



Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and a council governance champion, delivered an inspirational keynote address at the 2008 National Aboriginal Human Resource Conference in Montreal. Simon's vision of hope touched the hearts of her audience, challenging all of us to make a greater investment in our northern communities.

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CREATING CONNECTIONS, CELEBRATING COMMITMENTS

The Aboriginal Human Resource Council is proud to facilitate a growing dialogue between the companies we work with and the communities we serve. In this issue of the *National Report on Aboriginal Inclusion*, we look at exciting corporate initiatives that are opening up opportunities for Aboriginal participation in the Canadian economy:

- NorTerra is breaking new ground using hockey player Jordin Tootoo to inspire Inuit youth to follow their dreams.
- Innovative movie-making camps are bringing a slice of Hollywood to kids in Nain, Labrador and Inuvialuit, Nunavut.
- Canadian North expands its commitment to inclusion by making Christy Sinclair the first Inuit Vice President and breaking new ground in the north.
- With affordable housing a barrier to retaining workers, what's a small company like Smook Brothers Construction to do, buy their own apartment building? Exactly.
- With low high school completion and difficulty drawing the best teachers to reserves, Sunchild E-Learning uses technology and virtual teachers to make the grade.

A MESSAGE FROM KELLY LENSAY, PRESIDENT & CEO



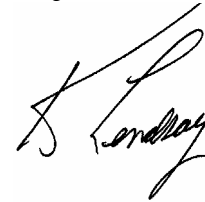
We've all heard the clichés about “change” being the only constant. In our personal lives, in our professional practices, the world around us is constantly shifting. Adaptation is one of the truly remarkable human characteristics, allowing people and organizations alike to grow, to develop, to evolve.

Change can be transformational, breathing new life into organizations to stimulate new ways of thinking and working. This is the kind of change represented in the council's landmark series *Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion*. This is the kind of change that Canadian companies have been waiting for, working towards, and are now ready to embrace as a new paradigm in human resource management.

There can be no doubt that Canada's Aboriginal Peoples have experienced a long history of social and legislated exclusion. From early policies that isolated communities to the multi-generational scars of the residential school system, Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples have faced countless barriers to education and employment. At the Aboriginal Human Resource Council we are proud to say that things are beginning to change.

Working in a broad, research-based partnership with 29 of Canada's top employers of Aboriginal talent, we've developed a revolutionary series of products that gives employers real, proven strategies to transform their work cultures, embrace diversity, and improve their bottom line. This is more than just solid corporate social responsibility; through the development of the Inclusion Continuum we help demonstrate the business case for inclusion and the new ROI (Return on Inclusion). Creating a foundation that respects diversity, recognizes the distinct cultural strengths of Aboriginal people, and works to forge connections with the booming Aboriginal workforce pays incredible dividends, both now and for future generations.

I hope you will explore the links below and take advantage of our convenient e-commerce system to purchase the self-study modules or register for a local workshop. Together, through a partnership of change, we will transform the Canadian economy and celebrate the diversity that makes Canada strong.



MASTERING ABORIGINAL INCLUSION



Discover this landmark series of five modules and a two-day workshop that builds the business case and develops HR strategies for Aboriginal inclusion. Based on research from Canada's most successful corporations, *Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion* gives you proven tools to:

- Solve skills shortages, build local capacity and grow a workplace of diversity
- Attract Canada's youngest, fastest growing and untapped workforce
- Build strong relationships and discover business opportunities in Aboriginal communities
- Advance your Corporate Social Responsibility while becoming a workplace of choice for Aboriginal talent.

Register today for a workshop near you:

September 9-10	Vancouver
September 23-24	Halifax
October 1-2	Winnipeg
October 22-23	Toronto
November 4-5	Edmonton
November 12-13	Saskatoon
November 25-26	Moncton
December 1-2	Calgary

Get the full story and purchase self-study print modules online at aboriginalhr.ca

Gatorade does it to sell drinks. Nike does it to sell shoes. But when NorTerra does it, the product is something different – Hope.

In April 2008, the Nashville Predators’ Jordin Tootoo scored the first postseason goal of his NHL career, and in the next game he scored his second. There were cheers in Inuit homes from Inuvik to Nain, not to mention in the head office of an investment and management company in Edmonton called NorTerra Inc.

Tootoo is a hero across the North, becoming the first Inuk ever to play in the NHL when he stepped onto the ice on October 9, 2003 wearing a Nashville Predators uniform. Just eight months earlier, Tootoo, while still with the WHL’s Brandon Wheat Kings, had signed on to be a spokesperson for NorTerra, joining the swollen ranks of famous athletes representing corporate interests.

But the interests here have a higher purpose. And Carmen Loberg, President of NorTerra Inc., says Jordin’s impact in the North over the last five years has been extraordinary.

“I’ve just been astonished at the level of connection that Jordin makes in his tours...what I wanted was to connect his success as an Inuk from a remote community to our broader public in the north, where we could help convey a message to kids in schools that here’s a young man who had a dream; he grew up in Rankin Inlet, and he managed to get from skating in a rink in Rankin Inlet to playing in the National Hockey League. And he did it by clean living and hard work.”

NorTerra is owned equally by the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic and the Inuit of Nunavut and its team of companies includes Canadian North Airline and Northern Transportation Company Limited, the country’s largest tug and barge operator. As an Inuit-owned company, NorTerra’s mandate is not only to produce profits, but to create jobs in the northern communities it serves.

“We believe that there are many more opportunities out there... but they’re not visible to a kid in Kugaaruk or Pond Inlet or Sachs Harbour... Jordin’s profile as an athlete raises peoples’ awareness of not only what he’s achieved but of all the things that are out there for kids to aspire to.”

It’s hard to miss seeing an image of Jordin Tootoo in the Arctic; he’s quite literally become the ‘poster boy’ for the North. Tootoo’s handsome face appears everywhere from Canadian North’s in-flight magazine to the government-sponsored posters which are plastered on the walls of schools, government offices, businesses and community centres across the North.

When he isn’t banging bodies in Nashville, Tootoo can be seen in the flesh, as he dedicates 12 days each off-season to travel across the Arctic with NorTerra officials to visit communities, local leaders and particularly schools.

“We spend a day in the community,” Wanda Norwegian, Director of Human Resources and Career Development says of a typical visit. “He talks about our companies, our ownership, stay in school, and just follow your dreams. He talks about some of his challenges in reaching where he is, his successes, really bringing it back to who he is, the culture, and the opportunities that are out there... the turnout is unbelievable. Practically everybody in the community comes out to see and hear Jordin.”

A couple of years ago, NorTerra brought Tootoo to Kiiliniik High School in Cambridge Bay. Ben O’Hara, a teacher and hockey coach at the school, says Tootoo has become a folk hero. “You’ll see kids with Nashville Predators hats on and stuff. What do kids in Nunavut and Cambridge Bay know about Nashville, Tennessee? It’s a world apart...you hear in the morning around the lockers that Jordin Tootoo scored a goal last night... for a population of kids that don’t have a lot to hold onto, it is a huge thing.”

Tootoo is small for the NHL, at 5’9” and 194 pounds, but the 25-year old right winger has earned his nickname ‘Tootoo train’ with his intense play and bruising hits. For all his aggression on the ice, it’s been Tootoo’s leadership skills that have impressed NorTerra the most. “Originally, when Jordin travelled through the communities, it was always about the hockey hero being in town who was Inuit,” Loberg says. “And each year, the story becomes more about opportunity and vision and dreams and successes, and less about hockey. He’s now become remarkably capable of talking about what life opportunities there are for people in the communities...about what they need to do in school, how they can start planning their career, where they can job shadow a prospect. He’s got a much broader perspective for a young man,” says Wanda.

In hockey it’s easy to count goals and assists but how does NorTerra measure Jordin Tootoo’s success as its spokesperson? NorTerra isn’t keeping score, but ultimately, says Loberg, the true measure of success will be when more Inuit and Inuvialuit kids graduate from high school, learn trades, further their education and start building the career of their dreams. Perhaps, in part, because they were once inspired by a famous Inuk hockey player who gave them hope. Chalk up another assist for Jordin Tootoo.



Jordin Tootoo is a hockey player...



a role model to youth...



and a living example of the success that comes with hard work and dedication.



Many youth in Nain, Labrador, were thrilled with the opportunity to work freely with video, sound, lighting and editing technology. This group of girls used these skills to make their own movie short. Photo Credit: Actua

Actua and Nortel's partnership delivers opportunity

Storytelling has always been an important aspect of Aboriginal cultures and what better way to tell a story than through the medium of film – except that, today, modern film has been replaced by the simplicity of digital movie-making where everyone can become a director.

“All teens love movies, so what better way of engaging them?” says Jennifer Flanagan, CEO of Actua, a national charitable organization dedicated to providing young Canadians with positive, hands-on learning experiences in science, technology and engineering.

“The technology of digital movie making, in itself, is a huge attraction.”

In 2007, Actua, who partnered with NorTel to pilot the movie-making summer camps, reached 13,000 Aboriginal youth in 75 communities across Canada through its national Aboriginal outreach program.

NorTel's contribution included training and equipment while Actua offered its extensive outreach resources which included 'dream teams' made up of instructors and role models from across Canada.

“We send these teams to remote or rural locations, typically to under-served youth with the goal of building literacy skills,” says Flanagan, “We want to encourage students to stay in school and to build confidence, especially in regards to science and technology.” Ultimately, Flanagan says, confidence in those areas will lead to capacity building in Aboriginal communities as a whole.

The new movie-making camps are the latest example of an innovative Aboriginal outreach model that is behind a number of sustainable education partnerships Actua and Nortel have developed in recent years.

“We work with local representatives to customize the content and, as a result, there are some communities that have been with us for more than 10 years,” Flanagan says.

In those cases, youth, who originally participated and are now too old, have returned as instructors to carry on the outreach effort.

Actua's movie-making camps are primarily aimed at ages 9-16 and take place over a one-week period during the summer. Classes focus on a number of elements including:

- Story boarding
- Script development
- Camera use
- Music score development
- Exposure to all aspects of movie making

The youth participants worked collaboratively in teams, led and mentored by young, energetic undergraduate students in science and technology, who were trained by Nortel LearnIT.

Throughout the week, students develop and utilize team, communication and technology skills to express themselves creatively which encourages many of these young Aboriginal Canadians to explore and document locally relevant cultural traditions and stories.

Actua selected three Aboriginal communities that had never before experienced this type of programming opportunity for youth.

Camp Highlights

At the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Moshi Kotierk, an Inuit geneticist from Igloodik, talked about his life growing up in the Arctic and also demonstrated the extraction of DNA from a strawberry, which the campers filmed. Multiple film crew groups took turns interviewing Moshi on film – asking questions ranging from “what's it like being a biologist” to “have you ever gotten frost bite?” After Moshi left, campers worked together to edit their footage into a mini-documentary on Moshi, a positive Aboriginal role model.

On another day at Odawa, a group of dancers/drummers from Sandy Lake First Nation came in to do a presentation. Ida Meekis, an Ojibway-Cree woman, began by talking about the regalia she wore and about the dances they would be performing. Then, Ida and two other dancers performed several traditional dances while students filmed. At the end of the dancing,

the dancers and drummers were seated and participated in talk-show style interviews where campers took turns asking questions about dance competitions, regalia, and favourite songs.

Two Inuit throat singers, Becky Kilabuk and Emily Karpik visited the Iqaluit camp to perform and were then interviewed by campers. They were asked questions like “what's it like to be a throat singer,” “do you get to travel” and “why have you chosen to stay in Iqaluit?”

The Nain camp was run in conjunction with a youth drop-in program at the community centre which provided a unique opportunity for Nain youth to participate in a technology program in a supportive, educational setting, and in the presence of great role models. Programming for youth above 13 years of age is significantly lacking in Nain and this camp was seen as extremely beneficial.

The three pilot locations were:

- Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Ottawa
- Nunavut Arctic College, Iqaluit, Nunavut
- Nain Community Center, Nain, Labrador

Camp Overview

Each camp week began with students working on short filming and editing projects. Nortel LearnIT videos, on topics such as cameras, lighting, rule of thirds, production sound, editing basics, intro to Windows movie maker and Jump 5 were used to demonstrate these techniques. This helped provide the basic skills that students would need for the production of their main movie project.

Throughout the week, camp participants learned about the variety of careers involved in movie making as they each took turns carrying out the roles of director, camera operator, interviewer, lighting technician, sound technician and grip.

To provide students the opportunity to practice their interviewing, filming and editing skills, Actua invited special guests to do mentor presentations that the campers could film. Guest presentations in each of the communities were followed by interview sessions where students prepared a list of interview questions and filmed an interview in the style of a talk show or documentary film.

Feedback and Impact

Once the student movies were finished, a screening took place, complete with popcorn and the famous “red carpet” star treatment. As awards for Best Director, Best Video Editor and Best Costume Design were presented, students took a bow after showcasing their documentaries – an experience that allowed each participant to taste the celebrity lifestyle and gain an interest in science and technology at the same time.

Feedback from campers and parents on the camps was overwhelmingly positive with many parents reporting that they had never seen their children so engaged and committed to a program – especially during the summer when they can be easily distracted by other things.

Parents in Iqaluit expressed their appreciation for the opportunity for their sons and daughters to express themselves in a healthy and supportive environment

and to learn new skills which instilled in them a sense of confidence and pride. Many parents commented that this camp was a unique and highly beneficial experience in which Iqaluit youth would never otherwise have the opportunity to participate.

By connecting Aboriginal youth to the science and technology of their everyday lives, Actua programs spark an interest and curiosity amongst participants for a variety of science fields that is not just limited to movie-making. Actua’s community-based approach also exposes youth to Aboriginal role models, demonstrating how traditional knowledge can play a significant role in the study of science.

This approach is helping to address the critical need to engage Aboriginal Canadians in the science fields, both to ensure future prosperity within Aboriginal communities and to contribute to the creation of a diverse and strong Canadian workforce.

Actua’s national Aboriginal outreach program is a success story that continues to grow, catalyzed by the investment of resources from new supporters. Thanks to these partnership efforts, each year, more Aboriginal youth are exposed to the limitless future possibilities that await them.

The new movie-making camps are the latest example of an innovative Aboriginal outreach model that is behind a number of sustainable education partnerships Actua and Nortel have developed in recent years.



Youth from Nain, Labrador, participated in a week-long movie making camp in their community. In this photo, participants are capturing action shots outdoors. Photo Credit: Actua



The graduating class of 2006 share a group moment to reflect on their accomplishment.



2005 graduates were treated to a dance performance by Chase Gladeau.

Distance delivery program brings teaching excellence to remote communities

When Martin Sacher realized that he wouldn't be able to get teachers to travel to native reserves, he decided to do one better – he would bring the best instructors to those students using the latest in technology.

With more than 20 years experience as a high school administrator, Sacher has a passion for education. After a career spent in the public school system, he decided to begin a new chapter, helping to increase the number of graduates from reservations.

“The challenge was how to bring the best to the reserves... it was difficult to get people to come out,” says Sacher, now CEO of the Alberta-based Sunchild E-Learning Community.

“Most Aboriginal people lack the educational opportunities that others have and, to partake in the world economy, they have to be provided those same equitable opportunities,” he says.

Eight years after its first on-line session opened, Sacher's innovative program has been featured in Time magazine and won accolades from other educators. The Sunchild E-Learning Community program has also grown and expanded to include grades 7-12, post-secondary options and trades preparation.

Today, Sacher can proudly claim that 50 per cent of all Alberta reserve graduates have come through his program. With e-learning classrooms scattered across the province, the program has created some staggering statistics – in the past five years, 69 individuals have graduated, compared to only seven individuals for the previous 40 years.

“Aboriginal students need education to be job-ready but they usually lack basic literacy skills...and colleges don't address this deficiency,” explains Sacher.

As well, other barriers such as the inability to move to a campus location, lack of transportation or life skill hurdles prevent many from pursuing educational options.

Today, most of the Sunchild E-Learning Community students are adult learners, with an average age of 21-22 years old but, as Sacher notes, there are individuals enrolled from ages 13-60.

The program is support-heavy with mentors, support workers and educators who, typically, go far beyond the role of educator in helping their students overcome personal and academic issues.

Aboriginal Elders have also recognized the value of this program, giving their full support with the caveat of “do it, share it but don't leave them.”

“Sometimes, the burden is heavy because this is the only education they may get,” says Sacher, “But we understand that Aboriginal workers are a huge component to building the Alberta workforce.”

“Western economies talk about building capacity...well, this is the human resources solution.”

Program Delivery

The Sunchild e-learning program differs from conventional distance learning programs in that it creates accountability and interaction between student and teacher. Students are expected to be logged into their computer during class times and can speak with the teacher at any time through text messaging or a microphone. In most cases, students work from a classroom environment where a “key teacher” addresses technical concerns and ensures student participation.

Experienced instructors with a passion for teaching First Nations students head the online classes, providing a level of education that is the same or better as in urban schools. Program flexibility is a critical element to help students overcome issues:

- Students who miss class time or change residences can easily catch up by reviewing archived classes.
- Students can work at a comfortable pace.
- Achievement is tracked on a weekly basis so that intervention and support can be provided as soon as it becomes necessary.

In record numbers, Aboriginal students are re-entering the school system and staying in school. By gaining valuable essential skills and experience with computers, they are graduating and moving on to rewarding jobs or post-secondary education. Graduates of the Sunchild E-Learning Community are educated and competent – the kind of employees who make corporations successful. A number of companies have chosen to partner in this program, knowing that, in this way, they are investing in their own future.

History of the Sunchild Initiative

Typically, Canadian Aboriginal people have a lower high school completion rate (compared to non-Aboriginals) which leads to unemployment, poverty and unrealized potential in Canada's fastest-growing demographic.

In 1999, members of the Sunchild First Nation in Alberta considered the lack of education in their community and decided alternative methods were needed to reach aboriginal students. They discovered that:

- Aboriginal students faced unique challenges including family and legal situations, time away from class and relocating to new homes.
- Many aboriginal students were adults. These students wanted to upgrade and build a better future while still meeting their current schedules and responsibilities.

In light of these considerations, any successful education program would have to overcome these challenges with a new way of teaching. In addition, high quality programs and experienced teachers would have to be brought to small numbers of students in remote locations – without exceeding limited education budgets.

To meet these challenges, the Sunchild E-Learning model was adopted as a solution.

“

After attending actual classes for thirteen years and still not receiving my diploma, I began to acknowledge that my talents were not in anything but hard labour. This gave a bleak outlook on the future, leaving me believing nothing more but sore, tired nights and long, hard days were in store for me. When entering the cyber school program, I noticed an immediate difference in my attitude towards learning and my mind opened up. I have reinvented myself into believing I do have what it takes to be a success. My first step to my attempt in making a mark in life is the completion of my bachelors in business. The doors only open from there. My graduation signals a new beginning in a story, which has yet to unfold.

”

– Trevor Roasting, Louis Bull

“

I wasn't going to school regularly, because I didn't like going to classes where I was alone and didn't know anyone. This program was great for me because I thought I wasn't going to finish school until I joined and now I have my grade 12 as of June 2006, and I am planning on going to college in Vancouver for bigger and better opportunities. This program helped me accomplish one of my goals in life.

”

– Shilla Hobbs, Fort McKay

“

I am so proud to be writing to you. It has been hard work for me to finish high school in Fort McKay... This (Sunchild) is where I developed my skills and found out what I wanted to do after I finish school. I also want to thank the school for encouraging me to go to college and experience life to the fullest and not to be afraid of the world, to try and understand that there's more out there than Fort McKay. Through this school, I found myself making the right choices and those choices have taken me this far.

”

– Blair Faichney, Fort McKay



Sunchild's innovative model combines excellence in teaching with the social and cultural supports that help students thrive.

HR CONFERENCE RAISES THE ROOF IN MONTREAL



Advancing Aboriginal Inclusion



Networking is the heart of any conference. Over 300 delegates from across Canada represented the ranks of educators, employment counselors, HR practitioners and diversity professionals that gathered at Montreal's beautiful Delta CentreVille Hotel.

As the Montreal Canadiens closed out their playoff series against the rival Bruins a few blocks away, delegates from across the country began to arrive at the Delta Centre-Ville in downtown Montreal. The excitement in the streets carried over to the conference hall, where 250 human resources professionals, Aboriginal career development experts, educators and council partners explored the latest practices in Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement.

Kahnawake Elder Billy Two Rivers opened the conference with the warm humour that served him so well over a long career as a professional wrestler and politician. Mary Simon, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami then took the stage and offered a poignant glimpse at what's happening in Inuit communities. Her wisdom and leadership moved the audience as she spoke with passion about the monumental challenges they face balanced by the incredible optimism and hope for the next generation.



Aboriginal Music Award winner Melissa Pash delighted the banquet with her soulful music. Melissa has since blessed the council with a song she wrote, produced and recorded, lending her melodic voice to our presentation 'Reason to Believe.'

As the conference broke into concurrent sessions and panels we learned how Safeway partners with the ACCESS Aboriginal Employment Centre in Vancouver to train for customer service jobs and how the Métis Nation sponsors an employee bus to take participants to worksites for job shadowing. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways shared their practice of replacing rapidly retiring workers with Aboriginal heavy duty mechanic apprentices. They created a diversity/competency matrix for all managers and supervisors that focused on people's abilities, rather than their differences, resulting in an 80 per cent retention rate. We discovered how the Commission de la construction du Quebec supports Cree apprentices in the James Bay area to reach journeyman's status by breaking down language barriers and helping with exam preparation.

In a session about human resource development on reserve we learned the power of one person with a vision and how they can motivate entire communities to change. As Michael Sadler said, "Our most valuable resource isn't ore or timber or oil, it's our people." Resources and people were also front and centre as Vale Inco outlined the Impact and Benefit Agreement that helped establish a positive relationship at the Voisey's Bay mine. We heard how hiring teams performed skills assessments, career counseling and on-site training with an approach based on mutual respect, co-operation and good faith, creating a win-win situation for the company and the community.

Everywhere we looked were solutions and everywhere we walked were new friends with new ideas. Just as the intensity of the conference peaked, keynote Frank O'Dea took to the stage to share his philosophy of "Hope, Vision, Action." Having transformed himself from a homeless panhandler to a corporate executive, Frank has used his entrepreneurial drive to improve conditions for children around the world through Street Kids International, War Child Canada and the Canadian Landmine Foundation.

“

This conference is an amazing event that brings a wealth of knowledge to a variety of organizations. I highly recommend these seminars to all people who are involved with the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal persons.

”

– Gemma Riche
Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation

INCLUSION WORKS '09 – Aboriginal HR Solutions ○ ○ ○ ○

April 6–8, 2009
Sheraton Wall Centre, Vancouver, BC

Get involved in Canada's premiere Aboriginal recruitment fair, trade show and professional development event

Brilliant strategies to advance your organization along the council's Inclusion Continuum
Bolder solutions to help you recruit, retain and advance the Aboriginal workforce
Better networks to connect with colleagues and discover new resources...

Human resource professionals trust the Aboriginal Human Resource Council to bring the best and brightest minds together for cutting edge professional development.

Due to overwhelming demand, we will now host 1,000 participants at our new signature annual event; adding renowned keynote speakers, expanded networking, a recruitment fair, tradeshow opportunities, and the best in Aboriginal entertainment.

We're flying in 200 of the best and brightest Aboriginal, post-secondary graduates from across the country, offering 100 national employers an unprecedented opportunity to interview and hire these future leaders.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with your colleagues, discover exciting new practices and recruit many of Canada's top Aboriginal graduates.

To find out how you can take advantage of the sponsorship, recruitment fair, trade show and professional development opportunities this event offers visit aboriginalhr.ca.

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aboriginalhr.ca

“

The simplest change can make such a huge difference – I learned so much at this conference that will benefit the company I work for (Thank you) in regards to Aboriginal inclusion.

”

– Angela Merasty, Cameco Corporation

“

The national conference provides opportunities to hear not only the challenges faced but more importantly, the successes. My principal take away from the conference is the affirmation that the work being done, even if in isolation, is linked by shared visions and goals.

”

– Anonymous



President and CEO Kelly Lendsay raises the stakes at the silent art auction, where many Aboriginal artists donated work to raise funds for the council's new charitable foundation.



With 18 concurrent workshops, three panel presentations and two inspiring keynote speakers, the 2008 conference engaged learners with new ideas and promising practices.



Even the most serious people need to cut loose once in awhile. As rapper Red Suga took the stage, spontaneous acts of dancing broke out around the room.



Christy Sinclair, Inuk Vice President

Canadian North's first Inuk Vice President wants business done 'the Northern way' as it expands community air service across the Arctic.

Picture this... five company executives have just finished a presentation to the residents of a small Arctic community. They walk back to their hotel down the middle of the road because that's what you do in the North. All five of them are Inuit. One, Christy Sinclair, is the new Vice President of Canadian North Airlines. "Each one of us was carrying a laptop bag and we all had a cell phone in our pocket and we were dressed corporately, we had a logo on everything. And we just started laughing and said: 'What have we turned into? What do you think our grandparents would say?' It was funny...times are changing."

Sinclair is an example of that change, the new face of success that many Aboriginal people are enjoying in business throughout the North. The same can be said of Canadian North airlines and its parent company, NorTerra Inc., an investment and management company owned equally by the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic and the Inuit of Nunavut. Its Inuit ownership is a major reason why Canadian North is expanding its scheduled passenger and cargo service to small communities through the North.

"Community air service is an essential service up here," Sinclair says. "It's the link to other communities. It's the link to receiving food. It's the link to certain medical services that you can't get in the community... Sometimes I just have to stop and pinch myself (about) what we're doing. I still sit here and I think: 'Wow, we actually made it! We got to this level. It's no longer a vision; we actually made it.'"

Tracy Medve, president of Canadian North, hired Sinclair, pried her away from NorTerra. "I really wanted Christy because she's very, very smart. She's very thoughtful. She has a very high ethical standard. It's really fun to travel with Christy in the North; she either knows or is related to just about everybody."

It was only ten years ago that NorTerra Inc. bought Canadian North and began increasing service from its southern bases in Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa into the North to Yellowknife and to Iqaluit on Baffin Island. The company started with three jets and 47 employees. Now it has nine Boeing 737-200s, four Dash 8's, and more than 400 employees, of whom 51 are Inuit or Inuvialuit. Last June they began taking over scheduled passenger and cargo service to Kugaaruk, Kugluktuk, Gjoa Haven and Taloyoak in the Kitikmeot region. To the people of the area, the change couldn't come soon enough.

Among service improvements like hot meal service, Canadian North has been hiring more flight attendants whos speak Inuktitut so that unilingual Inuit or even bilingual passengers can choose to speak their first language. "It's about northerners serving northerners in the northern way," says Sinclair.

It's not only passengers who are excited with the changes. Sinclair was recently approached by three Inuit pilots. "Now that you're in the Baffin," one of them said, "and I live here, I'd like to come and work for my own company."

