

A catalyst for change
Why education makes all the difference



Aboriginal relations
Creating Canadian synergies

MEDIA PLANET

June 2011

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS



THE CHALLENGES FACING ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT

The Aboriginal population is growing six times faster than the rest of Canada's. How can we work together to build success for the future?

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CHALLENGES

FACT

1

THE FIRST PRIORITY IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
An employee poses next to a First Air aircraft. The company is part of the Makivik Corporation, a very successful Quebec-based Aboriginal-owned company.
PHOTO: FIRST AIR

A new era of **opportunity** is upon us. As the entrepreneurial spirit is ignited—and supported—**success** for Aboriginal communities everywhere is within reach.

The building blocks of Aboriginal communities

Despite its more than 25-year history, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, which advocates on behalf of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, has more work to do. As chief executive of the CCAB, part of my job is to make Canada aware of the business success stories as well as the things that need to be done. Aboriginal people in Canada continue to be the poorest of the poor and are normally on the lowest ranking of every socio-economic indicator—household income, health, education and employment. Frankly, many problems would simply dissipate with a greater focus on creating economic prosperity in Aboriginal communities.

Addressing those affected

The idea of achieving sustainable economic growth by being inclusive of those individuals at the bottom was discussed at the most recent World Economic Forum. While in Davos, Don Tapscott, internationally renowned author and business professor, noted the economic recovery is not really a recovery if “it’s not inclusive.”

In this country, we are turning our minds to creating sustainable growth for the future. And it is imperative that this growth be inclusive of Aboriginal

people, communities and businesses. How can we do that? To paraphrase Chief Clarence Louie from the Osoyoos Indian Band, by being a customer.

Research supports Chief Louie’s insight. In April and May of this year CCAB released two research reports from its national survey of Aboriginal businesses. On average, 62 percent of Aboriginal small business employees are Aboriginal and 72 percent of the Aboriginal community-owned development corporations’ employees are Aboriginal. The bottom line is buying from Aboriginal business provides gainful employment for Aboriginal people and supports their families.

Relevant employment policies

There are 37,000 privately owned Aboriginal businesses in Canada, and hundreds more businesses that are owned and operated by Aboriginal communities. These companies operate in wide range of industries, from IT, to human resources management, financial services, insurance, airlines and construction. These companies offer high quality products and services and focus on customer service.

But very few governments and companies have an Aboriginal procurement policy whereby they are committed to including Aboriginal companies into their supply chain.



Clint Davis
President & CEO
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

“In this country, we are turning our minds to creating sustainable growth for the future. And it is imperative that this growth be inclusive of Aboriginal people, communities and business.”

This needs to change. Aboriginal companies hire, train and retain Aboriginal people. Aboriginal companies do business with other Aboriginal companies. When Aboriginal businesses grow and prosper, Aboriginal people and communities benefit.

Supporting local and economic growth

Some companies are getting right. In 2008, the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) certified companies at the Gold level procured over \$600 million to Aboriginal businesses through Canada. PAR is unique program offered by the CCAB that provides companies with a framework to measure their progress in Aboriginal Relations. Companies like Sodexo Canada, Syncrude, Cameco, Compass Group Canada and Diavik Diamond Mines see real value in buying from Aboriginal business. It not only supports economic growth in the local area, but in many cases it is more cost effective.

Do you want to help Aboriginal companies and communities achieve sustainable economic growth? Do one thing—be a customer.

Clint Davis, an Inuk from Nunatsiavut in Labrador, is the President and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

A healthy discussion for positive change

Earlier this year, the Health Council of Canada held a series of regional meetings across Canada to learn about promising programs and strategies that are improving the health of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis expectant mothers and young children.

At each session, participants were asked to list the issues facing Aboriginal communities and standing in the way of better maternal and child health. Poverty topped the list, along with its cascading effects on personal health, family relationships and communities. There were many discussions about the impact of the traumatic experience of colonization—the imposition of Western values and way of life—and residential schools.

Addressing the disconnect

In some of the sessions, participants



“Participants identified more than 100 programs and strategies that they believe are making improvements...”

John G. Abbott
CEO
Health Council of Canada

expressed concern that many non-Aboriginal Canadians—including those who work in health care, child welfare services, and government offices—simply don’t understand or value the Aboriginal world view, and don’t understand how the multi-generational effects of the residential school experience have affected their entire culture. Imbedded in many of the success stories we heard was the importance of rebuilding what had been stripped from Aboriginal

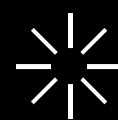
people—knowledge of their language and traditions, pride in their culture and self-determination.

