

FOR RELEASE

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AN ABORIGINAL SOLUTION TO NEW BRUNSWICK'S IMMINENT SKILLS SHORTAGE

Saint John, New Brunswick – New Brunswick *Workforce Connex*, an innovative and results-driven forum to address the province's pending skills shortage, is being held today at the Delta Brunswick in Saint John. For the first time, many employers will learn about their ability to develop and access Aboriginal talent through Aboriginal employment centres. This knowledge will help human resource professionals develop strategies to effectively recruit, retain and advance New Brunswick's untapped Aboriginal workforce.

New Brunswick is experiencing the lowest unemployment rate the province has seen in 30 years. The issue of a skills shortage will continue to increase as the projected growth in several sectors of the economy begins to take shape within the next few years. *Workforce Connex* will provide employers, the Aboriginal community, training institutions and government with the ability to do the preliminary work that is necessary to ensure a skilled workforce is available to meet upcoming demands in the trades and apprenticeship sector.

"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."

Across Canada employers are searching for innovative solutions to the skilled worker shortage. Many are taking aggressive action to recruit workers from beyond provincial and national borders. Others are awakening to the competitive advantage of workplace diversity, inclusive of Aboriginal people.

"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 New Brunswick *Workforce Connex* are innovative thinkers motivated to develop an Aboriginal presence in their workforce and become an 'employer-of-choice' for top Aboriginal talent."

Through keynote presentations and interactive break-out discussion among delegates, New Brunswick *Workforce Connex* will create opportunities and partnership understandings between the private sector and Aboriginal community. The forum will offer employers a local labour solution that will help narrow the growing gap between labour demand and supply.

Workforce Connex is a national forum series hosted by the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada in cooperation with the New Brunswick regional planning committee (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Mawiw Council, Enterprise Network, First Nation Human Resource Development Council, New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples' Council, Ulnooweg Development Group, New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training & Learning, New Brunswick Department of Aboriginal Affairs, North Shore Micmac District Council, New Brunswick Construction Association, New Brunswick Community Colleges, Institute of Trade & Technology Training, JEDI-Joint Economic Development Initiative, Service Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada).

New Brunswick *Workforce Connex* is the seventh forum held in the series, with more scheduled for 2007. The outcomes of the forum will be integrated into a national private sector/Aboriginal partnership strategy. Funding for the series is provided through the Sector Council Program, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

- 30 -

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The Aboriginal Human Resource Council is a national not-for-profit, private/public sector partnership mandated to build connections, partnerships and solutions that advance opportunities for Aboriginal people in the nation's labour market. The council is Canada's leading innovator in Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement.