Canadian Council for ABORIGINAL BUSINESS

Achieving Progressive Community Relations:

Key Findings from CCAB

Progressive Aboriginal Relations Research Series

Building Relationships, Sharing Knowledge.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This report analyzes data submitted by Canadian companies between 2001 and 2008 as a part of the Progressive Aboriginal Relations program (PAR) – a benchmarking tool developed by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

PAR was designed to help Canadian business organizations gauge and improve their commitment to progressive relationships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities, businesses and people. To date, a total of 38 companies – representing diverse sectors and geographic locations – have undertaken the PAR process.

The purpose of the current analysis of PAR data is to better understand how Canadian companies initiate, build and sustain these positive relationships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities[1].

What did we learn from our review of PAR data?

We discovered a number of "good things underway" towards achieving progressive community relations between Canadian companies and Aboriginal communities. These activities can be grouped under four general themes:

- **the use of systematic communication processes**
- **the existence of robust consultation mechanisms**
- **a willingness to observe cultural differences**
- **understanding the importance of mutual benefit**

While companies undertook these activities in various ways, certain common experiences emerged:

- There is no one-size-fits-all template, no transposable formula for success: a focus on the unique circumstances of each Aboriginal community is most effective.
- Time and effort, not necessarily money, are key ingredients to effective relationship-building.
- As the economic influence of Aboriginal communities grows, so too will the importance of effective community relations.
- Mastering productive community relations is no longer a "nice-to-have" for companies seeking a return on their investment; increasingly, this is being viewed as a "must-have" competency.

> " *Community relations are the foundation upon which PAR is built. If positive community relations have not been achieved, nothing else matters.* "
>
> *Clint Davis, CEO, CCAB*

Canadian Council for ABORIGINAL BUSINESS

ABOUT THE CCAB

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) was founded in 1984 by a small group of visionary business and community leaders committed to the full participation of Aboriginal people in Canada's economy.

A national non-profit organization, CCAB offers knowledge, resources and programs to both mainstream and Aboriginal-owned member companies. These resources foster economic opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses across Canada.

CCAB is non-partisan and receives no government funding. It is entirely supported through corporate funding and member dues.

For more information, please go to www.ccab.com.

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[1] The CCAB conceptualizes a First Nation, Métis or Inuit community as a group of people whose members share a local government or treaty, and who have a common cultural and historic heritage.

II. BACKGROUND

Twenty-five years ago, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business was founded by a small group of business and community leaders committed to the full participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in the Canadian economy. Ten years ago, the Progressive Aboriginal Relations Program (PAR) was designed and implemented to help realize that goal.

This report highlights a growing trend in co-operation between Canadian companies and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. The trend appears to be largely due to resource development escalation, labour requirements and emerging northern markets. Whichever the case may be, interests seem to be overlapping, and relationships are developing that have been stagnant since the decline of the fur markets.

In some cases, forward-thinking companies who recognize that First Nation, Métis and Inuit partnerships make good business sense are taking the first steps by expanding engagement with these communities and spearheading cooperation. Interestingly, the Canadian Businesses for Social Responsibility has found that companies which have shown "a real aptitude for substantive engagement are consistently ranked among the most profitable companies in Canada and the world... Companies that excel in stakeholder engagement excel in business."[2]

In other cases, the Aboriginal communities take the first step and approach a Canadian company or companies. Our analysis of PAR data shows that for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, stronger relationships with corporate Canada can yield a number of important benefits. Such relationships can:

- Contribute to a community's economic self-sufficiency.

- Further develop financial, technical and human resource skills among community members.

- Give communities more control over the development of resources while maintaining important cultural values.

THE PROGRESSIVE ABORIGINAL RELATIONS PROGRAM

The Progressive Aboriginal Relations Program, or PAR, is the first of its kind in the world. The program requires that companies set goals and assess themselves in four areas: employment, business development, individual skill development, and community relations.

PAR recognizes companies at three levels of achievement: gold, silver and bronze. Each firm must complete a self-assessment, which is verified by the National Quality Institute (NQI), a Toronto-based independent organization that measures organizational excellence. NQI makes recommendations to an independent jury of business leaders that in turn awards the PAR hallmarks.

For more information, go to www.ccab.com/par.

