

Salute to Aboriginal Business in Alberta

Building relationships for a brighter tomorrow key to TransCanada's success

Trust, communication and respect are the foundation of any strong relationship. TransCanada Corporation's partnership with Aboriginal communities is no exception.

"We're proud of the relationships we've built with Aboriginal communities during the past 50 years," said Brian McConaghy, Vice-President of Community Safety and Environment.

"We are committed to open communications, consultation and working towards mutually beneficial relationships."

TransCanada is a leading North American energy company with pipeline and power facilities neighbouring more than 150 Aboriginal communities across Canada. They have facilities on 12 First Nations and Métis settlements.

Knowledge, experience and working directly with Aboriginal communities over the years led the company to develop an Aboriginal Relations policy in 1999. The policy is based on creating employment and business opportunities, respecting diverse cultures and supporting learning opportunities for the future workforce. The policy also outlines the role all employees have in ensuring positive relationships with Aboriginal people.

TransCanada has field-based employees dedicated to building and maintaining positive relationships with Aboriginal communities in all of the company's operating regions. Regular dialogue with these communities is essential.

"By effectively communicating our operations and taking the time to understand the community's needs, we increase our understanding and find opportunities for mutual benefit," said McConaghy.

In 2000, TransCanada started developing community relations agreements that would explain procedures for consultation and also show how TransCanada would contribute to the community. The agreements would help the community participate in business activities.



"Creating win-win partnerships is the basis of our community agreements," said McConaghy.

"We believe our Aboriginal initiatives are an investment in Canada's prosperity."

TransCanada's commitment to the Aboriginal community includes:

- a national Aboriginal scholarship program, which awards approximately \$100,000 in scholarships every year to full-time Aboriginal students;
- an annual community investment program, 15 to 20 per cent of which goes to Aboriginal communities and projects;
- providing support to post-secondary schools, including \$500,000 given to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) for the Aboriginal Resource Centre for Aboriginal students in 2003;
- a recent loan to the Aboriginal Pipeline Group for its share of planning costs for the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. This part of the project is expected to cost about \$80 million.



Dene Thla First Nation member participates on pipeline construction

INTRODUCING THE THREE FINALISTS FOR THE INAC/AWPI ABORIGINAL RELATIONS – BEST PRACTICE AWARD OF DISTINCTION

In partnership with the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction, organized by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) salutes Aboriginal business in Alberta.

Following are profiles of the three finalists for the INAC/Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI) Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice Award of Distinction, sponsored by INAC's Alberta Region. This award recognizes businesses that have made outstanding achievements working with Aboriginal business, focusing on employment and training. This year there are three finalists: TransCanada Corporation, TRAVERS Food Service Ltd. and Western Lakota Energy Services Inc.

Please take the time to read about these outstanding businesses and join INAC in wishing this year's finalists the best of luck at the awards gala February 18, at the Telus Convention Centre in Calgary.

For more information on Aboriginal economic development, please visit our web site at: www.inac-ainc.gc.ca or Telephone: (780) 495-7495

TRIVERS Food Service Ltd. – sharing our future with the Aboriginal community



TRIVERS employees at G-8 Summit, Kananaskis, 2002

TRIVERS Food Service Ltd. is a professional supplier of remote camp and catering services to the oil and gas, forestry, construction, railway and other industries. The company was founded in 1978 and has been under current management since 1997. It has been wholly owned by Aramark Canada Ltd. since July 2002. TRAVERS offers its clients an experienced and professional management team, great people, outstanding food and an up-to-date, well-maintained camp fleet.

The company has the expertise to provide housing solutions, catering options and planning and support services for projects of all sizes.

Managing more than 50 projects each winter,



TRIVERS has a database of over 600 potential employees and, at peak, employs over 400.

TRIVERS recognizes the importance of working with and sharing the economic benefits of its services with Aboriginal communities, so they have a full-time Aboriginal and Community Affairs Manager. They have built long-term partnerships with Aboriginal communities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Through these partnerships, TRAVERS promotes ownership in camp facilities, supports local service providers, makes strong commitments to employment and training and supports many community projects. During the 2003 fire season, 46 per cent of TRAVERS employees were Aboriginal.

The complete service package the company handles includes service trucks with journeymen service techs, temperature controlled grocery trucks, staff support vehicles and a core of field supervisors. TRAVERS not only maintains a high level of service, but responds quickly and professionally to clients' concerns and needs.

Catering is TRAVERS' core business. To make sure employees follow the latest health and safety regulations for the storage, preparation and serving of food, TRAVERS hires qualified and experienced managers, field supervisors and camp chefs/cooks. All food products are bought from government-inspected suppliers and handled to ensure optimum freshness, quality and safety.

TRIVERS custom-builds weekly camp orders in a temperature-controlled warehouse, to make sure its camps are well stocked with name brand products. Chefs and cooks must complete food safety courses before working in a TRAVERS camp.

Over the last five years, TRAVERS has seen consistent growth. A good portion of that growth comes from its willingness to work with Aboriginal communities in the industrial camp and catering business.