It's her strong commitment to the people that made Sinclair the best candidate for the newly created position of Vice President of Community Air Service. She'll be responsible for the airline's economic performance in this area, putting bums in seats and cargo in the back, according to Medve. She'll also bring cultural awareness that the airline can rely on to avoid mistakes in communications, translation and marketing. In day-to-day operations, she'll be the primary contact between people in the communities and the airline.

An important part of Sinclair's job will be to find new business. "Identifying opportunities for growth," Medve says, "A lot of the business development in the North is about having your ear to the ground, and paying attention to what's happening now; hearing little hints about where things are going in the future and connecting the dots between two seemingly unconnected elements so that you realize that this thing over here is going to happen."

If Sinclair has her ear to the ground, her heart is still very close to home. She was born in Taloyoak, a community of 250 Inuit then (700 now) on the Boothia Peninsula, the northernmost point of mainland North America. Sinclair's great-grandfather and grandfather helped establish the settlement. "Everybody knew everybody. You were related to half the town. If you weren't, 20 years from now you'd be related through marriage. Growing up, there was such a strong sense of family...I miss that....I go back and I get re-booted. I always say that my mantra in life, and really a lot in work, is: never forget where you come from."

Like most Inuit in the north, Sinclair had to leave home to go to high school. After a false start at the University of Lethbridge, she moved to Ottawa for a year with 12 other Inuit to study with the Nunavut Sivuniksavut Training Program, a college course to prepare Inuit youth from Nunavut for the educational, training, and career opportunities being created by the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and the government of Nunavut.

“ I come from one of those small communities and I know where we were yesterday. I know exactly where we are today, and there's a huge difference. And because now that I'm in an executive position within the company, I know where we're headed in the future, and I know this because I have the opportunity to be that Inuk voice at the decision making table ”

“That really kicked off my going to school and furthering my education at the college and university level,” says Sinclair. “I found a comfort level. Because I think before, like many other Aboriginal people, I probably didn’t have the confidence. I think I was intimidated by going to school in the south and taking a university program. Taking this program built my confidence to say, ‘You know what? I’m going to take this one step farther.’”

Sinclair returned to Yellowknife, followed up with a diploma in Management Studies, then graduated with a degree in Business Administration from Athabasca University. When a high school friend, Wanda Norwegian, now the director of Human Resources and Career Development at NorTerra, recruited her to work for the company, Sinclair was hesitant but eventually came on board.

It was there that Sinclair found a mentor in company president Carmen Loberg. “We worked very well together. He’s a fabulous man. He is a mentor to me. He gives me the opportunity to make decisions that I probably wouldn’t have seen otherwise, so short in my career. He backs me up 110 per cent. He said that I knew it; I just needed to go practice it. If it wasn’t for him, I probably wouldn’t have moved into this position.”

Loberg’s pride in Christy’s accomplishments is obvious. “She’s now a Vice President, a high profile job in a major airline in the north, travelling, meeting people, talking to beneficiaries on the street, visiting with people in coffee shops, making formal presentations at AGM’s and public forums. To me that is an amazing opportunity to connect an articulate, young successful woman with the folks in the communities, and so I think there really is a role for business to drive a more aggressive agenda all across those things.”

And what is the best part of the job to Sinclair? “Because I’m an Inuk, ultimately, the best part is being able to go back home and actually communicate the successes and the opportunities that are being created... I come from one of those small communities and I know where we were yesterday. I know exactly where we are today, and there’s a huge difference. And because now that I’m in an executive position within the company, I know where we’re headed in the future, and I know this because I have the opportunity to be that Inuk voice at the decision making table.”

Sinclair admits that maintaining her equilibrium between the corporate world and the small town she came from is something she tries hard to balance. “I live in the south (Yellowknife)... but when I go home, I’m no different than anybody else. That’s really important to me. And I find that there are certain times that I need to go back to get a reality check. Because it’s easy to get sucked into this corporate world, it really is. And because we’re an airline, I have the ability to do it.”

So a reality check question: does she have a Blackberry yet? “Yeah!” she says, laughing. “See what I mean? I’m getting sucked in!”

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WALKING TOGETHER ○ ○ ○ ○

Halfway around the world, Chief finds similarities for indigenous peoples



Regional Chief Shawn Atleo and Jill Carr-Harris (from Ekta Parishad 'United Forum') leading the 25,000 Adivasi (indigenous) marchers on the Janadesh ('the Peoples Verdict') March.

“ Tribal indigenous people are so much alike. Globally, their story is one of being dispossessed of their land, dislocated from their way of life and marginalized in society. ”

Baking in +40 degree heat (that he swears was more like 60 degrees in ceremonial dress) to address a crowd of 25,000, Chief Shawn Atleo was struck more by similarities than differences while participating last fall in the 350-kilometre Janadesh March for the rights of the Adivasis, India's landless and poor tribal people.

Chief Atleo, the British Columbia regional representative of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), was invited to join the March by P.V. Rajagopal, President of Ekta Parishad, an organization that embraces Gandhi's philosophy of peaceful, nonviolent protest to advocate for recognition, land rights and self-determination for the 80 million Adivasis.

“Tribal indigenous people are so much alike. Globally, their story is one of being dispossessed of their land, dislocated from their way of life and marginalized in society. The Adivasis are not even recognized as existing in India,” says Atleo.

Atleo adds that when he spoke to the Adivasis and human rights supporters participating in the March, they were shocked to learn the story of indigenous people in Canada. “Canada is widely viewed as a champion of human rights. The Adivasis just couldn't understand how a country as rich as Canada could have such a huge divide in things like basic infrastructure for its First Nations or why Canada

was one of only four countries to vote against the United Nations resolution on the rights of indigenous people,” he says.

Chief Atleo says that while there are similar challenges for indigenous people in developed and third world countries – for land and human rights, and basic infrastructure such as clean water – there are also similar strengths and opportunities.

“I shared meals and tribal songs with the Adivasis and sat with their elders under their sacred tree,” says Atleo. “It seemed to me that tribal people share a rich diversity of language and culture, and a strong connection to family and to the land.”

This connection to the land is where Atleo sees opportunity, not just for First Nations communities, but for the health of the planet. “Particularly in the West, there has been a disconnect from the land and unsustainable consumption. There are now 350 million people in the middle class in India, about the same as the population of the United States, but the West is polluting at ten times the rate per capita as in developing countries. Indigenous people can lead the way back to sustainability,” he says.

Atleo says the Janadesh March demanded huge sacrifices – there were eleven accidental deaths along the route -- but the Adivasis had been preparing for a long time and understood the risks. Their determination brought the Adivasis one step closer to a sustainable future that respects their land rights.

“It took a gathering of 25,000 to even get the rights of the Adivasis on the radar screen there, but it got them a meeting with the Indian government, and as of January, a land reform council that includes the Adivasis leadership was formed,” Atleo says.

Atleo says the bond with the Adivasis and Ekta Parishad will continue. “They really appreciated the support of the AFN and asked what they could do to support our National Day of Action here,” says Atleo. “I have also been invited back to observe and assist as they move forward with the implementation of the land reform council. There is a correlation between the work they will do there and the treaties and agreements in Canada. It is very important for the Adivasis that negotiations do not get tied up in process, without achieving the results they want.”



Regional Chief Shawn Atleo walking with the 25,000 marchers on October 2nd (the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday), the first day of the Janadesh March.

This peaceful march, inspired by Gandhi's salt march, took place throughout October 2007, from Gwalior to Delhi, some 350km away. It united 25,000 marchers (including about 200 global activists).

“

Canada is widely viewed as a champion of human rights. The Adavasis just couldn't understand how a country as rich as Canada could have such a huge divide in things like basic infrastructure for its First Nations...

”



Chief Shawn Atleo is shown speaking with villagers under a sacred Neem tree, discussing land rights and landless farmers. Shawn also presented the village leaders with woven cedar headbands made from bark from his village in Ahousaht.



Innovative solutions help Manitoba construction company attract skilled labour

The construction industry is red hot in much of Western Canada and Northern Manitoba is no exception. Driven by new deposits and upgrades to existing infrastructure, mining is a major economic force in the province. The construction of a new hydro dam is further depleting the pool of available skilled labour. As a result, local employers are increasingly challenged to recruit and retain people with high-demand skills.

Smook Brothers Construction, a family-owned heavy construction company that has been a fixture in Thompson for nearly 40 years, is reaping the benefits and tackling the challenges of all this economic activity.

“We are extremely busy, but it is difficult for the local community to compete with the large mining companies like INCO, and with Manitoba Hydro for skilled workers,” says company President Ted Smook. “It is really important to recruit locally, and ideally we would like to have all our employees from the North, but we’ve had to hire some trades people from overseas. The mining companies in particular can offer long-term, better paying jobs which are very attractive. As a subcontractor, we obviously have a lot of work to do right now, but in construction, there are no guarantees.”

What has enabled Smook Brothers Construction to attract skilled workers is the extra flexibility and support they provide to employees, especially those from First Nations communities in northern Manitoba. Of the company’s 150 employees, approximately half are Aboriginal.

“It can be difficult to find housing in Thompson and it is expensive to put people up in motels, so in the beginning we made the mistake of asking potential employees if they had a place to stay in town,” says Ted. “Invariably they said yes, but we found that often they were staying with relatives or friends who didn’t have a fixed schedule. Because our employees couldn’t get the sleep they needed to be at work at seven o’clock, they would quit or be fired.”

Ted says the company knew there was a good pool of potential employees within the First Nations communities because they had trained quite a few Aboriginal people over the years. “We racked our brains to find a solution, because we were frustrated by what was happening, not by the people themselves, but by the situation,” he says.

The solution Smook Brother Construction hit upon was the purchase of an apartment block that accommodates 22 employees.

“Leaving behind family and community support for a larger community that might previously have been seen as a place to party can make it difficult to work productively. We have an onsite manager at the apartment to help provide a good environment and the guys themselves are like a team. They take care of each other so if someone sleeps in, another crew member will wake him up,” says Ted. “It has also made it easy for us to arrange transportation between the work site and home for our employees who don’t have a license or their own car.” He adds that after a year or so in the apartment, several employees have purchased homes and moved their families to Thompson.

Smook Brothers Construction also accommodates staff who must take time off work to maintain their eligibility for commercial fishing licenses. “We have several long-term employees who need three or four weeks off each spring and fall, but they can make quite a bit of money and it is really important for their family to maintain that license. It is something that can be passed down to your children, but once it is given up, you can’t get it back,” he explains.

“Certainly, it’s a bit inconvenient, but we know when the absences are going to occur, so surely we can plan around that,” says Ted. “It’s a sacrifice the company is willing to make because these people are so productive the rest of the time. Besides, several of our employees are farmers and they need time off at specific times of the year as well. Accommodating one cultural practice is really no different than what we do for anybody.”

““ We have several long-term employees who need three or four weeks off each spring [to maintain their fishing licenses]... It’s a sacrifice the company is willing to make because these people are so productive the rest of the time. ””

Smook brothers were among the 75 employers who attended Workforce Connex Manitoba, making up 33% of the audience.

10 Workforce Connex forums across Canada have brought together 1400 participants to create 545 commitments towards advancing the Aboriginal workforce. The forums create a dialogue between the supply and demand sides of the labour equation, building common ground towards innovative employment solutions.

Following on the success of the Saskatchewan forum that attracted 260 delegates, our next event is being planned for Toronto on October 28/29, 2008. Visit aboriginalhr.ca for more information and online registration.

The council's regional initiatives are a step towards a national framework for Aboriginal apprenticeship

With Canada's growing labour shortage hitting the skilled trades especially hard, the council is dedicated to creating opportunities for Aboriginal apprenticeship workers. Here are a few highlights from recent workforce initiatives:

WFC Saskatchewan

More than 260 employers, public sector leaders, AHRDA representatives and other stakeholders converged on the Delta Bessborough in Saskatoon on March 26/27, 2008. With nearly 15% of Canada's Aboriginal population and a booming construction sector, employers were looking for ways to connect to the province's largely untapped Aboriginal labour pool. 86 commitments were made by participants, producing tangible results that will create jobs and improve retention in Saskatchewan's red-hot economy.

Job Horizons in Northern Saskatchewan

The Job Horizons Project is a bridging-to-employment initiative that recruits Aboriginal clients from northern Saskatchewan communities, places job-ready candidates in available jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan's booming north, links clients pursuing trades and careers to the highly successful Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program, and tracks their retention and advancement. Due to the great success of the original Job Horizons project, new funding has allowed the council to renew and expand this integrated employment program.

Nova Scotia Coordinated Aboriginal Apprenticeship and Trades Strategy (NSCAATS)

With a skilled worker shortage impacting Nova Scotia industry, a multi-stakeholder group gathered at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre on Saturday, May 3, 2008 to launch a three-year project to increase the number of Aboriginal people entering into and completing trades apprenticeship programs. NSCAATS brings together key players in Aboriginal human resource development in a spirit of partnership that will create a win-win situation for Nova Scotia industry and Aboriginal communities alike.

"Nova Scotia's Aboriginal population is a tremendous asset to the workforce in this province," declares Labour and Workforce Development Minister Mark Parent. "This joint strategy will help connect more Aboriginal Nova Scotians to the province's apprenticeship system where they can obtain the training they need to find a rewarding career in the skilled trades in Nova Scotia."

Bringing together the collective knowledge and experience of a number of dedicated organizations, provincial and federal government departments, and Aboriginal community representatives, the NSCAATS strategy will build on existing programs to provide pre-apprenticeship essential skills training, registrations and job placements under a streamlined provincial umbrella.

"We know that the people are motivated to make this work. Employers understand the business case for recruiting and retaining a skilled, local and diverse workforce inclusive of Aboriginal people," adds Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council, "We're working collectively with employers, communities, trainers and government to build a customized trades and apprenticeship approach that builds on the success of similar initiatives in Alberta and Saskatchewan that have resulted in 685 Aboriginal people entering the trades since 2000."

Key to the initiative's success is the partnership that brings many voices to the table, ensuring that the project stays focused on the needs of local Aboriginal communities. Working both on-reserve and off-reserve, reaching into every sector of the economy, and creating opportunities for men and women of all ages, the strategy takes a local approach to what is becoming a national shortage of skilled trades people. Stopping the "brain drain" that draws workers away from their communities is an import factor in creating successful outcomes.

Companies across Canada are turning to young Aboriginal apprentices to fill the skilled trades gap. BC Hydro's innovative outreach strategies are attracting more applications from Aboriginal youth who see a bright future in the trades.



UPCOMING WORKSHOPS ○ ○ ○ ○

September 9-10, 2007 – Halifax, NS

Guiding Circles 2 Workshop

Facilitator Training for Guiding Circles 2:
Finding New Possibilities

September 9-10, 2008 – Vancouver, BC

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop

September 23-24, 2008 – Halifax, NS

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop

October 1-2, 2008 – Winnipeg, MB

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop

October 16-17, 2008 – Saskatoon, SK

Guiding Circles 1 Workshop

Facilitator Training for Guiding Circles 1:
Understanding Yourself

October 22-23, 2008 – Toronto, ON

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop

UPCOMING EVENTS ○ ○ ○ ○

Fall 2008 - Toronto, ON

Ontario Workforce Connex

April 6-8, 2009 - Vancouver, BC

Inclusion Works '09: Aboriginal HR Solutions

Promising Practices?

If your organization has a new initiative to grow Aboriginal employment or an Aboriginal employee who has thrived in your inclusive workplace, we'd definitely like to hear about it. We are on the lookout for the best and most promising innovations in creating a larger Aboriginal workforce for upcoming issues of *The National Report on Aboriginal Inclusion*. Let us hear. Send a brief description to the managing editor, crechner@aboriginalhr.ca.

THE INCLUSION NETWORK – www.inclusionnetwork.ca Canada's National Aboriginal Online Job Site

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- Connect to over 400 Aboriginal employment centres
- Bilingual resumes and postings welcome
- Free resume posting and job searches attract Aboriginal talent of all ages

Canada's employers asked for it and the Inclusion Network delivers. Our recent partnership with Workopolis is bringing more employers and job seekers together each month. Visit inclusionnetwork.ca or call us toll-free at 1.877.223.1833 to start recruiting today.



THE NATIONAL REPORT ON ABORIGINAL INCLUSION

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