Participants identified more than 100 programs and strategies that they believe are making improvements to the health of expectant Aboriginal mothers and young children. Many of these promising practices are integrating mainstream health care with traditional Aboriginal practices. Thanks to the wealth of information provided, later this summer we will be

releasing a report on what we heard at these sessions and the promising practices that were identified.

Pushing for positive change

This upcoming report is the first step of a multi-year project by the Health Council of Canada to learn more about programs and strategies that have the potential to reduce the unacceptable health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. We believe that it is a particularly interesting and relevant time to be asking questions and sharing information about what’s working, given the prime minister’s emphasis on maternal and child health in the developing world. Some of the issues parallel what’s happening in Canada’s Aboriginal communities. Hopefully, governments and health care leaders are beginning to realize that they need to think and work differently if they want to improve the health of all Canadians.



WE RECOMMEND



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Catalyst for change
Activist and lawyer Roberta Jamieson speaks on the importance of an education.

“One in five Canadians can expect a post-secondary degree, but only one in 33 First Nations Students can...”

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How the Horizons program is providing employment and growth opportunities.

Catching opportunities p. 7

Ashley Callingbull’s story of overcoming circumstance to achieve success.

MEDIA PLANET

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS
1ST EDITION, JUNE 2011

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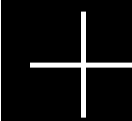
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Distributed within:
National Post, June-2011
This section was created by Mediaplanet and did not involve the National Post or its Editorial Departments.



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DON’T MISS!

Words of wisdom

■ “The mineral exploration and mining industry needs greater participation by Aboriginal people to ensure access to the human resources needed to ensure the industry’s long-term viability.”

■ “The Throne Speech sends a powerful signal that the federal government is prepared to engage constructively with Aboriginal people on improving on-reserve educational outcomes and economic development opportunities.”

DONALD BUBAR

Co-chair

PDAC’s Aboriginal Affairs Committee

■ Contention arises between Native and non-Native people when deciding how to manage Canada’s natural resources. Many get the impression that Aboriginal people are against economic development and labour-market participation. Many First Nations leaders are advocating for resource revenue sharing and resource management consultations. What Native people are protecting when speaking out against proposed projects are not only traditional rights and connection to land, but also looking out for our Mother Earth so that we can enjoy a future that is not damaging the environment for all Canadians.

LISA CHARLEYBOY

Aboriginal Recruitment Officer - Aboriginal at York University
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Making a Meaningful Difference

As a proud member of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), Sodexo has been working with Aboriginal communities for more than 20 years. During that time our focus has been on building community relations and supporting youth and heritage initiatives. For the fourth consecutive year, we have been recognized by the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program with Gold Certification. Over that time we have ensured that each project delivered contributes to the advancement of Aboriginal people and to the economic, social and environmental development of the communities in which we have a presence.



Since 1912, through our legacy company, Sodexo Canada has been a strategic partner to clients nationally through the design, management and delivery of Comprehensive On-Site Service Solutions. The environments in which we operate include Business and Industry, Remote Sites, Healthcare, Education, and Leisure and Entertainment. By integrating the delivery of facilities management, property management, project management, public and private partnerships, and food services, Sodexo contributes to the development of individuals and the performance of organizations.

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Chief Norm Hardisty, Moose Cree First Nation, Ontario



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Chief Shane Gottfriedson, Tk'emlups Indian Band, British Columbia



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Chief Dean Sayers, Batchewana First Nation, Ontario



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INSPIRATION

For **Aboriginal youth**, exercising the right to an **education** can be a formidable obstacle. **Roberta Jamieson** persevered through this challenge to become the first First Nations woman to graduate from law school. Now, she advocates to give all students the same **opportunity**.

Education: A catalyst for change

HOW I MADE IT

First Nations communities face a number of challenges that include crime, poverty and disenfranchisement, but giving young Aboriginal people a way out of the cycle by investing in their education may prove to be a turning point, according to Roberta Jamieson, a prominent activist—and trailblazer.

A Mohawk woman from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Jamieson has the distinction of being the first First Nations woman to graduate from law school.

Head of the class

Along her path to a successful career, she has led fundraising and investment efforts in helping reverse the trends and stereotypes that have afflicted First Nations communities. Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing demographic in Canada, and while improvement in education has seen a jump from just two Aboriginal stu-

dents in post-secondary education in all of Canada in the 1950s, to a current figure of over 30,000, Jamieson says there is still a long way to go.

