

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ATTENTION: BUSINESS EDITORS

DIVERSITY LEADERS CALL FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND HOPE FOR INCREASED ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT IN 2007

Ottawa – A premiere national *Think Tank: Influencing Aboriginal Labour Market Strategies: Increasing Returns and Productivity*, held in Ottawa on December 13, 2006, involving Canada's leaders in Aboriginal diversity (business, government and Aboriginal community), identified three key labour market strategies for 2007. These strategies; *business investment, efficient access to the Aboriginal workforce and inclusive schools/workplaces*, will capitalize on the employment opportunities now available across Canada due to the skilled worker shortage.

"Business leaders across Canada need to awaken to the competitive and socio-economic advantage of building a strong Aboriginal workforce by investing in our nation's Aboriginal human capital," said James (Jim) E. Carter, President and COO, Syncrude Canada Ltd. "The time has come for the private sector to do their part to help right the wrongs of the past and take a leadership role in the creation of sustainable economic opportunities inclusive of Aboriginal people. Labour market initiatives need to encompass a holistic approach that invests in Aboriginal education, business development and communities, not as a charity, but as a vote of confidence in the abilities of the Aboriginal people who have a stake in the business and its future enterprise."

Many Aboriginal people contribute value to the Canadian economy each day. Many more are job ready, waiting for an opportunity. "More needs to be done to address the staggering unemployment rate of Canada's Aboriginal population to mobilize our nation's youngest and fastest growing workforce," said Joe Norton, former Kahnawá:ke Grand Chief and Vice-President of Mohawk Internet Technologies. "Aboriginal people need the collective help of business, government, and elders to address the systemic issues impeding their ability to obtain the independent and self-fulfilling life so many Canadians take for granted each day. Aboriginal people need school/workplace mentors and opportunities to help them build confidence to pursue the hope of a better and more independent life, said Norton."

"Successful Aboriginal workforce strategies are those which focus on the realities of the Aboriginal world and are also responsive to industry needs," said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC). According to a recent report released by the Conference Board of Canada, 42 per cent of Canadian businesses do not have a diversity plan. Unemployment rates in the Aboriginal community are high, yet Canada is experiencing skilled shortages. "The reality is that a tremendous effort is required to overcome some enormous socio-economic gaps. Productivity gains can be measured by achieving socio-economic targets," said Lendsay.

AHRDCC is developing tools that will help employers and training institutions write a 'prescription of hope' for successful Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement solutions that focus on cultural understanding, education/training and workplace engagement relocation issues.

Visit <http://www.ahrdcc.com/media/backgrounders.htm> to read the December 13, 2006 discussion paper; *Aboriginal Labour Market Strategies: Increasing Return and Productivity* and the resulting backgrounder, *Critical Aboriginal Labour Market Strategies 2007*.

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Contact:
Peggy Berndt
Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada
tf -1.866.711.5091 -- c-780.720.1118
e -peggy.berndt@ahrdcc.com -- w-www.ahrdcc.com

AHRDCC is a private-public partnership that connects Aboriginal organizations and employers to partnerships and solutions that accelerate the recruitment, retention and advancement of Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market.

Canada's leading innovators in Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement.