

## **Five Steps in Committing Leadership to the Business Case for Aboriginal Inclusion**

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### **1. An organization's commitment to inclusion must be supported by senior leadership.**

The growth of a successful Aboriginal workforce is never entirely the work of HR services. It first requires a full and unstinting commitment by senior management. This commitment can only be successful if it is anchored in the three pillars of the business case: demographics, diversity advantage, and corporate social responsibility.

### **2. The birth of inclusion in most organizations begins with a change agent.**

A change agent can be the CEO. It can be the branch manager or two foremen who insist on hiring Aboriginal people. In short, a change agent is someone who plants seeds for the organization with a new idea: promoting and pursuing the benefits of Aboriginal inclusion. One essential role played by every successful change agent is to help articulate the business case for Aboriginal inclusion to senior leadership.

### **3. The demographics for the business case, in an era of rising skills shortages is that the Aboriginal population is growing six times faster than the rest of Canada.**

As Canada's baby-boom workforce begins to retire, many of the retirees are proving difficult to replace. The Conference Board of Canada predicts a shortfall of one million skilled jobs across Canada by 2020. Canada's present birth rates cannot begin to address the pending labour shortages. The reality is that a fast-growing Aboriginal labour force becomes not so much an option, but a business imperative.

### **4. The business case for diversity is that the richer the mix of people in an organization, the stronger the organization will be.**

A recent study by Dr. Takahiko Masuda at the University of Alberta shows that North Americans and Japanese people intuit the emotions of others in different ways, based on cultural training. "North Americans try to identify the single important thing that is key to making a decision. In East Asia they give much more importance to the context." In this and in other ways – such as an implicit trust in decisions by consensus -- Aboriginal people see the world more like the Japanese than other North Americans. Such deep-rooted cognitive diversity brings a richer mix of perceptions and ideas to any organization and any team.

### **5. The business case for Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR): building Aboriginal inclusion is an obligation to the company, and the community.**

Almost two decades ago, the footwear giant Nike was under attack from consumers for its use of sweatshop labour in producing its shoes. Following the guidance of

consultant Simon Zadek, Nike reoriented first its thinking, then its practices, and finally its entire sense of obligation to the public. Today Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a foundation of all Nike's policies and practices. In Canada, companies such as Syncrude, Cameco and EnCana have achieved a comparable degree of reorientation around CSR as a driving impulse in all relations with Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal communities.