"One in five Canadians can expect a post-secondary degree, but only one in 33 First Nations students can, and it would take over 28 years to close that gap under the current graduation rates," Jamieson says. "There is a myth that natives have a negative view of education, and some may indeed feel that way, but education is a number one priority for most, and the biggest barrier is the lack of financial support."

Investing in an education

As President and CEO of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF), Jamieson's organization has worked to provide financial support to Aboriginal students. NAAF is second only to the federal government in funding to Aboriginal students to the tune of \$42 million for 11,500 recipients.

Last fall, Jamieson had lobbied Ottawa to double its funding commitment to Aboriginal students of almost \$300 million, but

PROFILE



Roberta Jamieson

- **Born in:** 1953
- **From:** Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Ontario.
- **Education:** Graduated in 1976 from the law program at University of Western Ontario.
- **Achievements:** Also named to head the first Ontario Indian Commission and in 1982. Recipient of the Order of Canada.

there has been no increase as of yet. The problem, Jamieson adds, is that NAAF is "only barely" meeting 20 percent of the needs of students who turn to the foundation. "The ones who do get our help end up graduating, succeeding and giving back, so there is light at the end of the tunnel but it requires more investment," she says.

Addressing unique needs

She goes on to say that the profile of the average First Nations student receiving NAAF funds is a 27-year-old woman, often with children. On top of costs associated with studying, these students also need daycare and services to help them adapt to day-to-day life in an urban area that may be worlds apart from a reserve, she says.

This is why some of the universities and colleges have taken some key steps to look hard at what it is they need to do to retain native students and ensure their success. They know that the students need to be in touch with one another, their culture, perhaps access to elders, and a welcoming environment for them to meet others, Jamieson points out.

The benefits are tangible, she says. A

study done last year by The Centre for the Study of Living Standards demonstrated that if the gap in education and employment for Aboriginal people in Canada closed, the treasury would save \$115 billion in expenses over 15 years, while adding another \$400 billion to Canada's economy in the same timeframe.

Corporate Canada is keen on helping, but are also looking for leadership from government, she says. Last year, NAAF supported 129 doctors, 214 nurses, 105 lawyers, and many other graduates in different professions.

"There are Aboriginal success stories to be had in this country, but it requires investment," she says. "This is not about benevolence, or arguing rights, it's a smart investment that will reap benefits for all Canadians."

TED KRITSONIS
editorial@mediaplanet.com

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INSIGHT

FACT
2
ABORIGINAL YOUTH ARE THE FASTEST GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC IN CANADA



1. Jarret Leaman.
2. With Lifetime Achievement Recipient, Lillian McGregor (left).
PHOTO: 1: PRIVATE, 2: NAAF

DON'T MISS!

The landscape of an Aboriginal education in Canada

Aboriginal education is a multi-faceted issue within the borders of Canada, but these issues are felt by Indigenous Peoples all over the world.

Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, which includes First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit and Metis face multiple barriers within the educational system.

Some of these barriers include historic colonized attitudes, accessibility, financial, physical, sociological and geographical issues. Limited academic programming within many northern community schools is an example of accessibility, geographical and financial barriers, whereas high teen suicide and drug consumption rates result in sociological and physical barriers. All of these detrimental effects play a negative role in enrollment and retention of Aboriginal learners within the

educational system in Canada. In short, Aboriginal learners are not going to be enticed to attend educational institutions where they do not see themselves reflected and valued; and failure to attend leads to many of the other access issues they face in postsecondary education.

Growing aspirations

With an exploding population growing six times faster than the national average, Aboriginal people who are educated will greatly enhance Canada's future economy. Encouraging the Aboriginal demographic to embrace education as a method of increasing their quality of life has been difficult. Unfortunately, while the learner's decision to enroll does not guarantee success, continued enrollment can lead to attaining the goal. Supporting Aboriginal learners to promote retention and graduation,

honoring Aboriginal ways of knowing, culture and languages, and validating them as learners assist greatly in the fulfillment of their aspirations.

Great efforts are being made to address Aboriginal education with a multi-pronged approach. One of the first objectives is to create understanding of the value of self-identification as an access tool to provide services and programs. Many post-secondary institutions are actively acknowledging the barriers and introducing Aboriginal student support centers which increase Aboriginal presence within the administration, leading to a greater awareness of Aboriginal issues within the institution. Also, a greater number of transition year programs are being created which target the Aboriginal demographic allowing for greater access for Aboriginal learners.

