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First Quarter – Spring 2006

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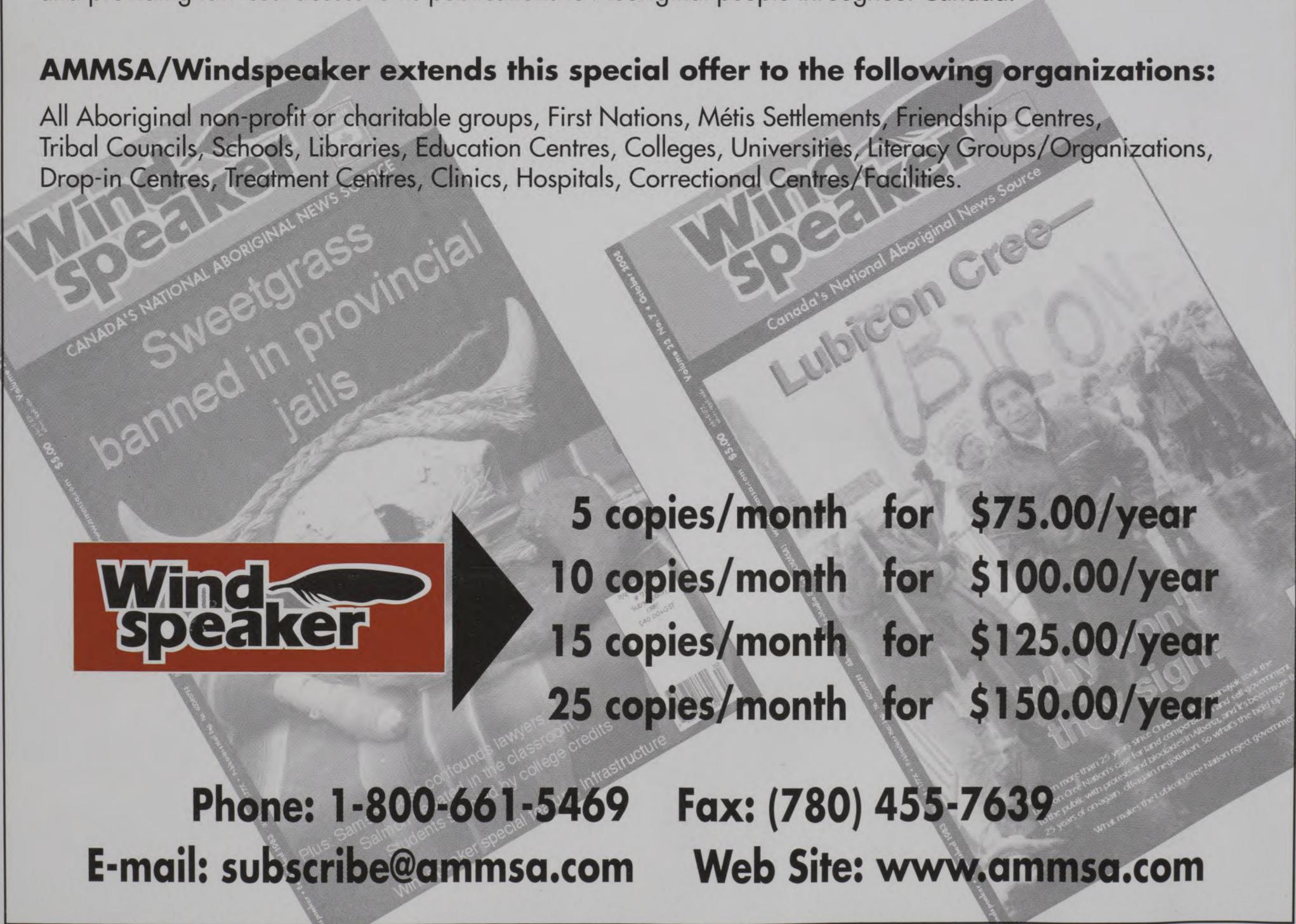
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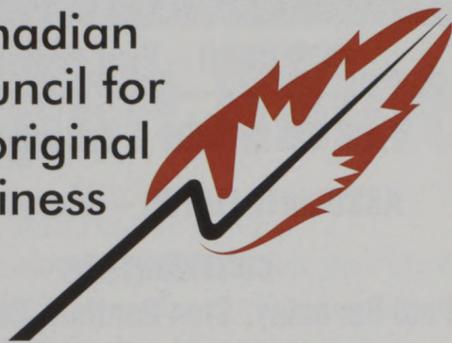


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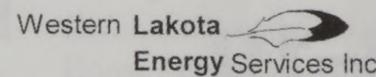
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The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) would like to acknowledge the following companies for achieving standing in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations Program (PAR). PAR is a program that allows companies to benchmark their performance and earn the right to use a hallmark that recognizes their achievements in implementing positive relations with Aboriginal people, businesses and communities. For information on the PAR program and CCAB please visit www.ccab.com.

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On The Agenda

March 6-8

Aboriginal Tourism Canada/ STAQ Conference (Quebec City)

The event will bring together tourism operators to share information and bring attention to successful products. Held in Quebec City, the conference will focus on youth entrepreneurs and human resources development. Contact (613) 235-2067.

March 8-10

Aboriginal Conference on Employment Strategies (Kamloops)

Topics for this conference in Kamloops, B.C. will include trades and apprenticeships, networking and partnerships with business. Call (250) 828-9844 for details.

March 8-10

Building Entrepreneurs (Vancouver)

This conference will be held in Vancouver and is the third annual Youth Entrepreneur Symposium of its kind. It will focus on leadership, networking and finance. For information: (613) 688-0894.

March 10

BC Aboriginal Women In Leadership Forum (Vancouver)

The forum recognizes the achievements of women leaders and promotes the career and leadership development of Aboriginal youth and women. It will be held at the Squamish Nation Recreation Centre in Vancouver. Call (250) 764-6384.

March 10-11

Indigenous Peoples and Natural Resources (Calgary)

This conference in Calgary is designed for everyone involved in advising clients on natural resources and Indigenous rights. The program will feature an update on the Mackenzie Valley Project. For information call 1-800-267-8860.

May 8-10

Meet the North (Edmonton)

This conference will be held in Edmonton and will highlight opportunities and issues surrounding the new mega projects of northern Alberta. Contact (780) 988-0707.

April 3-4

Insight Aboriginal Housing Conference (Calgary)

Network with other First Nations and leading experts to explore fundamental issues in Aboriginal housing today. On the agenda is Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's New National Housing Strategy, the business case for developing additional financing options, on-reserve housing loan programs for financing home ownership and the Cowichan Tribe's Sustainable Housing Project. For information call (416) 777-2020 ext. 150.

April 24-25

Insight Aboriginal Oil and Gas Conference (Edmonton)

On the legal front, three recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions (Mikisew First Nation, R. v. Marshall and R. v. Bernard) amply show that Aboriginal legal rights across Canada are changing and altering the way key stakeholders manage their business partnerships. Knowing how to navigate the changing legal terrain will enable stakeholders to better manage the legal and business processes. Call 1-888-777-1707.

May 3-4

Nation Building: Leadership, Governance & Economic Policy (Vancouver)

Prepare for self-governance. At this conference in Vancouver held by the Aboriginal Leadership Institute participants will learn the tools for nation building. The session will provide an overview of the research findings of the Harvard Project. For information go to www.alii.ca.

