government or themselves?"

Rene Laerich, owner of Adair Aviation Ltd., who has sued the territorial government over its awarding of contracts for the 2011 contract for the emergency medical services in the Kitikotam region, said yes, it's a longstanding problem, when asked about businesses that are owned by territorial government employees.

And his opinion? "You either work for a business or you work for the government."

The list of businesses in Cambridge Bay reveals many that are associated with, or owned, or co-owned by GN employees, according to online information.

In the departments of Community and Government Services and Economic Development and Transportation these include:

- All Wheel Rentals, a vehicle rental company (Corey Dimitruk, Senior Regional Community Planner, CGS)
- Will's Expediting Services, a single-family housing construction company (Willard MacDonald, Project Officer, CGS)
- Chou Consulting and Development Inc., consulting and project management services (Stuart Rountan, Senior Project Manager, CGS)

GN workers and business owners met by Nunavut News maintain their businesses don't interfere or conflict with their responsibilities. Lear, who runs Kalgen's Dis and Dat, open from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., said he couldn't speak for the others in his department or the GN who own businesses, but added that he never does any business-related work during office hours.

Dimitruk, who until recently ran a local taxi company and now operates All Wheel Rentals, also said he deals with business-related

## 3

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### GN seeks input on tourism

**"We want Nunavummiut to share their ideas for the new Travel and Tourism Act"**

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### BEN BULMER

#### The Low Down to Hull & Back News

A well-written, interesting and community-focused local business story. Bulmer takes a thorny issue and allows all sides to address it in an orderly, matter-of-fact tone. The issue is met head-on without risking community relationships in the process.

Honourable Mention:

## JEREMY EAST

the Nation

Judge: Dan Hoddinott, Editor, Speaker, Trainer & Author, Vaughan, ON • Number of entries in the Best Business Story Category: 17