Finding the right voice

Some best practices include: recruit-

ment initiatives such as the Aboriginal Postsecondary Information Program where Aboriginal recruitment officers from many post-secondary institutions are helping promote engagement; assisting Aboriginal learners to gain access while embracing Aboriginal values of a community based approach to education. These same recruitment officers and colleagues are also working collaboratively to increase the presence of learners of Aboriginal descent within the education system.

Demonstrating respect for and having Aboriginal people and values reflected within an educational system will promote participation in the education system. This type of continued progress is needed nation wide.

JARRET LEAMAN

Recruitment and Admissions Representative

York University

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INCREASING CANADIANS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ABORIGINAL MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH



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Aboriginal Education

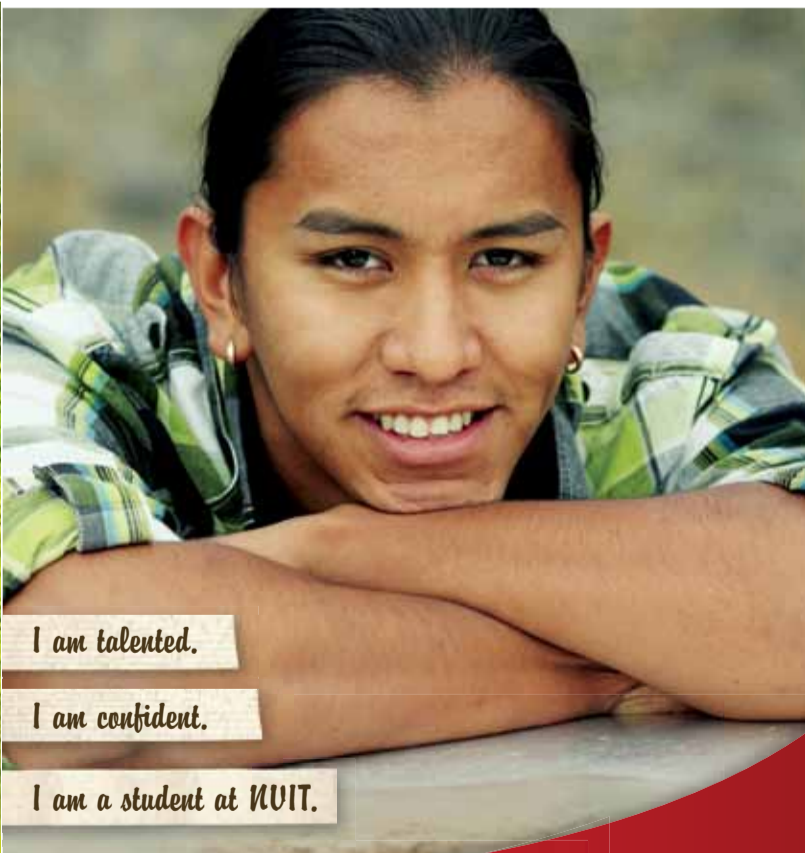
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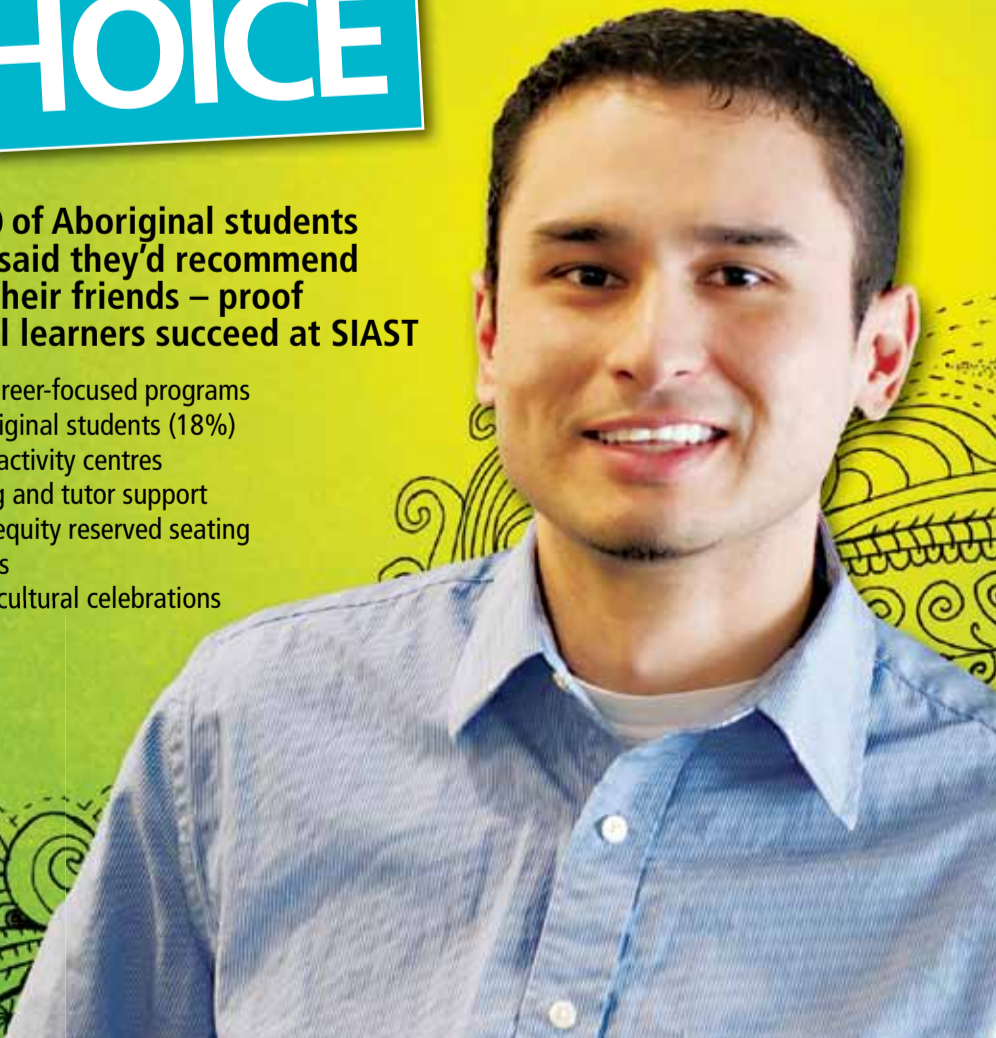
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INSIGHT