May 16-18

Vision Quest 2006: Economic Conference (Winnipeg)

From Vision to Reality: A Decade of Excellence will be held at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. A range of topics will be included in the categories of community and individual development. A session entitled Using Culture (and the Arts) As An Economic Vehicle is on the agenda. There is also a youth program planned. Keynote address will be delivered by Alvin Law. Call 1-800-557-8242 for information.

Business Quarterly

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First Quarter – Spring 2006

Harper names new Conservative cabinet

The new Conservative federal government was sworn into office on Feb. 6 with **Jim Prentice** appointed to the top job in the ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs. Prentice also takes on the responsibility for Metis and non-status Indians. Prentice had become familiar with the issues in the portfolio as Indian Affairs Critic when the Conservatives sat in Opposition. Prentice sits as MP for Calgary North-Centre, and is a lawyer by profession who specialized in property rights with a focus on relocations, environmental protection suits and restricted development areas. He also served for 10 years as the commissioner of the Indian Specific Claims Commission of Canada.

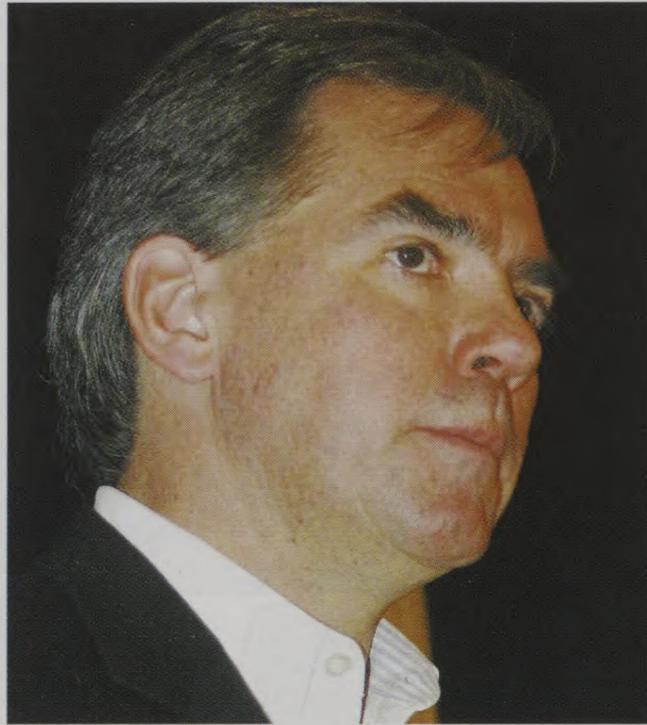
Also appointed by **Prime Minister Stephen Harper** in the first Conservative government in 12 years is **James Flaherty**, who has been given the Finance portfolio. Flaherty sits for Whitby-Oshawa (Ontario) and is a first-time MP, though not new to politics. He sat as a



James Flaherty

member of the Mike Harris Conservative provincial government from 1995 to 2005. Under Harris he held a variety of posts, including minister responsible for Native Affairs, minister of Labour and the minister of Correctional Services.

In the short-lived Ernie Eves government, post-Harris, Flaherty served as the minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and



Jim Prentice

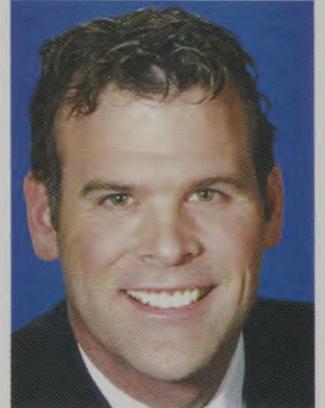
Innovation.

In a turn of events that shocked political observers across the country, **David Emerson** has been appointed minister of International Trade and minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics.

Emerson ran and was elected on Jan. 23 as a Liberal candidate for Vancouver Kingsway (British Columbia). He crossed the floor to the Conservatives before taking his seat in Opposition. First elected to the House of Commons in 2004, he sat as minister of Industry in the former Paul Martin government. In the 1980s, he served the government of British Columbia as deputy minister of Finance, deputy minister to the Premier and later as president of B.C. Trade

Development Corporation. In 1992 he was appointed to lead the Vancouver International Airport Authority and in 1998 he was appointed president and CEO of Canfor Corporation. He has a doctorate in economics from Queen's University.

President of the Treasury Board is new MP **John Baird**, sitting for Ottawa West-Nepean (Ontario). He was also previously a Harris Conservative, serving as minister of Community and Social Services, Government House Leader, parliamentary assistant to the minister of Labour, the Management Board and of Finance.



John Baird

Harper's choice for minister of Industry is **Maxime Bernier**. His is also a new MP, sitting for Beauce (Quebec). Bernier is a lawyer with a bachelor's degree in commerce. Prior to being elected, he was vice-president of the insurance company Standard Life of Canada. He is also a member of the board of the Montreal Economic Institute.



Maxime Bernier

NEW MINISTERS CONTINUED PAGE 11.



Brian Hjlesvold

RBC Royal Bank (RBC) has appointed Brian Hjlesvold as manager, Aboriginal Markets,

to help manage the growing Aboriginal banking requirements of First Nation, Metis and Inuit clients in Alberta, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Hjlesvold joins a team of two dedicated Aboriginal banking account managers—Dan Miller and Paul Wyminga. In his role, Hjlesvold will work with Aboriginal communities to address issues of importance to them, with a particular focus on youth and education.

He will also work with Aboriginal people to share the many career opportunities available at RBC Financial Group. In addition, Hjlesvold will assist First Nations, Metis and Inuit governments and organizations in accessing bank financing for

economic development, housing and infrastructure projects.

A native Albertan, Hjlesvold lives in Edmonton with his wife and four children. Hjlesvold is Metis who has worked in Aboriginal banking at RBC for five years.

Royal Bank of Canada is Canada's largest bank as measured by assets, and is one of North America's leading diversified financial services companies. It provides personal and commercial banking, wealth management services, insurance, corporate and investment banking, and transaction processing services on a global basis. The company employs approximately 60,000 people who serve more than 12 million personal, business and public sector clients through offices in North America and some 30 countries around the world.

Tax court upholds GST exemption

Ron Phillips got good news on Jan. 30 when Tax Court of Canada Justice Brent Paris ruled that the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) had erred in ordering him to pay Goods and Services Tax (GST) on services he provided to First Nations.

Phillips is the proprietor of R. S. Phillips & Associates. The Winnipeg-based company organizes workshops that help First Nation administrators improve their skills.

Justice Paris, the former director of the federal department of Justice's tax law services section (British Columbia region), listened to the arguments and decided Phillips did not owe the government GST on \$812,120 in conference fees collected between 1997 and 2001. The judge reduced that number to \$118,301.70. The GST is seven per cent of that.

The Crown had argued that Phillips provided his services off the reserve in Winnipeg and not on reserve and was therefore not able to rely on Section 87 of the Indian Act to claim a tax exemption. That would have meant that, even though he did not collect the GST from his First Nation clients because he knew they were tax exempt, Phillips would have been on the hook for \$60,000, plus penalties and interest—well over \$100,000 in total.

From the First Nation perspective, it would have been the further erosion of the tax-exempt right.

There is no legislation that deals explicitly and in detail with a First Nation citizen's right to be GST exempt. Instead, a number of policies and regulations seek to make sense of the case law as it applies to a wide variety of situations. First Nation representatives claim the government tends to take the narrowest possible view when it comes to interpreting the tax-exempt right.

In this case, CCRA (formerly called Revenue Canada) ruled that Phillips was selling "admission" to conferences that were held off reserve and therefore he should have been collecting GST. CCRA assessed the business' records and issued a demand for payment.

Phillips, representing himself in court, asked Justice Paris to rule that the payment demand was not legal. Phillips told the court he had not collected the tax because he knew First Nations have the Section 87 exemption.

The judge concluded that knowledge is property. And the Indian Act says the property of an Indian on reserve is not subject to taxation.

"What the judge did in court is that he took their argument saying that I'm not providing services but providing property and he said, 'Yes he is providing property but what he's

taxman if this ruling holds up.

"I was following the policy and there I am in court, essentially trying to get the government to follow their own policy," Phillips told *Windspeaker Business Quarterly*. "And if I would have lost, that would have meant billions of dollars for Revenue Canada

because it would have meant that they could go after lawyers, engineers and accountants for all the services they provide to First Nations off reserve. You're talking billions. Think of

lawyers and treaty land entitlement stuff, accountants and all the third party management stuff, all the engineering companies that work on reserve. They would have been forced to pay billions of dollars across Canada going back to 1998.

He'll know whether the government plans to appeal by March 2 because there is a 30-day time limit on filing appeals.

But now that he has won at trial, if the government wants to appeal, the government will have to pay for his lawyer.

"I've already lined up the best GST tax lawyer in Manitoba

and I also want to get my hands on the best constitutional lawyer, too. I want to have two excellent lawyers on my side to go after these guys because what they're doing is wrong. It's as simple as that. I never tried to pull a fast one on anybody. I followed their policies to the letter and what they've done to me is fundamentally wrong," he said.

The businessman believes the judge saw that the government was not being reasonable and that was reflected in the ruling.

"The decision just blew me away. The judge, I believe he was upset with Revenue Canada because he knew I was following their policies," he said. "He said in court that he was really surprised that the government of Canada would say that their policy was wrong in law. As a businessman, what are you supposed to do? If you follow their policy, you get nailed; if you don't follow their policy, you get nailed. How can you win?"

By Paul Barnsley



providing property to is not the individual but to the First Nation and that's how it's tax free.' If it's personal property to an individual, it's taxable," Phillip said on Feb. 3. "He's saying that, following the Indian Act, the property of the Indian band is tax free. He did not get into the policy of Revenue Canada because if you go by the policy, I lose. But policy is not law."

The case law as laid down by the Supreme Court of Canada requires "connecting factors" to a reserve because the tax-exempt right is limited to reserve lands under existing Canadian law. Justice Paris decided the connecting factors were there.

"What the judge was saying is the First Nation buys it on reserve. Even though it's consumed off reserve, the knowledge is being used back on the reserve. So there's three factors there and I'm on reserve for two of them so he said, basically, 'You win.'

Most companies that deal with First Nations will have been spared potential trouble with the

Dakota Dunes Golf Links is best new Canadian course



Photo: Tourism Saskatchewan/Douglas E. Walker

The esteemed *Golf Digest* Magazine has named the First Nations-owned Dakota Dunes Golf Links as its choice for Best New Golf Course in Canada (2005). Dakota Dunes is the first course in Saskatchewan to receive this coveted recognition.

In the January edition of *Golf Digest*—read by millions of golf fans around the world—writers said the course was put in the top spot because “In this ideal golf terrain, architect Wayne Carleton, the West Coast partner to veteran Canadian designer Graham Cooke, painstakingly fashioned a modern inland links...”

“Being named Best New Canadian Course for 2005, with the prestige that accompanies it, is a fitting tribute to outstanding architecture and to our community partners,” said Darcy Bear, chief of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, located 26 km south of Saskatoon.

“Even more so, it tells our golfers about the world-class status of the course on which they can play,” said Bear. “It means our region, and in fact, our province, can further position itself as a golf destination of real consequence.”

With Whitecap First Nation as the host location, the golf course was developed and is owned by Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, Prince Albert Grand Council and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. The course is the first stage in a destination resort project that will see the Saskatchewan Indian

Gaming Authority open a casino in the spring of 2007. Whitecap First Nation is also looking at developing a hotel and spa complex. Once the casino complex is complete, consideration will be given to developing a permanent clubhouse.

The 18-hole links-style championship track is sculpted in the windswept sand dunes overlooking the Saskatchewan River valley basin. The \$5.3-million course opened to the public and rave reviews in 2004. At the time, the *National Post* in its annual golf review named the course one of the 10 best new courses in Canada.

Staff and those involved in the creation of Dakota Dunes held a party this January to celebrate the *Golf Digest* honor. Architect Wayne Carleton was among the attendees. Carleton has also done master planning or renovations at Riverside, Willows and the Saskatoon Golf and Country Club. His firm, Carleton International Golf Course Architects, located in Delta, B.C., oversees projects in Western Canada.

Golf Digest magazine has recognized Carleton’s work five times, but Dakota Dunes is the first time he’s garnered top honors.

Dakota Dunes won the award because it’s a great site. We were able to preserve the natural features in the routing, design and construction, said Carleton.

“The land had so much potential and building a course that accentuated that potential was a challenging task. The natural wind swept sand dunes at Dakota are unlike anything you will find in Canada. Very reminiscent of a U.K. links course, we let the natural features determine what the course was going to be. From the very first moment I stepped onto the property,

I knew we had the site to create a world-class golf course,” Carleton said.

The course follows an old-world design blended with the modern era, and features pot bunkering and open-face green surrounds to give the look and feel of a classic European design. If golfers hit any of the 104 pot bunkers or large waste-sand areas, they’ll need to spray and pray. The golf course is RCGA rated 74.7 off the back tees.

With five sets of tees and a slope of 129, the track measures from 5,514 to 7,301 yards off the tips and manages to challenge and reward players of all ability. Carleton tries to avoid talking about signature holes - those considered extra special by golfers - saying all 18 holes are unique and memorable in their own way. Among his favorites are the par-3 15th, the par-4 12th and the par-5 2nd hole.

“Graham Cooke and I always felt that Dakota Dunes would be a special course and it was only a matter of time that golfers ventured to Saskatoon to discover it,” said Carleton. “Personally, it is a great achievement, as I put my heart and soul into the project and it will hopefully lead to more projects on sand-based sites in other parts of the world. Dakota Dunes was my second-home for a few years and I enjoyed every minute of it.”

Carleton also feels the *Golf Digest* honor will help the bottom line at Dakota Dunes and other new high-end courses in the province.

“It’s great for golf in Saskatchewan as this award is a first for the province. There are a number of strong golf courses in the province and I hope that the exposure that Dakota Dunes will receive from this award will bring deserving attention to the many fine courses in the area.”

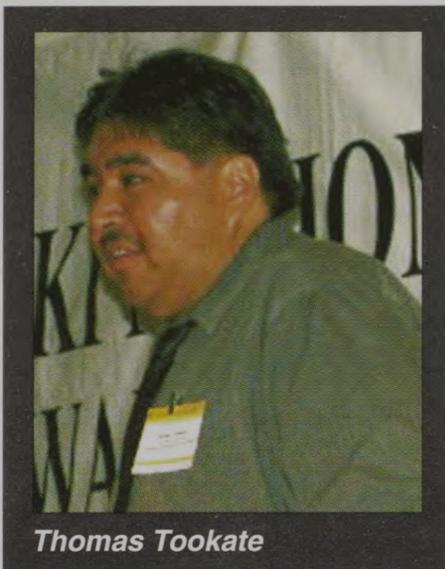
By Stan Bartlett, *SaskGolfer.com*



Accomplishments

The Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund announced the winners of the Nishnawbe Aski Nations Business Awards on Nov. 30.

Awards in eight categories recognize achievement in business in the northern portion of Ontario, primarily known as Treaty 9. Youth entrepreneur



Thomas Tookate

of the year was **Darcy Kejick** of North Spirit Lake First Nation. He is the owner of Darcy and Susan's Gas. Kejick, with his wife **Susan Rae**, also received the Partnership Award. The Business Man Award went to **Bruce Brunette** of Fort Albany. He owns and operates B&M Auto, a vehicle repair service located in Cochrane, Ont. The Business Woman Award went to **Laureen Wassaykeesic** of Mishkeegogaming Lake First Nation, located south of Pickle Lake. She owns and operates a convenience store in the community. **Thomas Tookate**, the CEO of Attawapiskat Development Corporation, received the Executive Award. The Development Corporation Award went to the **Attawapiskat Development Corporation**, which looks after the economic development activities of Attawapiskat.

Fred Carmichael of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and Suzanne Rochon Burnett of Spirit 91.7

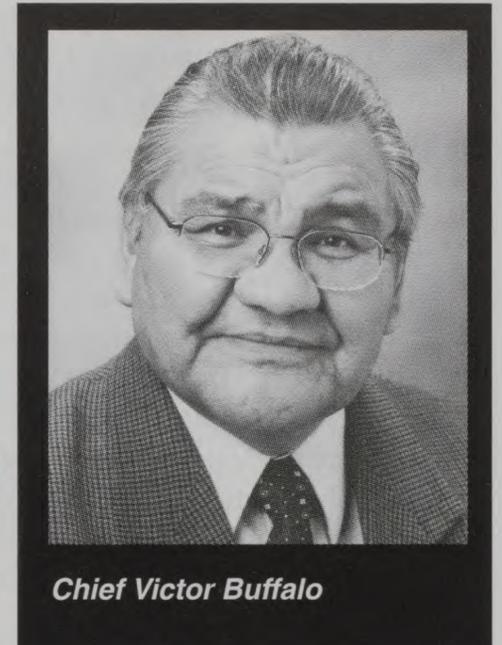
have been named this year's inductees into the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame. Carmichael, born in Canada's far north, was the first Aboriginal pilot in the north to have both a commercial pilot's license and a charter license. He started Reindeer Air Services, which he sold, and then Antler Air, which grew into Western Arctic Air. Rochon-Burnett worked for many years in broadcasting and then in 1997 became an owner. She turned an almost bankrupt AM radio station in Welland into SPIRIT 91.7, a country station that soared in the ratings. She was the first Aboriginal person to own a private commercial radio station in Canada.



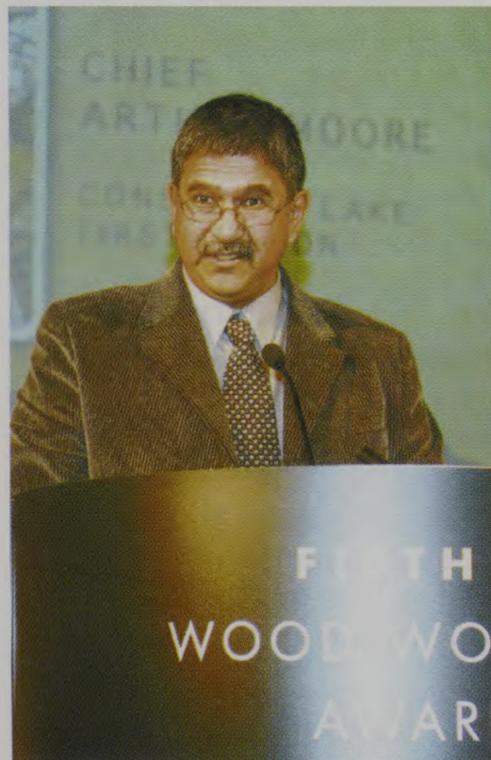
Suzanne Rochon-Burnett

After 16 years of legal maneuvering, the federal government has finally transferred \$350 million

in energy royalties into an independent trust fund that will be controlled by the Samson Cree Nation in Alberta. The move was ordered by Federal Court Justice Max Teitelbaum more than one year ago during phase two of a four phase billion-dollar legal battle that seeks damages from Ottawa. Samson contends that the federal government mismanaged the band's oil and gas revenues over many decades by not paying a fair rate of return on royalty monies held in trust. "Control of our heritage trust monies is a major step forward for the present and future generations of Samson Cree Nation members and an important recognition of our Treaty 6 rights," said Chief Victor Buffalo. The transferred monies, to be called the Kisoniyaminaw Heritage Trust Fund, will be managed by a five-member board of experts, and any future royalty monies will be added to it. Control of the fund will allow Samson to quickly take advantage of economic opportunities that present themselves to the nation.



Chief Victor Buffalo



Chief Arthur Moore of Constance Lake First Nation, a community located 200 km west of Timmins, Ont., was awarded the Building the Future Award

in the community leader category at the annual Wood Works! Awards gala held Nov. 24, 2005 in Collingwood, Ont. More than 300 industry leaders, politicians, architects and engineers gathered to celebrate initiatives that promote the increased use of wood in commercial, industrial and institutional construction. Moore won the award for his leadership in promoting the use of wood in projects such as his community's Holistic Education Centre and Eagle's Earth Historical Centre. His nomination papers for the award said Moore believes building with wood evokes the cultural heritage of First Nations. The award was sponsored by the Ontario Forestry Industries Association. Smith Carter Architects & Engineers Inc. and Lavergne Draward & Associates Inc. of Winnipeg accepted the Jury's Choice Award for the Deer Lake First Nations K to 12 school. The community is located 1,000 km northwest of Thunder Bay. The award recognized projects that represent excellence in design, use wood in a unique manner and invoke a sense of community spirit and pride. The award was sponsored by The Working Forest.

Diamonds International Canada Ltd. (DICAN), a Yellowknife-based company that is 51 per cent owned by Aboriginal Diamonds Group,

has been awarded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada the first-ever Nunavut diamond valuation contract. DICAN will be responsible for ascertaining the gross value of diamonds produced by Tahera Diamond Corporation's Jericho Mine. The mine is located near Contwoyto Lake in the Kitikmeot Region and will be the first diamond mine in the Nunavut territory. It is expected to start production this year. The Aboriginal Diamonds Group is made up of Nishi Khon Enterprises Inc., Deton'Cho Corporation, and Kitikmeot Corporation, which represent the business interests of the Tlicho Nation, the Yellowknife Dene First Nation and the Kitikmeot Inuit Association. The 49 per cent owner of DICAN is WWW International Diamond Consultants Ltd. WWW is providing technical and management expertise to DICAN, as well as training and transfer of knowledge to the Aboriginal peoples involved in the contract, which will be three years in duration with an option of a further two-year extension.

CreeWest, a joint venture between Air Creebec and the James Bay First Nations, have been awarded the air transportation contract for De Beers Canada's Victor Project.

The three-year contract includes passenger and freight transportation to and from the mine site near Attawapiskat in Ontario. "We are pleased that the regional First Nations are utilizing the Victor Project to create new business initiatives, said Jeremy Wyeth, vice president of De Beers Victor Project. The First Nations involved include Moose Cree, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Attawapiskat and Weenusk.

Flint Energy Services has acquired 49 per cent of Inuvik-based Mackenzie Valley Construction, a subsidiary of Gwich'in Development Corp.

With the deal the Alberta oilfield company hopes to slice off a piece of the Mackenzie Gas pipeline pie for themselves, once the megaproject advances through the regulatory review, which began in January. Flint expects to do \$200 million in northern work in 2007 to 2009. Flint is well-known to Aboriginal people in Alberta having long established ties with many Aboriginal communities where the oil and gas business takes them. Flint is one of five construction contractors involved with the Gwich'in, Mackenzie Aboriginal Corp.

