

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2006

## AN ABORIGINAL SOLUTION TO ALBERTA'S WORKER SHORTAGE

**Red Deer, Alberta** – *Alberta Workforce Connex*, an innovative and results-driven forum to address the worker shortage is being held Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at the Capri Centre Trade and Convention Centre. For the first time, many employers will learn about their ability to access Aboriginal talent through Aboriginal employment centres and develop strategies to effectively train, recruit and retain Alberta's untapped Aboriginal workforce.

Employers are searching for innovative solutions to the skilled worker shortage. Many are taking aggressive action to recruit workers from beyond Alberta borders. Others are awakening to the competitive advantage of workplace diversity, inclusive of Aboriginal people.

Through keynote presentations and interactive break-out discussion among 250 delegates, *Alberta Workforce Connex* will create opportunities and partnership understandings between the private sector and Aboriginal community. The forum, which offers employers a local labour solution, will help narrow the growing gap between labour demand and supply, with some emphasis on trades and apprenticeship.

"Canada is experiencing an Aboriginal baby boom," said Kelly Lendsay, President and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada. "Aboriginal people are the nation's youngest and fastest growing human resource. This young upwardly mobile labour force wants and needs workplace opportunities for training, skills development and employment."

"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," said Lendsay. "Employers participating in *Alberta Workforce Connex* are innovative thinkers motivated to develop an Aboriginal presence in their workforce. Many are motivated to become an 'employer-of-choice' for top Aboriginal talent."

"Canada Safeway is confident this forum will result in jobs for Aboriginal people and hires for our company," said Bill Campbell, Co-Chair of the Alberta Workforce Connex Regional Planning Committee and Director of Human Resources for Canada Safeway's Alberta operation. "Two months after Canada Safeway attended *British Columbia Workforce Connex*, 26 Aboriginal people were hired at our Chilliwack store, with a possibility of more to follow."

*Workforce Connex* is a national forum series being hosted across Canada. *Alberta Workforce Connex* is the sixth forum held in 2006, with more scheduled for 2007. The outcomes of the Alberta forum will be integrated into a national private sector/Aboriginal partnership strategy. The Alberta forum is hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada in cooperation with the Alberta regional planning committee (Canada Safeway, Shell Canada, Petroleum Services Association of Canada, ATCO Electric, Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada, Métis Settlements General Council, Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council, Bigstone Cree Nation, Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation, Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society of Hobbema, Yellowhead Tribal Development Foundation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Service Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada).

The forum is funded by the Sector Council Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the Alberta Government.

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