[2] Canadian Business for Sustainable Relations, "Profitable Business = Stakeholder Engagement" (2004).

PAR Companies, 2001 – 2008

Companies that are in the PAR process, or have committed to PAR, represent approximately 300,000 employees in Canada and $200B in annual revenues. Those companies that participate repeatedly in the PAR program demonstrate steady progress over time.

Companies Progress Over Time

80%
of PAR companies have participated in the program three or more times.

35%
of PAR companies have merited "Gold" status.

100%
of PAR companies achieving Gold status have been in the program for more than four years, and half of them have participated for at least eight years.

PAR Companies at a Glance, by Achievement Level, 2001-2008

12 BRONZE
Reflects a good beginning on the PAR journey.

Canada Post
EDS Canada
ESS
IBM
Manitoba Lotteries
Nassituq Corp.
Pitblado LLP
Red River College
Sodexo
Western Lakota
World Wildlife Fund
Xerox

9 SILVER
Awarded for significant accomplishment.

Alberta Pacific Forest
  Industries
B.C. Hydro
Canada Post
Donna Cona
Manitoba Lotteries
SaskTel
Scotiabank
Western Lakota
Xerox

14 GOLD
Demonstrates leadership and sustainability.

Alberta Pacific Forest
  Industries
Bank of Montreal (BMO)
Cameco
Canada Post
Diavik
ESS
Higgins International
IBM
Manitoba Lotteries
Place Louis Riel
Savanna Energy Services
Sodexo
Syncrude
Xerox

Note: This is not a list all of PAR companies. This list does not include those PAR companies that have committed to the program, but have yet to achieve bronze, silver or gold status. For a full list of PAR companies, see page 4.

> "For us to maintain our gold status, we have to be on top of these things [hiring, community engagement, procurement practices], making sure we're progressing not regressing... PAR is like our ISO 9000."
>
> *Steve Fay, Director of National Aboriginal Banking, BMO Financial Group*

Unfortunately, there have been instances where co-operation between businesses and Aboriginal communities has been forced. This is often a direct result of court cases flowing from confrontations between a First Nation community and a Canadian company. The Delgamuukw (1997) as well as Taku River Tlingit and Haida Nation decisions, (2004), have obliged governments to ensure that companies whose development might affect "an established or asserted treaty right" have a "duty to consult and accommodate" Aboriginal peoples.

This data review contributes to a small canon of case studies, papers and reports which attempt to understand and describe these emerging relationships. However, the literature on community-company relationships seems to expose a dilemma: while research on community engagement has been increasing, these investigations have been largely theoretical. Little is known about what these community engagement processes really look like or how successful they are.[3]

We hope to narrow this knowledge gap by describing "real world" examples of how Canadian businesses and Aboriginal communities begin, build and sustain positive relationships. Through examples drawn from the PAR program, we provide some much-needed insight into the behaviours, attitudes and approaches common to successful community relations between these two groups.

PAR COMPANIES

Alberta Pacific Forest Industries

BC Hydro

BMO Bank of Montreal

BP Canada Energy Corp.

Cameco Corp.

Canada Post

Casino Rama

Compass Group Canada (ESS)

Delta Bessborough Hotel

Diavik Diamond Mines Inc.

Domtar Forest Resources

Donna Cona

EDS Canada

EnCana Corp.

Canwest

Higgins International

IBM

Junior Achievement

Kelly Services

Manitoba Lotteries Corp.

Nassittuq Corp.

Pharmacia Canada

Piruqsajit

Pitblado

Place Louis Riel

Prairie Architects Inc.

Radisson Hotel Winnipeg

Red River College

SaskTel

Savannah Energy Services

Scotiabank

Sodexo

Syncrude

TELUS Corp.

Tribal Councils Investment Group of Manitoba

Veco

World Wildlife Fund

Xerox

[3] Research Network for Business Sustainability, "Engaging the Community: A Systematic Review" (2008).

III. "COMMUNITY RELATIONS" KEY FINDINGS

For the purposes of this report, we define "community relations" as the interaction between an organization and their "communities of interest." We pose relevant questions such as: How do such interactions begin? And what does it take to build and sustain them over the long-term?

The findings indicate that community engagement is essential. This engagement is built on trust, goodwill and respect. And while there may be no transposable formula, some hallmarks of progressive relationships in the community relations realm have emerged.

We discovered a number of "good things underway" towards achieving progressive community relations between Canadian companies and Aboriginal communities. These activities can be grouped under four general themes or recurring features among companies with strong ties to First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities:

- **The use of systematic communication processes:** These processes use joint learning to build an initial relationship.

- **The existence of robust consultation mechanisms:** Such mechanisms serve to permit ongoing collaboration.

- **A willingness to observe cultural differences:** Activities are undertaken with the understanding that cultural differences exist and should be acknowledged.

- **Understanding the importance of mutual benefit:** For activities to be successful, they must meet the needs of all parties involved in the relationship.

While these features are presented in sequential order, in practice we found that they tend to overlap. For example, promoting cultural retention is also mutually beneficial in some cases.

The companies profiled here are chosen for their rich detail and sustainability. Although they are relatively few compared to the dozens of companies that have participated in the PAR program, we aim to share examples that best enhance understanding of progressive community relations.

FINDING 1:

Successful programs use systematic communication processes.

An existing systematic communication process allows for open dialogue and discussion. First, it often serves as an opportunity for companies to gather feedback on how their operations are affecting their neighbours. Such a process also gives communities an opportunity to voice their concerns.

The following examples drawn from PAR data demonstrate three successful but quite different approaches. Each one has been tailored to the individual circumstances of the company-community relationship.

Gathering Feedback through Satisfaction Surveys

ESS/Compass Group Canada

This company, which provides services to remote development projects, employs a straightforward method to achieve communication: data-gathering via the use of annual satisfaction surveys. Originally, the company used the satisfaction survey model in its sales. Then, starting in 2006, ESS began using the survey to gauge its progress with its joint venture partners and with First Nation communities.

The system (called the WITY Process – an acronym for "What's Important to You?") involves written assessments done by each community's Chief and Council. These assessments are submitted to ESS representatives in charge of managing relationships with these communities.

The annual reviews cover at least 12 items of potential importance to the community – ranging from employment opportunities for First Nation members to the transfer of knowledge to the community. The WITY Process requires follow-up reviews to ensure that the company has effectively dealt with any concerns which emerged from the previous assessment.

Creating Windows into the Company

BC Hydro

The energy supplier has developed a relatively unique communication process: assigning Key Account Managers (KAMs) to First Nations communities. These First Nation KAMs – normally assigned to large corporate account holders such as universities or municipalities – began operating in First Nations communities in 2008.

FINDING #1 IN BRIEF:

1. Dialogue promotes better understanding of needs and a channel for addressing concerns.

2. Systematic communication establishes the basis for community-company collaboration over time.

3. Good communication processes are the fundamental building block of trust and respect.

The BC Hydro KAMs currently service 16 communities throughout their area of operations. Their mandate is to build relationships with the First Nations and to serve as a kind of "window" into BC Hydro. This allows communities to express any concerns they have related to the company's operations; these might range from energy conservation priorities to service interruptions and general customer care. Regular satisfaction surveys are conducted to determine BC Hydro's success in reaching conservation targets and in supplying effective customer service.

Throughout this process, according to Lyle Vierick, Director or Aboriginal Relations, BC Hydro has discovered that "Communication is both an ongoing process and a learning process... I don't think there is an ultimate achievement. We've certainly stepped back and... [realized] that we need to get a better understanding of the communities, we need to better understand what their needs are, we need to better understand how they would like to best work with BC Hydro."

Providing an On-the-Ground Community Presence

Alberta Pacific Forest Industries (Al-Pac)

This forestry company works on the ground in 15 First Nation and Métis communities in the province of Alberta. The company's communication process can be described as "community-based." Al-Pac offices are stationed in places such as Janvier and Wabasca, among others. Here, Al-Pac liaison officers work with community leaders, organizations and businesses to provide information about the company's activities and initiatives. Another goal is to identify opportunities for community development, consultation and land use planning.

In addition, Al-Pac often places its employees on secondment in First Nation or Métis communities, working for the Chief and Council and providing administrative support, consultation assistance, and procurement help. In these positions, employees are accountable to the community, not to Al-Pac.

Sandra Cardinal, Al-Pac's Director of Aboriginal Affairs summarizes the Al-Pac position: "It's very important for us to be visible in community. It's not that we drive in and drive out and they don't see us – instead, we actually have a presence there because we are operating in and around their traditional lands. So they know we are not trying to do business from afar, and they have access to us if they need it. That's really important for us," Cardinal adds.

" *The companies that do well collaborate and communicate. Communicate, communicate, communicate; and of course, you have to build trust with the community. It's interesting that companies think that after years of neglect or even worse behaviour, they can just turn bad relationships (with the Aboriginal community) into good ones... It's so much better if you start off on a good footing and then continue working at it.* "

Ellen Perry, Senior PAR Verifier, National Quality Index

FINDING 2:
Successful programs are based on robust, collaborative consultation mechanisms.

Data from PAR reveal that a cooperative approach to communication was a hallmark of success in building strong relationships between companies and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. Such mechanisms helped all parties move beyond simple two-way communication, allowing for the creation of genuine partnerships. In these partnerships, all parties have a role in identifying and framing problems, and solutions are developed in tandem, providing joint-ownership of the pertinent issues.

Turning Collaboration into Partnerships

Syncrude

This national oil sands development company working in the province of Alberta has established and funds five Industry Relations Corporations (IRCs). These IRCs – which are community owned and controlled – exist in each of the First Nations communities in northern Alberta which are located within Syncrude's area of operations. The IRCs serve as a connection between the community and the oil sands industry; they also interact with government and any other stakeholders who need to consult with those communities. Programs and agreements are developed to deal with issues unique to each IRC. Such issues range from environmental concerns to improving community infrastructure.

Essentially, the IRCs help bolster the capacity of First Nation communities to consult with the two dozen industries operating in the region. Each IRC includes "Standards of Consultation" agreed to by both parties; it also establishes a forum for all parties to work together to resolve problems. (Beyond the IRC system, Syncrude complies with the Government of Alberta First Nation's Consultation Protocol[4]).

We have worked very closely together with Syncrude to ensure that people are aware of what's going on. We also set up meetings so people could voice their concerns. I think we have a very good model to build on and it's one of the strengths of our community... Syncrude is a part of our community, too, so we're all working together.

Chief Jim Boucher, Fort McKay, Alberta

> ### FINDING #2 IN BRIEF:
>
> 1. Collaborative consultation is more than simple two-way communication.
>
> 2. Effective consultation can lead to genuine partnerships and build capacity for the Aboriginal community.
>
> 3. Collaborative consultation results in joint ownership of issues and solutions.

> ### SYNCRUDE'S PRINCIPLES OF CONSULTATION
>
> 1. Syncrude has the responsibility to seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.
>
> 2. Public participants must be involved in designing consultation processes and, as far as possible; the process should meet the needs of all participants.
>
> 3. The roles and responsibilities of participants in any consultation process must be clear and understood.
>
> 4. Information relevant to participants' understanding and evaluation of a decision will be fully disclosed to allow meaningful participation.
>
> 5. Contributions to the consultation process will be fully considered in subsequent decision-making and feedback will be supplied to participants on how their input was utilized.

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[4] This protocol furthers Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework (APF) which envisioned that the Government of Alberta will work with First Nations on a government-to-government basis. The Protocol Agreement provides a commitment that Grand Chiefs will meet with the Premier once a year, and twice a year with Ministers responsible for consultation with First Nations regarding land and resource development.

FINDING 3:
Successful programs include a willingness to observe cultural differences.

One of the immediate outcomes of the communication processes and consultation mechanisms described above is the realization that culture is extremely important.

According to PAR data, the most successful and progressive companies spend time as well as money in their efforts to promote good relations with Aboriginal communities. Specifically, they take care to observe cultural differences that exist in these communities, and they support efforts to preserve those cultures.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are often viewed by others as a belonging to a single, homogenous group (i.e., they are all simply "Aboriginal"). Of course, quite the opposite is true. These unique peoples speak different languages and have their own traditions, histories, political structures and activities.

For companies working to engage with these communities, such complexity can be overwhelming. But understanding these differences is clearly possible—indeed, a hallmark of progressive community relations is each company's willingness and ability to recognize and include those differences.

Establishing Mandatory Cultural Awareness Programs

Alberta Pacific Forest Industries (Al-Pac)

A key to the successful relationship between Alberta Pacific Forest Industries (Al-Pac) and First Nation and Métis communities rests on the fact that the company insists on educating its own employees about the cultural differences of those communities. The "Aboriginal Awareness 101" program is mandatory for all Al-Pac employees. The educational courses, which have been in place since the early 1990s, are offered to employees throughout the year. Just last year, Al-Pac conducted 50 sessions covering 90 percent of its workforce, with goals to educate the remaining 10 percent this year.

The program includes references to cultural differences, the historic relationship between Canada and Aboriginal peoples and the creation and importance of treaties. In general, the courses impart an understanding of why working with First Nation and Métis communities is so critical to the company's success.

To monitor its efforts, Al-Pac uses employee feedback surveys.

FINDING #3 IN BRIEF:

1. Recognizing the complexity of First Nation, Metis and Inuit cultures is a critical first step.

2. Respecting the cultural differences is key to achieving strong community relations.

3. Corporate support in preserving Aboriginal culture can have intrinsic benefit for the company.

Respecting the Culturally Sacred

BMO Financial Group (The Bank of Montreal)

This national financial services company understands how important it is to avoid misappropriating First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultural symbols.

For example, BMO has made it an official policy to reject the use of cultural images that have often been used in advertising aimed at First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples. Depictions of eagles and feathers, for example, are prohibited from the company's advertising and promotional campaigns. The concern is that using such sacred cultural symbols ultimately serves to create and maintain stereotypes. While this policy might seem innocuous, it has been greeted by genuine appreciation among many in the communities served by BMO.

Supporting the Preservation of Indigenous Cultures

Syncrude

The company has collaborated with the Fort MacKay First Nation in a number of initiatives. The most well-known and seemingly successful is the Fort McKay Bison Ranch. As part of the company's reclamation practices, Syncrude created a natural habitat for bison on the site of a former mine. The management of the herd is the responsibility of the First Nation in collaboration with the company. After 15 years, more than 300 head of bison now roam and graze on 700 hectares.

The initiative has been so rewarding that a video, aimed at capturing Cree knowledge involved in the Bison Ranch, is being produced and will be launched in the near future. This follows an earlier video entitled, "Pmachihowan" ("Bush Life"), which recorded community members sharing their knowledge and traditions (e.g., moose hide tanning, beadwork, net-making).

Not only will these videos help future generations of Cree retain their culture, they will help to inform future industry partners about the cultural life of the Cree in the region. Once again, this company-supported initiative will aid Fort McKay preserve its members' traditional knowledge and in turn, the community's unique culture.

Efforts such as these are not purely altruistic. For Syncrude, preserving the culture of the Cree in northern Alberta is in the company's best interest. This is perfectly illustrated by the following example, provided by Kara Flynn, Syncrude's Public Affairs manager:

"There is something on the forest floor called LFH - leaf litter, fiber and humic matter, [which is composed of] decaying leaves, roots, and plants. When we were clearing land for oil sands operations, we were just taking that as part of clearing. It was an Elder [through a consultation forum] who suggested if we saved the LFA, our reclamation efforts would be more successful... We now do exactly that, and it's working very well," Flynn adds.

The PAR data indicate that, while examples such as these are rare, they are notable hallmarks of the most successful company-community relationships. The emphasis on cultural preservation, and even the acknowledgment and inclusion of differences, speaks to the effort companies must make towards understanding their community partners. These attitudes and actions support the fact that progressive relationships require constant and sensitive consultation and collaboration. They require time and effort, and not simply money.

FINDING 4:
Successful partnerships recognize the importance of mutual benefit.

FINDING #4 IN BRIEF:

1. Mutual benefit will be the natural result of genuine partnerships.

2. Mutual benefit can be formalized in written agreements, or occur organically.

3. The company and the community may not derive benefit at the same time.

Another hallmark of progressive relationships between companies and communities is the creation of mutual benefit. The PAR data suggest that this goal is more easily attainable than many people might predict. The fact is that, once productive relationships are established, mutual benefit is often a natural outcome.

Increasing Market Share while Facilitating On-Reserve Home Ownership

BMO Financial Group (The Bank of Montreal)

BMO created a unique program that enables First Nations individuals and families to own their own homes on-reserve, without the need for a government guarantee. Due to specific restrictions within the *Indian Act*,[5] financial institutions are prohibited from accepting reserve land as security. As a result, First Nations people are unable to obtain mortgages to finance the purchase or renovation of a home. Under the BMO program, which was launched in 2003, First Nations governments act as guarantors for such mortgages.

The program has allowed the company to build its business and market share by increasing the volume of mortgages it can issue, while empowering First Nations people to purchase homes. According to Tim Thompson, Grand Chief at Akwesasne, the program is making "a very positive contribution to our community."

[5] The Indian Act is legislation governing status Indians and reserve lands. The Indian Act was enacted in 1876 by the Parliament of Canada under the provisions of Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The Act restricts the ability for First Nation communities to control their lands and resources and subsequently impedes opportunities for economic development.

Building Operational Stability and Protecting Traditional Economies

Alberta Pacific Forest Industries (Al-Pac)

The Al-Pac pulp mill site is located about 50 kilometres northeast of Athabasca, Alberta. In the early 1990s, the company launched an innovative Trapper Notification and Support Program. The goal of the program was to minimize the impact of the company's activities on traditional First Nation and Métis economies.

Trappers operating within Al-Pac's forest management area are notified about when and where timber harvests will take place, up to three years before the harvest. The company estimates that at least 11 percent of Cree/Métis traplines are affected by the company's operations.

Under the terms of the Trapper Notification and Support Program, Cree and Métis trappers who are prevented from hunting game or trapping by Al-Pac timber harvests may be financially compensated based on previous yearly incomes.

Through this program, Al-Pac has found a way to earn community trust by ensuring that their activities do not negatively affect traditional economies. Because trappers and community members are less likely to express anger or frustration over lost income, the company achieves greater stability in its business operations.

Creating Impact Benefit Agreements

BC Hydro

A key activity which is helping both First Nation communities and Canadian companies is the negotiation of Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs).[6] BC Hydro has pioneered a number of these agreements. The Cowichan IBA, for instance, provides a ten-year commitment to understanding and reducing the factors that lead to low academic achievement among Quw'utsun students.

Meanwhile, the Chemainus First Nation IBA includes a commitment to providing energy and lighting at two sports fields in the community. These are just two community-focused examples of IBAs; others exist which focus on business development, access to capital and infrastructure development.

By 2009, BC Hydro expects to have 40 IBAs in place, which represent a value to the community of between $40–$50 million dollars. Of course, in return, the company is able to build roads, dams, and transmission lines on First Nation territory.

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[6] *Impact Benefit Agreements* are bilateral agreements, negotiated between corporations and Aboriginal communities to address a multitude of socio-economic and biophysical impacts that can arise from development. Although not compulsory in most cases, they are increasingly becoming part of a standard package of agreements negotiated between companies and a representative Aboriginal organization that can recognize Aboriginal peoples' interests. Fiddler and Hitch, "Impact Benefit Agreements: A Contentious Issue for Environmental and Aboriginal Justice," *Environments Journal (35)2, 2007.*

Tapping a Labour Pool and Expanding Academic Opportunity

IBM Canada Ltd

IBM is one of Canada's leading providers of advanced information technology, products, services and business consulting expertise. The company offers a portfolio of programs aimed at First Nation, Métis and Inuit students across the country. These programs – Young Explorer, Reading Companion, Story Book, and IGNITE – encourage Aboriginal children and youth to stay in school, get an education and follow career paths in science, engineering, business and technology.

While improved literacy and numeracy skills benefit young people and their families, the company also strives to provide awareness of and access to information and communication technologies.

According to Mary Jane Loustel, the National Aboriginal Program Executive at IBM, " As part of it's corporate citizenship, IBM has programs that contribute to education and skill development with a goal to increase participation of Aboriginal people in the technology sector either as employees, technology company owners or simply through their use of technology and communication tools within their communities."

PAR COMMUNITIES

The following is a list of some communities working with PAR participating companies:

Attawapiskat First Nation
Clearwater Dene
Cree Nation of Mistassini
Fort MacKay First Nation
Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Halfway River First Nation
Blood Tribe
Dene Tha' Nation
Samson Cree Nation
Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Horse Lake First Nation
Fox Lake Cree Nation
Mashteuiatsh Innu
York Factory First Nation
Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
Dokis First Nation
Squamish Nation
Beauval
Cowichan Tribes
Yellowknives Dene First Nation
Kitikmeot Inuit Association
Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation
Tåîchô Government
Big Stone Cree Nation
Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
Mohawks of Akwesasnne
Bearspaw-Stoney Nation
Blood Tribe
Chiniki First Nation
Piikani Nation
Siksika Nation
Tsuu T'ina Nation
Wesley-Stoney Nation

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In this, the first research report from the Canadian Council on Aboriginal Business (CCAB), we have highlighted some of the "good things underway" in business-community relationships across a range of business sectors and geographic regions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the best of the best; instead, it illustrates some of the unique approaches and practices that have been effective in developing strong relationships between businesses and Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Just as the companies which have enrolled in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program to date are diverse, there is no single best way to achieve the desired "progressive relationships." Such relationships require more than economic resources: they can only be achieved through time and effort, and they must be built on a foundation of mutual respect.

Our research on business-community relations suggests that as the economic influence of Aboriginal communities grows, so too will the importance of effective community relations. Mastering productive community relations is no longer a "nice-to-have" for companies seeking a return on their investment; increasingly, this is being viewed as a "must-have" competency.

Indeed, the growing economic influence of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples is hard to ignore. In addition to recent and empowering court decisions, the federal government has found that Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing and youngest population in Canada. They create businesses at nine times the rate of non-Aboriginal Canadians, and investment in their territories is expected to grow to over $150 billion.[7]

The number of success stories is also growing. Canadian businesses and First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities *can* and *do* work together to strengthen communities, to create jobs and to recognize new opportunities for co-operation.

V. WHAT'S NEXT

The CCAB is committed to tracking these processes, utilizing rich sources of data provided by the PAR program. We will regularly report relevant findings and share them with interested stakeholders. Our next report of the Progressive Aboriginal Relations Research Series will be released later in 2009 and focus on the topic of business development.

> " *There is a place for First Nations in this country to participate in a very meaningful way. It's quite critical, with a rising population, to deploy the energy of the FN people and also to better establish communication between all of us; First Nations, industry and governments.* "
>
> *Former Chief, Lac La Ronge, Harry Cook*

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[7] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, "Towards a New Economic Development Framework, (Annexes) 2008".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX – METHODOLOGY

The findings described in this report are the result of a qualitative analysis of PAR self-assessments submitted by 38 companies participating in the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business' Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Program between 2001 and 2008.

The National Quality Institute (a Toronto-based independent organization that measures organizational excellence) conducts an extensive audit process of these assessments using trained verifiers. This process includes interviews with each company's senior leadership team, middle management and front-line workers. A PAR Jury then reviews the company assessments and NQI audits, awarding the PAR hallmarks of gold, silver and bronze.

Participating companies, representing a diverse cross-section of Canadian industries and geographic locations, submit information on the four key areas ("pillars") measured by the PAR program: employment, business development, individual capacity development and community relations. In terms of community relations, companies must demonstrate the degree to which they have developed a process of communication and participation. They must also show that a transfer of skills and knowledge has occurred, resulting in company-community partnerships.

A general qualitative, inductive approach was used to analyze the PAR data on community relations in order to better understand how companies initiate, build and sustain positive relationships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada. The primary purpose of an inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data.

The PAR data (i.e., company self-assessments and NQI summaries) were reviewed several times to identify key themes and categories. Hayden King did the primary review while Sonya Kunkel read a sub- sample. Ongoing discussion and review took place and certain themes (or categories) emerged. These were then conceptualized into broad themes. A subsequent text review amounted to a categorization of themes into the four key findings, as described in this report. Company examples cited in the report were selected based on how well they illustrated these key findings.

Repeated review of PAR text data was supplemented by nine interviews with community and company representatives to further explore and test the dependability of the emerging themes. Analysis and interpretation of the PAR data was further aided by a comparison of emerging themes with findings on community relations and community engagement from previous research. This previous research involved a comprehensive literature review by Aine Leadbetter.

Finally, a complete description of the process and findings was submitted to a Research Advisory Board of independent reviewers. These reviewers examined the research findings, interpretations, and conclusions to further test their credibility and coherence.

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