



Media Release

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Saskatchewan Employers Look for Help to Recruit and Retain an Aboriginal Workforce

Saskatoon - *Saskatchewan Workforce Connex*, a two-day 'sold out' forum designed to address the province's skilled worker shortage through the advancement of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal workforce, kicks off today at the Delta Bessborough in downtown Saskatoon with over 250 delegates. For the first time, many employers will learn effective Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement strategies and their ability to develop and access Aboriginal talent through First Nation and Métis employment centres across Saskatchewan. The forum will put a specific focus on the advancement of Aboriginal people in trades and apprenticeship.

Saskatchewan's economy is leading the nation in construction growth. Many other sectors of the workforce are enjoying economic prosperity and many are missing opportunities due to the skilled worker shortage. Saskatchewan employers are searching for innovative solutions to the worker shortage. Many are taking aggressive action to recruit workers from beyond the province's borders. Others, like the 90 plus employers attending the forum, are awakening to the competitive advantage of workplace diversity inclusive of Aboriginal people.

"According to Statistics Canada's 2006 numbers, Saskatchewan, with a 14.9 per cent Aboriginal population, is experiencing one of the highest Aboriginal baby booms across Canada", said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC). "Between 1996 and 2006, Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population grew by 28 per cent, compared to a decrease of six per cent in its non-Aboriginal population within the same time period."

Aboriginal people are Saskatchewan's youngest and fastest growing human resource. The average median age in Canada for Aboriginal Canadians is 27, considerably lower than the average median age of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population at 40. This young upwardly mobile labour force wants and needs workplace opportunities for training, skills development and employment.

"Employers need help to create workplaces that are inclusive of Aboriginal people in order to financially benefit from the successful recruitment, retention and advancement of this workforce. AHRC, through the *Workforce Connex* forum series and its other products and services, is helping employers build inclusive workplaces that attract Aboriginal talent", said Lendsay.

Workforce Connex is a national forum series hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Council in cooperation with the Saskatchewan advisory committee (Government of Saskatchewan, Government of Canada, Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Métis Nation Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Youth Arts Programming, Saskatchewan Associate Rehabilitation Centres, First Nations University of Canada, Areva Resources of Canada, Saskatchewan Indian Training Assessment Group, Saskatchewan Mining Association, Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Saskatchewan Economic Development Association, Industry Education Council, Mosaic Potash, University of Saskatchewan, First Nations Inuit Health).

Saskatchewan Workforce Connex is the 10th forum held in the series administered by AHRC and funded through the Sector Council Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The Saskatchewan forum is also supported by Service Canada, Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations, Office of the Treaty Commissioner and Health Canada.

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