Marine Harvest Canada and the nine members of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR)

announced the completion of a "Framework for Dialogue" designed to foster collaborative efforts toward solving the conflicts surrounding open net-cage salmon farming. The agreement promotes research on the sea lice impacts on wild salmon, an exploration of the current viability of closed tank fish farming systems and potential solutions to enhance the sustainability of the industry on the B.C. coast. "We think this initiative holds promise," said Chief Bob Chamberline, chair of the Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk Tribal Council and CAAR. "Open net-cage fish farmers need to change how they do business. And with the exploration of closed containment systems, we look forward to the day when the aquaculture industry is 100 per cent responsible for any environmental impacts their activities generate."

Wind energy developer, Ventus Energy Inc., and Metis Energy Corporation, a subsidiary of the Metis Development Corporation,

plan to develop a \$2.5 billion wind farm near Churchill Falls, Labrador. The project springs from the newly-created partnership, Labrador Ventus Limited Partnership, and the wind farm, to be called Height of Land Wind Park, will be the largest in Canada with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts, enough zero-emission electricity to power 500,000 homes. Construction could commence in 2007, pending a successful regulatory review. Labrador Metis Nation President Chris Montague said the development will advance Labrador into the 21st century as a world leader in wind energy.

The province of British Columbia has reached a milestone. Since 2002, it has signed forestry agreements with 100 First Nations.

Leq'a:mel First Nation helped the province reach the benchmark by negotiating a five-year, \$760,000 forest and range agreement that gives the community access to more than 45,000 cubic metres of timber in the Chilliwack Forest District. "As a result of these agreements, we've seen First Nations build community centres, expand educational opportunities for their young people and even buy a local resort," said Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman. "These agreements mean more opportunities and a better future for First Nations." The agreements allow First Nations to develop their own forestry businesses.



Photo: Brian Cobble Dick

Jump in early to realize benefits

When you hear the word tourism, what pops into your mind? Sitting on a sandy beach, or kayaking through the rapids? Well, if you're Rick Traer, you think of sitting in the bleachers of a major sporting event like the Canada Games or the Brier.

Traer is CEO of the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA), an organization that promotes sport tourism as an economic development initiative. As part of those efforts, the CSTA looks at the economic impact sport events have had on host communities. But, more and more, the organization is being asked to assess the possible economic benefits of a sport event before a bid is even put in to host the event.

Hosting a major sporting event means a big investment of time, effort and money, but the return on that investment can make it all worthwhile.

Take, for example, the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) held in Winnipeg in 2002. The event, which ran from July 25 to Aug. 4 that year, drew about 5,500 sport participants from across Canada and the U.S., as well as 3,000 cultural performers and more than 2,500 spectators. According to the economic impact assessment conducted by the CSTA, the 2002 NAIG generated just under \$26 million in economic activity in the province.

So how can Aboriginal businesses get a piece

of the pie when it comes to the economic spin-offs from major sport events being held in their region? Gordon First Nation Chief Glen Pratt suggests one way is to get involved in the early stages of planning for the event.

Under Pratt's leadership, Gordon First Nation and organizers of the 2005 Canada Summer Games entered into a partnership through which members of the First Nation volunteered to gain experience in preparation for Gordon's hosting of the 2006 Saskatchewan First Nation Winter Games. Those games, in which First Nation youth from across the province meet and compete, will take place in Regina April 15 to 21.

The partnership provided members of the First Nation with a number of benefits from the summer games, including training and some employment. Some local businesses, such as gas stations, also benefited from the increased traffic in and around the city, Pratt said. But the major benefits of the First Nation's involvement in the games weren't economic.

"I think, culturally, there was a lot of awareness of our culture and involvement and, from a community standpoint the exposure of our children to the larger games, I think, was a spin-off."

The First Nation jumped on the games bandwagon late in the organizing process, which limited what could be done to claim a

share of the estimated \$70 million in economic benefit realized by the event.

"I think there definitely would have been more benefits for the Aboriginal businesses if they were brought in sooner," Pratt said. "As a community, we came in a little bit later on in the stages of the games. I think if we had people involved earlier more could have been done."

Pratt's advice to others wanting to reap the financial rewards of being involved in a major sporting event, such as the Canada Games?

"Well, I would say start early and understand where the moneys are being spent. And also to get involved with the local chamber of commerce and the local economic development authority and the city and the corporate community."

Part of the reason few Aboriginal businesses benefited from the Canada Games is the nature of the games themselves, explained John Hill, vice-president of Aboriginal services for the 2005 games.

"As much as possible we look for organizations and people to provide services or value in kind as compared to actually providing business opportunities," Hill said. There were some Aboriginal businesses that provided food services to the tipi village, and Aboriginal performers were contracted to provide entertainment, but there weren't a lot of business opportunities available to Aboriginal businesses.

While providing opportunities for Aboriginal business wasn't a priority for organizers of the 2005 Summer Games, that's certainly not the case when it comes to the Canada Winter Games being held in Whitehorse in 2007. The Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut will be sharing hosting duties for the games. It's the first time in their 40-year history that the games will be held north of 60.

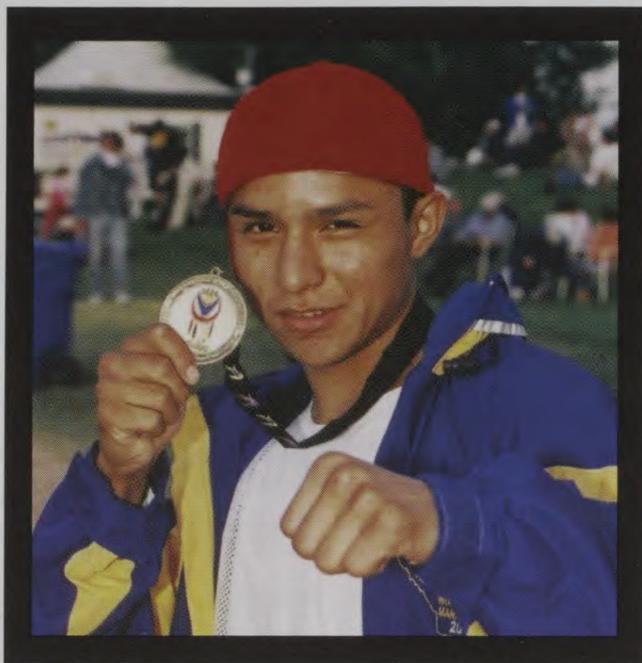
The economic impact for the north should be significant, explained Piers McDonald, president of the 2007 games.

"Overall, including staffing, we'll spend about \$20 million. We know that on the capital construction side, both with the construction of the Canada Games Centre here and also the village, and the third building facility is the ski chalet ... and that's totalled about \$65 million worth of construction," he said.

"What we're doing with this Canada Games, which is a little new, is to try to identify business opportunities before the games actually happen. In the past, most host society analysis of economic opportunities really came in a post-game study. But we've started working with the chamber of commerce to identify business opportunities, both in terms of procurement, buying things, as well as building things, as well as the service sector, which will be responsible for taking care of the many visitors that are going to be coming. So in the first instance we've put some energy into doing some opportunity identification, but also some reality therapy about what is and what really isn't an opportunity. We're making that available to everybody."

Making sure as many Aboriginal businesses as possible benefit from the economic opportunities surrounding the games is a priority of games organizers, McDonald said.

"I've made a special attempt to encourage Aboriginal businesses to feel comfortable with this project and it's a little bit difficult for everybody because nobody's actually done this at this scale before, so it's a learning experience for all of us."



Part of the problem with trying to provide games-related opportunities for Aboriginal business is not being able to find the businesses that are needed, McDonald said. There are no Aboriginal general contractors in Whitehorse to

bid on construction jobs, and many of the Aboriginal development corporations in the north are involved mainly in resource-based ventures, such as mining and oil and gas.

"But we've made it clear that we do want to have the benefits from these games, as much as we can direct them, available to everybody, including and especially Aboriginal

businesses."

For information on how you can get involved in preparations for the 2007 Canada Winter Games, it's best to call the games headquarters at 1-877-393-2007.

"I would encourage people to call into the host society and ask for direction, so to speak. We do work with all the business organizations in the community, both in terms of just transferring information, but also asking for partnerships from them. So probably the best approach would be, in the first instance, would be to give us a call. Then after that we would encourage partnering up with people who've got like interests and make sure that we all can take full advantage of the opportunity," McDonald said. "A lot of Aboriginal businesses are either large, or they're very small micro-businesses. So if there are benefits to joining with others to provide a service then, if that works, we'd encourage it to happen."

Businesses wanting to track business opportunities surrounding the 2007 Canada Winter Games can also do so through the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, said Chamber president Rick Karp.

The Chamber Web site, at www.whitehorsechamber.ca, has a section called Raising Our Game, which will include information on games-related business opportunities. Information can also be obtained by calling the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce at (867) 667-7545.

By Cheryl Petten

New ministers

(Continued from page 5.)

MP **Carol Skelton**—Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar (Saskatchewan)—becomes Minister of National Revenue and Minister of Western Economic Diversification.

Skelton was first elected to the House in 2000. Her parliamentary experience includes periods as Critic for Western Economic Diversification, for the deputy Prime Minister and for Human Resources and Skills Development (Social Economy.)



Carol Skelton

Minister of Human Resources and Social Development is **Diane Finley**. She sits for Haldimand-Norfolk (Ontario). She has worked as an administrator in the University of Western Ontario's French immersion school. She has a master's degree in business administration.

Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is **Jean-Pierre Blackburn**—

Jonquiere-Alma (Quebec). She is the president of a communications firm specializing in business development and public relations.



Diane Finley

Minister for Economic Development for Northern Ontario is **Tony Clement**, another former Harris Tory. Clement represents Parry Sound-Muskoka (Ontario). He also holds the Health portfolio.

Minister of Natural Resources is **Gary Lunn** of Saanich-Gulf Islands (British Columbia). He has previously held the critics portfolios for Northern Development, for Metis and Non-Status Indians, for Human Resources Development, for International Trade, for National Revenue and for Fisheries and Oceans.

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in the new government is **Loyola Hearn**s of St. John's South-Mount Pearl. He served as the Official Opposition Critic for this portfolio.

Minister of Justice; Attorney General of Canada is **Vic Toews**—Provencher (Manitoba). He has served as Justice Critic since January 2001.

Native people's involvement in the 2005 Canada Games was limited to volunteerism and participating in the cultural component, including the tipi village seen on page 10. Aboriginal business believe their late involvement with games organizers limited their opportunity to benefit in the games' economic spin-offs estimated at \$70 million.



Native Nations

prepare to

we

Canada will welcome the world in 2010 when it plays host to the Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games. The Olympics will take place in Vancouver and Whistler from Feb. 12 to 28, and the Paralympics will take place March 12 to 21.

About 6,700 athletes representing more than 80 countries are expected to take part in the two international sporting events. The games are expected to attract more than two million people in total, including about 10,000 media representatives from around the world.

Along with the prestige that comes with hosting a world-class sporting event, the region is expecting to realize major economic benefits from the games. It's estimated that the games could generate in excess of \$10 billion in economic activity across the province and could create more than 240,000 full-time jobs.

One of the things that makes the Vancouver Olympics unique is the level of involvement First Nations have had in the games every step of the way. The Olympics and Paralympics will be held within the traditional territories of the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh



First Nations, which will join the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) as official games hosts.

"They are officially Four Host First Nations," said Gary Youngman, program director for Aboriginal participation with VANOC. "They were involved in preparation of the bid."

The four communities have established the Four Host

First Nations Secretariat to maximize Aboriginal participation in all aspects of the games. That, too, is one of the priorities of VANOC, Youngman said.

"Our goal is unprecedented Aboriginal participation ... we've researched Calgary, we've researched Montreal, we've researched Sydney, Sault Lake City, Lillehammer, all of which had some form of Aboriginal participation. Our goal is to be better, best in the class as we refer to it ... We really see that, in a whole bunch of different areas, Aboriginal participation will really enhance and make our games so much better," he said.

The organizing committee will be working to promote Aboriginal involvement in all aspects of the games by supporting and encouraging Aboriginal athletes and coaches, celebrating Aboriginal history, culture and languages, and providing opportunities for

Aboriginal businesses to get involved in the economic opportunities the games will bring.

With visitors from around the world set to congregate in Vancouver, one of the business sectors that should be able to cash in on the games is the tourism sector.

"Aboriginal tourism, and tourism in general, is going to be a huge focus of the games," Youngman said. "Promoting British Columbia, promoting Canada and all it has to offer, and welcoming the world to come visit it and explore and stay and spend money and so on is a big part of what the games are about. And we're focusing a lot on the Aboriginal tourism side because it's a growth area and there's a number of existing, market-ready products out there right now and we think that we can help to enhance that product through some creative marketing initiatives to get exposure to these companies. But the companies themselves will have to get themselves together, make sure they have Web sites and things like that that can be linked to because if they're dealing with a world population, people need to get a hold of them somehow."

To help the tourism sector take full advantage of opportunities that may come their way, the B.C. government has developed the Spirit of 2010 Tourism Strategy. Along with outlining the contributions the government has made to help ready the Vancouver area for the games, including improvements to facilities and transportation systems, the strategy also commits money to grow the First Nation tourism industry across the province.

One of the partners the government is working with in its efforts to support Aboriginal tourism is Aboriginal Tourism

e to help v welcome the world

British Columbia (ATBC), which has also worked with the provincial and federal governments to create a strategy of its own. The Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy for B.C. was unveiled in December 2005 and is designed to allow for a co-ordinated approach to developing and marketing Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses across the province. Through the strategy, ATBC hopes to help communities identify opportunities for cultural tourism, provide tourism training for Aboriginal people, help Aboriginal entrepreneurs break into the tourism sector and assist existing business to expand into new markets. The organization hopes both the provincial and federal governments will provide the funding required to implement the strategy so businesses in the Aboriginal tourism sector can prepare for 2010.

While increased tourism will be a spin-off from the games, there are many opportunities for businesses to benefit more directly from the 2010 Olympics, Youngman said.

"The game buys a lot of different things it needs to put the games on and so there'll be opportunities to be able to sell products and services to the games. And what we're trying to do right now is a little bit of a match-making set up. We're working with the federal government to be able to identify businesses that are out there right now and find out what they have to offer and, basically, link them with us to indicate what kind of things that we'll be needing at what particular points in time. And then they'll have an opportunity to look at that, see whether they're interested in either getting involved directly or through some kind of a subcontract basis."

Businesses wanting to see what opportunities are being spawned by the games can

find the information on a few different Web sites. At www.2010commercecentre.com, a site co-ordinated by the B.C. Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Secretariat within the provincial Ministry of Economic Development, you can read through postings of many of the procurement opportunities related to the 2010 games, and can sign up to be e-mailed whenever a new procurement opportunity is added to the site. You can also sign up to receive the 2010 Commerce Centre newsletter via e-mail. Information about business opportunities can also be found on the VANOC Web site at www.vancouver2010.com.

Youngman suggests Aboriginal business people take a look at the Guide for Business Opportunities in the 2010 Winter Games, a guide created by the provincial government and RBC Financial Group to help businesses take advantage of opportunities created by the upcoming Olympics. The document, available on the 2010 Commerce Centre Web site, includes a section specifically geared to Aboriginal businesses.

"It's a really good document ... and it really talks about all the different ways in which you can angle yourself into opportunities. For example, somebody might win a license to be able to provide, say, food services for the games. Well, you can get information about who that is, and they will often times be looking for local suppliers and local catering services and so on, to help them fulfill their

bigger contract. So people can follow up and talk to those companies and find out whether there are opportunities there.

And it's actually a really good guide to identify the different areas,"

Youngman said.

"A lot of this has to do with partnerships and relationship building and finding out who are players. And I guess the Aboriginal businesses have to determine whether this kind of games market is an area in which they would like to be able to deal in."

Another source of information for Aboriginal businesses wanting to find ways to benefit from the

games is Aboriginal Business Canada (ABC), a program of Industry Canada created to support Aboriginal businesses across the country.

"We're in the business of supporting Aboriginal entrepreneurship. We do that by providing financial contributions, but also advice ... you name it, we try to do it," said Radek Bandzierz, director of corporate affairs with ABC.

Many business endeavors linked to the 2010 Olympics wouldn't normally be eligible for support through ABC, but they may be eligible under a special ABC program for business opportunities linked to major developments.

"Let's say there's a major project or a major development going on and under our existing rules an Aboriginal entrepreneur would not be eligible," Bandzierz said. "What we've said is when it comes to the 2010 Olympics, we're going to make it so. And that's not only for the B.C. folks, that's for people across Canada. So we think that's fairly useful.

By Cheryl Petten



Airline still flying high,



despite turbulent times

It was a meeting Tom Morris will never forget: Officials of eight First Nations in Northwestern Ontario pulled \$49 in cash out of their pockets to buy 49 per cent of the common shares of a small air-freight business. In return, the owners got “all our freighting from our communities.”

“It was something extraordinary,” Morris, then a band councillor at Big Trout First Nation in charge of managing economic development, recalled of the meeting in 1989. “The people in the room were elated. It was a proud moment.”

The goal was economic self-sufficiency, the vision of Aboriginal Elder Albert Mamakwa from Kingfisher Lake, who wanted the eight remote communities to become involved in the businesses that serviced them.

“What he said was, ‘We need to do that for our youth,’” said Morris, now president and chief executive officer of the airline, during an interview at the Thunder Bay headquarters.

It was the first step in the 16-year transformation of V. Kelner Airways Ltd., from a non-Native-owned freight business with five planes and annual revenue of \$2.5 million to the Aboriginal-owned Wasaya Airways LP, with more than \$50 million in revenue last year and 18 planes offering passenger, charter and freight service to 25 communities in Northwestern Ontario and freight service to Northern Manitoba.

In 1998, when the original owners were bought out entirely by Wasaya, “people said, ‘Now it’s going fall flat on its face in one

year,’” Morris said.

Instead it continued to expand, started charter services and weathered difficult times, including a crash in 2003 that killed all eight aboard, including the pilot.

Wasaya Airways is the largest part of Thunder Bay-based Wasaya Group Inc., owned by Bearskin Lake; Kasabonika Lake, Kingfisher Lake, Big Trout Lake, Wunnumin Lake, Nibinamik, Wapekeka and Webequie. Last year, Pikangikum and Muskrat Dam joined Wasaya Airways and are expected to become part of Wasaya Group by next July.

The airline business was a natural choice for the group because it was the only way for the reserves to get necessities, such as food, household items and fuel for electricity-producing diesel generators.

“Pretty well everything that is sold in the stores” needs to be air-lifted in, Morris said.

So in 1989, the eight communities asked V. Kelner’s owners how they could get involved with the air-freight operation, which had flight dispatch centres in Pickle Lake and

administration in Thunder Bay.

Forty-nine dollars later, the deal was done. In the first year, thanks to the exclusive freight agreement, revenues more than tripled to \$8.9 million from \$2.5 million. By 1992, Wasaya Group owned 75 per cent of V.

Kelner’s common shares and 75 per cent of its preferred shares, buying the stock with a \$500,000 federal grant.

In 1993, V. Kelner was renamed Wasaya, which means “light from the rising sun” in Oji-Cree. A logo was developed in the shape of a sunburst that depicts eight sun rays, one for each of the original Aboriginal communities.

Regularly scheduled passenger service started in 1995 between Sioux Lookout and the eight fly-in communities; soon after Thunder Bay was added to the mix. An alliance with former air carrier Canadian Airlines helped make the passenger service possible by giving



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flight connections from Thunder Bay.

A year later, Wasaya bought the assets of Winnipeg-based freight carrier Air Manitoba, and set up a base in Red Lake, Ont., near the Manitoba border, to fly goods to Manitoba's north as well as six Arctic communities.

By 1998, the original owners were bought out. Tom Kamenawatamin Sr., chairman of Wasaya Corp. and former chief of Bearskin Lake First Nation, became the company's first Aboriginal president and chief executive officer. Morris, who had two years of experience at Wasaya as a resource worker and two more as a management trainee, became vice-president.

Their first major challenge was the company's failing scheduled passenger service, which was vying for customers with Bearskin Airlines, a non-Aboriginal Northwestern Ontario airline headquartered in Sioux Lookout.

At Wasaya's passenger peak in 1997, it was moving about 2,000 people a month using two airplanes, only half of its capacity. "Freighting has always been our main money maker," Morris said.

Wasaya cancelled the passenger service in early 1999, severing its ties with Canadian Airlines and cutting the work force by 75 to 220 employees.

"We wouldn't have survived if we hadn't made that tough decision."

But a week after the passenger service cancellation, Wasaya started charter scheduling, with five of the founding reserves setting up two air corporations that chartered Wasaya's planes and then resold the seats.

The benefits of charter scheduling are hard to miss, Morris said. "When it's passenger service, it depends on how many people you get on the plane. Charter, you get full, full. Everything's paid."

At the same time, Wasaya started a separate charter department to provide service to other groups, forming partnerships with companies and businesses to bring workers to work sites and fly tourists to fishing lodges. For example, the charter department arranged Wasaya's first aerial scenic flight on Sept. 8 for cruise-ship travellers from Germany who stopped

off in Thunder Bay. Wasaya also offers charters to any airport in North America.

Also in 1999, the Arctic service ended because clients went the postal freighting route. "It was probably cheaper for them," Morris said. As well, Wasaya's flight dispatch centres in Red Lake and Pickle Lake were moved to Thunder Bay as a part of a strategy to centralize, avoid duplication and minimize costs.

In 2000, Wasaya was restructured from a limited company to Wasaya Airways LP, reducing risk liability and creating tax savings for the company, Morris said.

Aviation services never come cheap, said Paul Disley, vice-president of operations, who has been with the airline since 1991.

Like other airlines, the rising insurance costs in the post 9/11 era and the rising price of oil have put pressure on the bottom line.

Costs for jet fuel jumped by about 10 cents a litre in October last year, the highest fuel hike Wasaya has ever seen, Disley said.

"Depending on how many planes you have, you can burn up a couple million dollars in a blink of an eye... At the end of the day, there's not a lot left after you pay your operating costs."