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A positive partnership

In May of 2008, a negative situation occurred at a Tim Hortons restaurant in Lethbridge, Alberta.

Improper and disrespectful language was directed at a First Nations community member by a Tim Hortons staff member. Days later, there was a meeting of Chiefs—the Chiefs of the two First Nations communities that were affected and the Chief Executive Officer of Tim Hortons, whose heartfelt apology was accepted. This incident served to galvanize our company and helped us come to the understanding and realization that this “must have happened for a reason.”

Little did we know that what would follow, would be an enlightening journey that would result in the creation of “Horizons”.

The quest to improve relations

Horizons was chosen as the signature name to represent Tim Hortons Aboriginal relationship efforts. It reflects a bright future, new interests and experiences, achievement and a quest with no limits.

The accompanying graphic brings together a number of important elements. Central to the logo is a vibrant drum—the indigenous symbol of communications, ceremony and celebration. Within the drum circle, the bursting sun signifies strength, opportunity and energy of life. Mother Earth is represented by the warm colours of the rich soil.

The three cultural motifs honour First Nations (Eagle feather), Metis (Infinity symbol) and Inuit (Inukshuk) indigenous people.

To provide structure to our guiding principles, we developed an Aboriginal Relations framework that com-



prises four key areas of focus: Education, empowering youth, economic development and employment. Since 2009, we have been developing initiatives in these key strategic areas. Some of these initiatives are just in the beginning stages and others are well under way. Our first priority was to focus on education and empowering youth.

Aboriginal relations training

With the assistance of Millbrook First Nation of Truro Nova Scotia, we developed a comprehensive on-line training program for our restaurant and corporate staff. Over the past two years, more than 120,000 team members have completed this training a two module program that covers workplace diversity and cross-cultural Aboriginal awareness. Topics include: Aboriginal culture, overcoming prejudice, common myths, Aboriginal history, treaties, self-government, residential schools, oral tradition, current culture and recognition of contemporary Aboriginal role models.

Serving aboriginal youth

The Tim Horton Children's Foundation (THCF) has been serving youth since 1974 through various

programs that invite youth, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to attend one of its six camps throughout the year. To date more than 1,500 Aboriginal Youth have attended a THCF camp.

In 2009, we announced a five-year partnership with the Ted Nolan Foundation. Aboriginal youth are chosen to attend a THCF camp where they learn the Seven Grandfather teachings with the support of Elders and community facilitators. This past year, over 150 Aboriginal youth from Garden River and St. Mary's First Nations attend a THCF through this partnership. Ted Nolan is a celebrated former professional hockey player and NHL Coach of the Year. He inspires and motivates hundreds of youth each year with his personal message of hope and determination.

Tim Hortons supports leading organizations that are dedicated to providing positive opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples. We have corporate participation on the following Boards: The Ted Nolan Foundation, The Arctic Children and Youth Foundation and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

NICK JAVOR

SVP Corporate Affairs,
Tim Hortons Inc.
editorial@mediaplanet.com

The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA) of Canada—building capacity in Aboriginal management and governance

The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA) of Canada builds strong, successful Aboriginal communities and organizations. Its mandate is to help Aboriginals manage and govern their communities and organizations through a focus on enhancing finance, management and governance practices. Its premise is that effective management is key to building social and economic prosperity and essential to Aboriginal self-government. Established in 1999, AFOA is a non-political, non-profit organization, governed by a Board of Directors with over 1,500 members and 8 chapters across the country, and a national reputation for quality and excellence.

Many communities have travelled far on the path to self-government and building their economies. They have developed strong financial systems and accountability frameworks. They are building infrastructure and enhancing programs and services. They are engaging in long-term planning and improving relationships between management and elected leaders. And, they are doing this in the face of significant challenges.

AFOA Canada is proud to have contributed to this success through its growing portfolio of respected products and services including a robust membership program, the Certified Aboriginal Financial Management (CAFM) educational program, the new Certified Aboriginal Public Administrator (CAPA) program, a National Conference that draws over 1,000 Aboriginal professionals, the development and delivery of capacity development workshops, courses and resources, publication



of JAM: The Journal of Aboriginal Management, Awards programs to recognize leadership, financial literacy initiatives, and programs aimed at encouraging Aboriginal youth to enter into the finance and management professions.

The most significant challenge that Aboriginal communities now face is the lack of trained Aboriginal financial and management professionals – people that can form the nucleus of our government's public service – people that can take advantage of the increasing opportunities for wealth creation and private sector partnerships – people that can lead the corporations and industries that will fuel our economy.

AFOA Canada is meeting that challenge by working to build a cadre of dedicated Aboriginal professionals who will be instrumental in bringing prosperity to our communities.

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NEWS

Bridging the gap to self-sufficiency

With First Nations winning numerous court cases affirming their rights under the constitution, and negotiating and concluding favourable settlements, a significant transfer of wealth from Government to First Nations has begun.

Presently, the technical expertise and capacity within First Nations to deal with the complexities arising out of these new realities of managing wealth is still seriously lacking in most communities. Building the internal capacity to bridge this gap is critical to the successful transition from dependency to self-government and self-sufficiency.

Lisa Ethans, Practice Leader, Aboriginal Client Services at Deloitte, one of Canada's leading professional services firms, understands this gap and is working to fill it in the financial services field. "At Deloitte, we've traditionally delivered services including audit, tax, financial advisory, and accounting to Aboriginal clients for over 25 years. However, over the past decade, Deloitte has tailored their services to include Treaty Negotiation support, Structuring and Negotiations support for Impact Benefit Agreements, Real Estate Advisory services and Trust Advisory services. And, we continue to tailor them to meet the changing realities and responsibilities facing First Nations. We try to deliver our services in a way that helps build the capacity of our First Nations clients because continuing to deploy external

consultants alone is not enough."

"Deloitte has also begun to develop programs to encourage Aboriginal students to take up these financial disciplines because few Aboriginal people are trained as Chartered Accountants or Certified General Accountants."

Wendy Grant-John, a councilor for the Musqueam Indian Band, with a 30 year career focused on the cultural, economic, social and political development of Aboriginal and First Nations peoples in Canada, agrees. She joined Deloitte as Senior Advisor to the Aboriginal Client Services Practice with a plan. Her goal is to ensure that Aboriginal communities have the capacity and skills they need to manage their own affairs and secure their own future.

"Deloitte's talented team and varied services are critical attributes that drew me to the firm." Whether it is wealth management, business development, governance, or administration, Grant-John sees great potential in harnessing Deloitte's resources to funnel to Aboriginal communities, turning gaps into opportunities. "Self-governance will help strengthen Aboriginal communities, and so will their ability to generate and manage their own financial resources."

Jolain Foster, a member of Gitksan Nation, is a testament to this initiative and recently accepted a position with Deloitte. "Although I have a significant amount of management experience and have worked for First Nations directly in the private and public sector, I also wanted the accounting



OPENING EYES TO CULTURE
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designation and technical expertise in financial advisory," she says. "Deloitte shares my passion in working with First Nations. Like me, they are serious about providing services that are making a difference to First Nations leadership,

communities, organizations, and most importantly, their future."

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Addressing water woes

Question: How can the quality of life and basic health improve in Aboriginal communities?

Answer: The focus on providing clean drinking water has intensified—programs are in place to provide this basic human right.

If there is to be a progressive shift in the fortunes of First Nations communities, improving the overall health of the people living within them through better access to basic services could make a big difference now that there's a majority government.

Between 1995 and 2003, the federal government spent about \$1.9 billion to help First Nation communities provide safe drinking water and wastewater services. Since then, another \$600 million was allocated over a five-year span as part of the First Nations Water Management Strategy.

But even with that cash infusion, there are still over 100 communities with boiling water advisories and 49 water systems currently in high risk, meaning they can't produce safe water that meets provincial standards, says Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

"A recent McGill University study indicated that First Nations suffer from the same infrastructure backlog as Canada's municipalities," Atleo says. "The big difference is that First Nations do not enjoy the benefit of participating in Canada's economy and wealth creation, especially in the resource industry."

H2O hazards

Atleo adds that a National Engineering Assessment on the condition of all First Nations water and wastewater facilities is expected to be released sometime this year. The report will identify problem areas and make recommendations to Ottawa on services

for communities without water and wastewater systems.

Part of what complicates matters is that a "great number" of First Nations communities aren't close to major urban centres, or lie in remote areas accessible only via air routes. "Many communities also don't have the capacity to recover quickly from the devastating effects of climate events like tornados, floods and forest fires, and restore their basic infrastructure needs," he says.

Providing a basic human right

Health Canada, led by Leona Aglukkaq, the first Inuk appointed to the federal cabinet as Minister of Health, seems to have recognized the plight of Aboriginal peoples who have to deal with a lack of basic services, like potable water, that can lead directly to health risks. Her ministry spends about \$2.2 billion annually on First Nations and Inuit health programs and services.

"Health Canada has spent \$135 million to complete the construction

of 40 new health facilities and the expansion and renovation of various health facilities in First Nations communities, including health centres and nursing stations, which will help to improve access to health programs and services," says Leslie Meerburg, Health Canada spokesperson.

The AFN recently announced a First Nations-Canada Joint Action Plan to help communities strengthen their relationship with the government and tackle issues, like health and education, together in a partnership. Education and health are the top priorities, he says.

"A majority government offers new opportunity because the stability of the new parliament will help us advance an agenda for real and meaningful change," Atleo says. "The time is now, and another generation cannot and should not wait."

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Pursuing executive ambitions

A unique employment endeavour has been elevating career opportunities for Aboriginals to executive levels.

This trail-blazing initiative is led by a small Aboriginal executive firm Higgins International Inc., which employs only seven people, that has established itself as a key headhunter in the search for Aboriginal

executives.

"We don't advertise—our business for 12 years has been established through word of mouth," says Higgins founder and firm partner Brenda LaRose.

"I have been in recruiting and search for many years and decided as a Metis woman that there was a need to do Aboriginal Executive Search about 14 years ago," says LaRose, who

worked for a large recruiting firm in Manitoba at the time.

"As I started to bring in business and revenue, they didn't want 'Native people' sitting in their reception area as they said it was bad for business," she says. "So I gave my notice and started my own firm."

Virtually there

The company started out as a virtual endeavour.

"In 1999, competitors told me that we could not operate a virtual search practise," says LaRose.

Today, LaRose notes that although the group has an office space in downtown Winnipeg but "rarely utilizes it as they're always on the road."

"About 85 percent of our business is from outside Manitoba," says LaRose. "We work from the Atlantic region to British Columbia to the north." The firm also has staff in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Cape Breton and Regina.

LaRose points out that Higgins is one of few, if not the only firm that specializes in finding aboriginals roles in corporate governance.

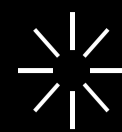
"We are a unique stand alone out in the Canadian scene," says LaRose. "There are no other firms like us... it is important because we are building bridges with mainstream, putting leaders in executive roles that can influence."

LaRose points out that there are about half a dozen Aboriginal professionals on corporate boards and she hopes to play a role in bolstering these numbers. As part of the strategy, Higgins has also involved itself in community support as well.

"Many provinces like Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the north have a high population of Aboriginal people, but we are still not engaged with the businesses at the top levels," says LaRose.

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DON'T MISS!



Catching the opportunity of a lifetime

As recently as a few years ago, Ashley Callingbull faced a shortage of opportunity. She dreamed of a career as an actress and model, but found herself limited by circumstances living in her hometown of Enoch, Alberta.

Just such an opportunity presented itself in the form of the Miss Universe Canada pageant—but raising the thousands of dollars she would need to be a successful contestant was a serious obstacle. A friend suggested she apply to The Dreamcatcher Foundation for help with the expenses. Today she is living her dream and inspiring other young people "to go for it."

"Dreamcatcher saw my potential. It made me the person I am now. I have [had] so many different new experiences, meeting new people, travelling, getting a lot of other opportunities. I wouldn't be here now if it wasn't for them. It gave me a voice," she says.

Granting wishes

For the past six years, The Dreamcatcher Foundation has quietly been handing out grants to about 1500 young aboriginal people who need some help opening life's doors.

Daniel Brant is CEO of the private charity. "A lot of people in the native community have different family structures; socio economic status is different and what we do is just provide opportunity. For example, you may have a family with four kids. They want to play hockey but the parents can't afford to have them all in hockey. So we'll help parents pay for the registration, for instance, so they will become involved and have the opportunity to do something positive."

Blazing the trail

"I wanted to do the pageant to be a role model," Callingbull says. "I was the only native contestant that year so it was something for my sisters to look up to. Actually, for all women in Canada to see where I come from, the lifestyle I used to have, living in poverty, really bad things in my childhood. I wasn't there only for myself. I was there for many reasons."

And her dream came true! Callingbull was named Miss Canada International, representing Canada at pageants all over the world. She has since spent a month in China, competed in Europe, and is planning for Latin America in the fall. "I see the world differently now that I've been able to travel. And I'm so thankful I live in Canada of all places," she says.

A pageant-free summer, however, gives Callingbull the time to film the second season of her TV show, "Blackstone", which airs on Showtime and APTN.

Home-grown pride

Brant and Dreamcatcher are excited to be part of Callingbull's success. "Ashley is a treasure. She is always willing to help when we ask her to do something with kids and is always professional in her approach. She really is a role model," Brant says.

To further celebrate her success, Ashley will receive another award to that effect this month at the foundation's gala fundraiser in Calgary.

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Developing practical industry toolkits for Aboriginal communities

Advocating for government resource revenue sharing and the rapid resolution of land claims

The development of clear, effective engagement guidelines in *e3 Plus: A Framework for Responsible Exploration*

Training and Educational Programs

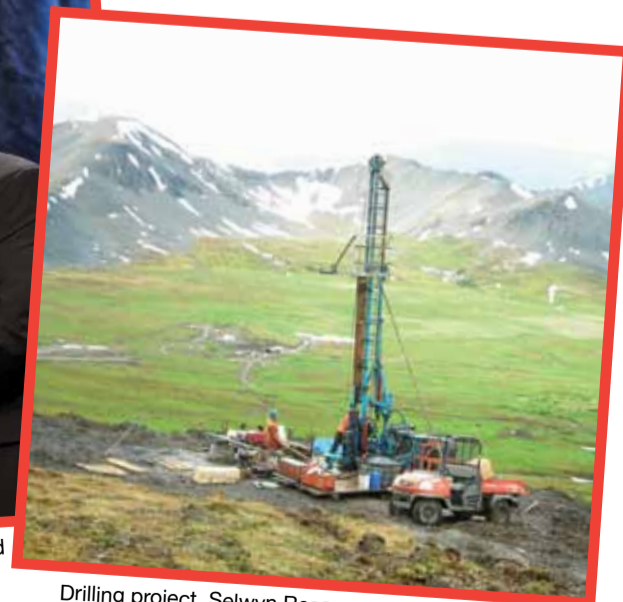
- PDAC Mining Matters – Aboriginal Youth Outreach Program

Aboriginal Program at the PDAC International Convention, Toronto, March 4-7, 2012

- Aboriginal Awareness courses
- Technical session showcasing success stories
- Aboriginal Forum for information sharing & networking
- PDAC Skookum Jim Award for Aboriginal achievement



P. Jerry Asp receiving the 2011 Skookum Jim Award from PDAC 1st Vice President Glenn Nolan



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