With the support and financial capacity of Aramark, TRAVERS will continue to expand and explore new economic opportunities with its Aboriginal partners. For TRAVERS, partnerships are an important part of its future – a future it is proud to share with the Aboriginal community.

Western Lakota Energy Services exemplifies the power of partnership

Western Lakota Energy Services Inc. constructs and operates state-of-the-art oil and gas drilling rigs in western Canada. Among industry leaders in drilling efficiency, the company has caught the attention of many oil and gas customers since it began operations in 2001.

As a result, the past two years have seen the Western Lakota fleet grow from two rigs to 13. While the performance of these rigs is setting the company apart from other drilling contractors, what really makes the organization unique is the Aboriginal partnerships they've developed.

Western Lakota has partnered with four Aboriginal groups on buying eight rigs. The Dene Thla First Nation was the first to become involved, when a 50/50 partnership was struck on two rigs. This venture has since grown to four rigs and has been a big success for both sides.

A second partnership with the Saddle Lake First Nation on one rig was finalized during the summer of 2003. The Métis Nation of Alberta also own part of one rig operated by Western Lakota.

The most recent partnership is with the Samson Cree Nation and includes the joint ownership of two drilling rigs. Five other rigs have been recently built and Western Lakota is finding partners for these rigs as well. The corporate mandate is to partner with an Aboriginal group on every rig the company operates.

The oil and gas sector is seeing a record period of activity and staffing shortages can be a serious concern for many organizations. Western Lakota is fortunate since Aboriginal employees make up a large percentage of their workforce. The company actively recruits Aboriginal people, using a full-time Aboriginal Recruitment Officer, to build a strong labour base.

"Our Aboriginal employees have been a



Saddle Lake First Nation/Western Lakota drilling rig operating in a northeast B.C. sunset

great complement to our already strong crews. Aboriginal people represent one of the largest untapped labour pools within the country," said Elson McDougald, President and CEO of Western Lakota.

"We are very pleased with the performance and dedication that we have seen from all our employees and this, in turn, benefits our Aboriginal partners who are owners of the rigs."

As the company continues to grow, it is seeking to form new partnerships with interested Aboriginal groups. While ownership in a drilling rig is a solid investment, hiring local community members also gives Western Lakota a key advantage over its competitors.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been very supportive of the projects with federal funding to help local First Nations become involved in the oil patch.

All Aboriginal communities are encouraged to consider partnership opportunities and are invited to contact Western Lakota for more information.



Salute to Aboriginal Business in Alberta

Community communications helps Little Red River Forestry grow

Little Red River Forestry Limited was incorporated in 1986 and is wholly owned by the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta. Their original operations were geared, perhaps somewhat optimistically, to mainstream sawmill products and production.

In the late 1990s, however, the company decided to provide services to industry and share, rather than compete, in the general market.

"Today, Little Red River Forestry manages a significant stand-alone timber quota with annual operations approaching 550,000 cubic metres between coniferous and deciduous timber," said Ron Laframboise, Little Red River Cree Nation's Economic Development Officer.

"Our operations now span the entire spectrum from planning and management through harvesting, hauling and culminating with long-term reforestation and environmental protection obligations."

The goals of Little Red River Forestry are to:

- develop resources and skills within northern Alberta so community members can fully participate in the forestry and logistics sector;
- ensure that operations take place in a safe, reliable and environmentally sensitive manner;
- provide realistic and fair pricing to clients;
- use performance measurement and continuous improvement as ways for client expectations to be evaluated;
- show a commitment to continuous quality improvement;
- get a fair return on investment for the parties;
- inspire the fundamental trust and respect needed to develop lasting business relations;
- maximize forestry-related economic and business opportunities;
- exceed the reasonable business expectations of industry.



Little Red River Forestry tree length loader at work

Elders, educators, students and community members regularly to discuss woodland operations.

"Because of this, we enjoy a significant competitive advantage in that we have ready access to the accumulated traditional knowledge of the people who have, for many generations, derived their livelihood from these traditional lands," said Laframboise.

The future is both exciting and daunting. It is daunting in that the challenges facing the company will need a lot of investment in both capital and human resources. As well, a great deal of training and technology upgrades will be needed to keep up the competitive advantage. The future is exciting as the company looks at ideas like tree farm plantations, greenhouse tax credits, more profitable manufacturing and GIS mapping.

"As we strive to emerge as a 'best practices' model in search of our short-term goals, Little Red River Forestry Limited remains firmly committed to the cultural, environmental and business objectives of all those people who rely for their livelihood upon this fragile component of Alberta's north," said Laframboise.



Little Red River Forestry Ltd. Woodlands Division

INTRODUCING THE
THREE FINALISTS
FOR THE
EAGLE FEATHER
BUSINESS AWARD
OF DISTINCTION



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Goodfish Lake Development Corporation – work wear for the oil and gas industry

With three companies under its belt, Goodfish Lake Development Corporation has just celebrated 27 years of success.

Owned and operated by the Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation #128, the corporation was started in 1977 with a dry cleaning and laundry division – dry cleaning industrial work wear and providing a laundry service to oil sands construction camps.

"Back in 1977, the chief and councillors were looking for a business that would increase economic development on our reserve and lower the unemployment rate," said Greg Sparklingeyes, Economic Development Officer for the First Nation.

"And we wanted something unique that would cater to Alberta's booming oil and gas industry."

In 1980, a sewing and garment division was added. The company first tried manufacturing western wear and other clothing lines, but quickly learned that there was a huge demand for industrial work wear. When it outgrew its manufacturing space in 1988, a modern 10,000 square-foot production facility was built.

It helped that the corporation had the attention of Alberta's industry leaders. With customers like Syncrude Canada Ltd., Suncoir Inc. and Esso Resources Ltd., success was assured.

It was the relationship with Syncrude back in 1991 that led the corporation to open its third company, a small retail outlet in Fort McMurray called Protective Clothing Ltd. The outlet filled Syncrude's need for a store away from the work site for employees to purchase their work wear.

"We saw an opportunity and we went for it," said George Halfe, General Manager.

"The three divisions of the corporation—the dry cleaning and laundry division, the sewing and garment division, and Protective Clothing Ltd.—share many of the same customers and provide complementary services."

For example, the sale of industrial garments often includes contracts for cleaning the garments, offering full maintenance and servicing from a single company. The Goodfish Lake Development Corporation is the only Aboriginal business in Canada that offers this unique service.



A worker from the dry cleaning and laundry division

Workers from the sewing and garment division

The company also takes pride in the fact that they are community oriented.

"We have made donations to various charities over the years," said Halfe. "We have also participated in events like community clean-ups and made contributions to the local school and minor hockey."

Furthermore, Goodfish Lake Development Corporation prides itself on dealing fairly with its customers and employees.

"We deal with any customer problems or concerns fairly and promptly," said Halfe. "As well, we treat our employees with respect. A tour was recently organized for all employees to visit the Syncrude plant in Fort McMurray to provide a better understanding of the work we do for the oil companies. It was a very pleasant day."

What is next for Goodfish Lake Development Corporation?

"This year, we will be building a new 17,000 square-foot facility for the dry cleaning division with new and updated equipment," said Halfe.

"With this new facility, we have the potential of doubling our work force and doubling the amount of dry cleaning from 8,000 units to 16,000 units per week."

Sales reached a whopping \$4.3 million in 2003, creating a huge boost for Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation #128.

"Our people are benefiting," said Halfe. "Of our 96 employees, around 95 per cent are on-reserve members and of that 95 per cent, about 85 per cent are female."

Fort McKay Group of Companies – giving back to its community



Fort McKay Industrial Park sod turning ceremony with Chief Boucher

"The primary objective at the time was to provide employment to band members while generating profits that would contribute to the community," said Chief Boucher.

Since then, other companies were created to meet the demand of the mainstream businesses who wanted more Aboriginal participation in the local economy.

One business does reclamation work on dikes, which is basically planting trees and grass on land used for oil and gas exploration. Another business co-manages a buffalo ranch on a piece of Syncrude Canada's land; the ranch is home to more than 300 buffalo.

The cornerstone of the company, however, has been Fort McKay General Contracting, which was recently expanded and

merged into Muskey Mountain Limited Partnership.

One of its more high profile joint ventures has been the Fort McKay/Shell Albion Muskey River Mine project with Shell Canada – worth \$27.5 million – with some funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The agreement let Fort McKay purchase, operate and maintain about 60 pieces of equipment to service the Muskey River Mine, 20 kilometres from the community. Fort McKay has also built maintenance shops, bulk fuel storage facilities and a 56,000 square-foot office complex. The newest phase of the agreement is an industrial park, which lets Fort McKay take advantage of a demand for industrial sites for contractors and companies.

"This project is a great example of how government, industry and First Nations can work together to promote self-reliance among First Nation members and to expedite the path toward independence," said Chief Boucher.

Chief Boucher estimates that by 2005, the companies will generate more than \$35 million in profit. Not too shabby, considering this amount was just \$5 million in 2000.

And Fort McKay Group of Companies enjoys sharing its wealth. For one, the companies employ more than 70 people from their own community – 25 per cent of its on-reserve population.

"Our policy is to hire qualified local Aboriginal people," said Chief Boucher. "Approximately 65 per cent of our employees are Aboriginal."

In addition, it helped 400 local residents start their own businesses and the company paid \$4,000 in dividends to each band member in December 2003.

"It means a lot to me to be able to give back to the community," said Boucher. "If we couldn't help our own people, what kind of company would we be?"

Fort McKay may be small, but it boasts big profits and an even bigger heart.



Fort McKay First Nation

Following are profiles of the three finalists for the Eagle Feather Business Award of Distinction, sponsored by INAC's Alberta Region. This award recognizes a First Nation-owned business that shows outstanding achievement and incorporates entrepreneurial and cultural concepts into its operations. This year, there are three finalists: Little Red River Forestry Ltd., Goodfish Lake Development Corporation and the Fort McKay Group of Companies.

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