

# News Release



ABORIGINAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF CANADA  
CONSEIL POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES RESSOURCES HUMAINES AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 2006

## PRIVATE SECTOR AND ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEET TO RESOLVE LABRADOR'S SKILLED WORKER SHORTAGE

**Happy Valley Goose Bay, Labrador** – An innovative Labrador forum, *Workforce Connex*, is being hosted today at the Aurora Hotel to help resolve barriers and create opportunities that will open the potential for the private sector to effectively train, recruit and retain an untapped Aboriginal workforce. Delegates will review the Labrador and region workforce supply and demand issues and determine how the talent of Aboriginal people can be effectively accessed to develop a skilled and consistent supply of workers to support the ongoing needs of sectors such as mining, construction, tourism and forestry. Participants will represent the private sector, Aboriginal employment centres and government.

Through open dialogue built on mutual respect and understanding, the forum will increase and strengthen private sector/Aboriginal employment centre partnerships. The partnerships formed will ultimately translate into basic and advanced training and job opportunities for Aboriginal people in Labrador. At this forum, steps will be taken to secure a homegrown Labrador workforce that will address the ongoing human resource needs of local business and industry.

“Employers are searching for ground-breaking solutions to address the migration of skilled workers, said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada. “Aboriginal people are the nation’s fastest growing and largely untapped human resource, ready and willing to obtain training and jobs that contribute to a skilled and local workforce.”

From 1996 to 2001, the Canadian working age population grew by five per cent, while over the same period; the Aboriginal labour force grew by 25 per cent. This young upwardly mobile labour force needs workplace opportunities for training, skills development and employment. Awakening companies to this opportunity is a goal for *Workforce Connex*.

Employers that attend the *Labrador Workforce Connex* forum are innovative thinkers motivated to develop an Aboriginal presence in their workforce. This, according to a survey conducted by the Canada Labour and Business Centre, is not the standard for Canadian business. The survey found that Canadian business and labour leaders do not consider the hiring of Aboriginal people an important solution to help solve their skill needs; only 13 per cent of business leaders and 21 per cent of labour leaders rated this activity very important. “This finding suggests that on a national scale, a disconnect exists between the potential skills contribution made by the Aboriginal workforce and the view held by some business and labour leaders on this contribution. This is the reason for *Workforce Connex*,” said Lendsay.

*Workforce Connex* is a national forum series that will be hosted in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Labrador. The outcomes of the Labrador forum will be integrated into a national private sector/Aboriginal partnership strategy. The Labrador forum is hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada in cooperation with the Labrador regional planning committee (Labrador Métis Nation, Innu Nation, Inuit Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement holders, Iron Ore Company of Canada, Voisey’s Bay Nickel Company, College of North Atlantic, Memorial University, Newfoundland, Service Canada and the Government of Labrador Aboriginal Affairs, Labrador Human Resources and Labour and Employment). The project is funded by the Sector Council Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

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The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada is a national not-for-profit organization funded by the private and public sectors to create links between Canada’s employers and the Aboriginal community. The council provides leadership on supply and demand issues that address the development of effective training, recruitment and retention strategies for Aboriginal people.