



**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 18, 2010**

Calgary Chamber of Commerce partners to provide Aboriginal awareness training

Chamber enters 'implementation phase' of Aboriginal Workforce Initiative

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce has contracted with Dr. Neil McDonald of Cross Cultural Consulting Inc. to provide Aboriginal awareness training for businesses and organizations looking to improve Aboriginal hiring and retention strategies, and partner with Aboriginal communities to develop business opportunities.

"Aboriginal people are the largest untapped source of talent in the country," said Heather Douglas, President & CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. "The business case for engagement is clear. Companies can access a local and reliable workforce, achieve workplace diversity, develop a reputation for corporate social responsibility and tap into new economic opportunities."

Aboriginal awareness training sessions are an important component of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative, a research and action plan launched in 2008 to better connect the business community to Aboriginal opportunities, and improve Aboriginal economic and labour market outcomes.

"Aboriginal awareness training is designed to improve understanding and communications with Aboriginal individuals and communities," stated Douglas. "This knowledge is vital to establishing and maintaining successful relationships."

This initiative is guided by the Chamber's long-standing Aboriginal Opportunities Committee, which was the first of its kind in Canada, formed in 1982. The Chamber is also engaging key Aboriginal organizations in the Treaty 7 region in the development and launch of this initiative.

"The Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative is one of the most progressive in the country", said Ryan Robb, CEO of Treaty 7 Management Corp. "We welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Calgary Chamber as this project progresses."

Starting in March the Chamber will offer full-day training workshops. Seating will be limited to ensure quality instruction. For more information and to register visit www.calgarychamber.com

– 30 –

Backgrounder: Aboriginal awareness training and the Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Tom Palak
Policy & Communications Strategist
The Calgary Chamber of Commerce
403-750-0423
tpalak@calgarychamber.com



BACKGROUNDER

Aboriginal awareness training and the Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative

What is Aboriginal awareness training?

Aboriginal awareness training is designed to improve understanding and communications with Aboriginal individuals and communities. It covers:

- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal historical relationships and lessons learned.
- Aboriginal rights, treaties, land claims, self-government and the business implications.
- Culture, values and attitudes and their impact on business and workplace behaviours.
- Conducting business with Aboriginal people – Aboriginal community structures and communicating across cultures.

Why is the Calgary Chamber of Commerce offering Aboriginal awareness training?

The Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative involved a comprehensive research and interview process to identify strategies and recommendations to improve Aboriginal economic and labour market outcomes in the Calgary region, while enabling the business community to meet labour force needs and invest in Aboriginal communities. The report titled *Completing the Circle* was released at the Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Symposium which brought together key stakeholders to share best practices, raise awareness of key issues and mobilize action for change.

Through research and engagement activities, the Chamber developed a clear understanding of the critical elements of success for Aboriginal people in the workplace - particularly from a business needs perspective. Aboriginal awareness training was deemed a vital element.

What are Dr. Neil McDonald's qualifications to teach this course?

A nationally recognized Canadian educator/trainer and published author, Dr. Neil McDonald has taught ethnic and Native studies at several universities in Canada and the United States. He has many successful years of conducting research and delivering educational programs to public and private sector organizations with his primary focus on 'Diversity in Canada'.

As a publisher and author, Dr. McDonald has successfully marketed a series of publications on diversity topics. Four of these publications are considered Canadian bestsellers in the training field, namely, *Aboriginal Peoples: Past and Present*; *Working with Aboriginal Peoples*; *Managing Diversity*; and *Harassment in the Workplace*. He has also developed online programs for several organizations.

Past clients have included major Canadian financial institutions; leading energy companies (such as Exxon-Mobil and Trans Canada Pipelines); Telus; the federal Public Service Commission; the Human Rights Commission; the Canadian Forces; Canada Revenue Agency; Canada Border Services Agency; the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs; Industry Canada; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; provincial and municipal police services; Corrections Canada; Ontario Hydro; all provincial and territorial governments; and the cities of Regina, Edmonton, Toronto, and Halifax.



What is the Calgary Chamber of Commerce's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative (AWI)?

The Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative involved a comprehensive research and interview process to identify strategies and recommendations to improve Aboriginal economic and labour market outcomes in the Calgary region, while enabling the business community to meet labour force needs and invest in Aboriginal communities. The AWI is conducted in conjunction with the Chamber's Aboriginal Opportunities Committee.

Phase One resulted in a research report titled *Completing the Circle: Realities, Challenges and Strategies to Improve Aboriginal Labour Market Outcomes in the Calgary Region*, which identified gaps and offered program and policy recommendations.

Phase Two involved hosting a one-and-a-half day Aboriginal Workforce Symposium on March 25 and 26, 2009 which brought together over 100 key stakeholders representing businesses, the Aboriginal community, service providers, decision-makers and other stakeholders to showcase the research findings, share best practices, facilitate discussion, raise awareness of key issues and mobilize action for change.

Phase Three, currently underway, involves working with the Aboriginal community of stakeholders, government, service providers and the business community to develop and deliver programs to implement the research project's findings identified in Phase One and build upon the relationships and momentum developed in Phase Two.

Tasks for Phase Three will include:

- Delivering professional Aboriginal awareness training to businesses interested in hiring and retaining Aboriginal employees and working with Aboriginal communities;
- Facilitating economic partnerships between businesses and Treaty 7 First Nations;
- Working with service providers to deliver pre-employment training to prospective Aboriginal employees, and linking employment candidates to prospective employers; and
- Hosting informational sessions to link businesses to prospective employees and economic opportunities in the Treaty 7 and Calgary region.

The Chamber's Aboriginal Workforce Initiative is funded in part through generous support from the Government of Alberta.

More information on the AWI: <http://www.calgarychamber.com/PGA/labour/aboriginal.html>