Wasaya has 18 planes: a Beaver float plane, three Beech 1900Ds, three Cessna 208B Caravans, four Hawker Siddeley 748s and seven Pilatus PC-12s.

Wasaya generally makes annual profits of five to 10 per cent, or \$2.5 million to \$5 million. In recent years, much of it has been plowed back into the airline.

There's some talk that all-weather roads and hydro grids could be heading North some day, a move that would ultimately affect Wasaya's services. While the promise is very long term, the airline is aware that "as times change, we have to mould ourselves into an airline that will be viable and profitable."

Wasaya Group is already looking into expanding its transportation arm with a trucking business to transport goods to the remote communities on any new roads that spring up.

"We're always on the lookout for new opportunities," Morris said.

By Chen Chekki



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Pipeline project regulatory review begins

The Really Big Show is on the road in Canada's north, launched Jan. 25 in Inuvik with a flourish of Native dancing, singing and drumming and enough vows, promises and pledges to apparently remove any doubts that the Mackenzie Gas Project will finally proceed.

But, farther south, project leader Imperial Oil was doing one of the things Imperial does best—injecting a note of caution.

In contrast to the celebration that set in motion a year of regulatory hearings, Randy Broiles, Imperial senior vice president, offered a sober assessment of the project's outlook.

Speaking to an energy conference at Lake Louise, a resort community in the Canadian Rockies, he again echoed Imperial's standard caveat that the Mackenzie economics are "thin."

He said a combination of rising construction costs, eroding natural gas prices and emerging competition from liquefied natural gas (LNG) could yet be the Mackenzie's undoing.

"While the Mackenzie would be an important source of supply, LNG imports are expected to dominate the new growth wedge," Broiles said Jan. 27.

Aside from Imperial's standard caveats that it must first obtain regulatory approvals and then reach a corporate decision on the economics of building a pipeline, Broiles' primary focus was on the progress achieved so far in a venture that has already cost the co-venturers \$400 million and involved more than 1,000 documented meetings with northern communities.

Despite the many loose ends—including the

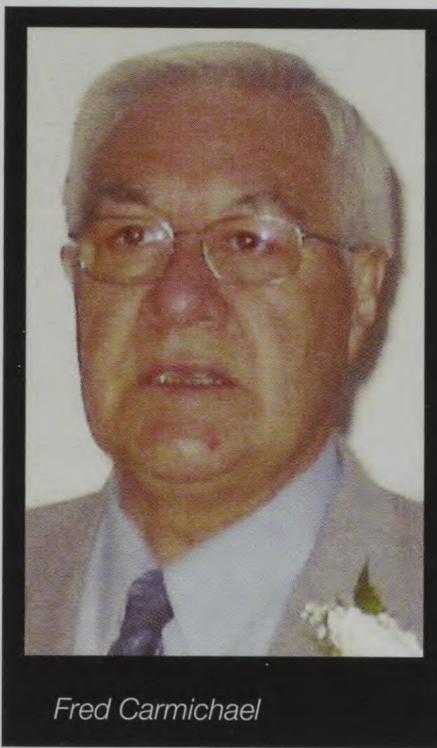
need for benefits and access agreements with Aboriginal groups, final terms of agreement on fiscal matters, natural gas markets, project costs and the level of shipping commitments—his essential message was

that "we're confident we will go forward with this amazing opportunity."

That sentiment was widely echoed by government, regulatory, industry and Aboriginal leaders.

"We're ready," said Fred Carmichael, chairman of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group, which could own two per cent to 33 per cent of the pipeline, adding the north has had 30 years to "get ready" since a 1977 national inquiry halted the first attempt to develop Canada's Arctic gas.

Ken Vollman, chairman of the National Energy Board, which is conducting one of two parallel hearing processes along with a Joint Review Panel, charged with assessing



Fred Carmichael

the environmental, socio-economic and cultural impact, said "We're striving to hear all voices."

"We have been asked to make a decision on a proposal to build a pipeline system from north of Inuvik to the Alberta border covering nearly (840 miles).

"If approved, this \$7 billion system would be one of the largest projects considered by the board since its creation in 1959," Vollman said.

With the hearings under way, those Aboriginal regions who are in the final stages of wrapping up deals with Imperial to take full equity positions in the Aboriginal Pipeline Group delivered an ultimatum to the Deh Cho First Nations, the last holdout community. Carmichael said a letter has been sent to the Deh Cho giving them until June 30 to take an equity position or lose their reserved seat.

"This project is going to go ... with them or without them," he said.

But Deh Cho Grand Chief Herb Norwegian was typically direct in his response, telling the Globe and Mail that "we don't accept deadlines on anything. That's the attitude we get from imperialist oil companies."

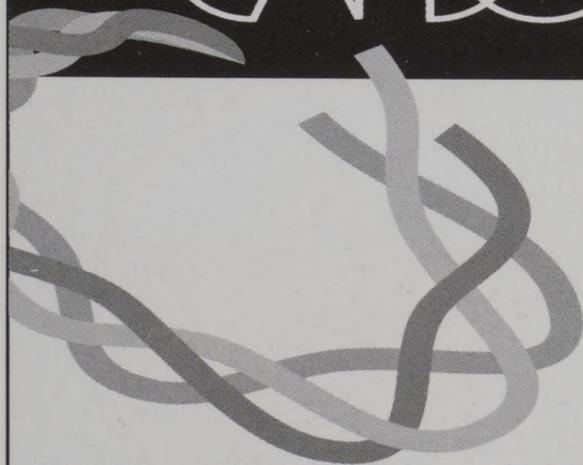
He said the Deh Cho first wants the Canadian government to break a deadlock in land claims and self-government negotiations.

Otherwise, Norwegian said, the Deh Cho are ready to support environmentally sound projects that directly benefit First Nations, at which point the Deh Cho would be "right in the forefront."

By Gary Park—Petroleum News

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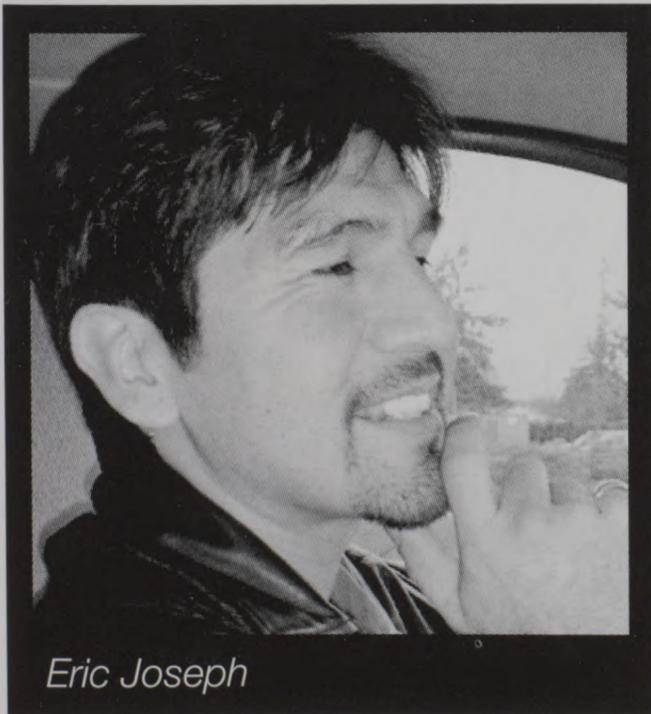
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Obstacles & Opportunity

The Tsawataineuk First Nation, Gwawaenuk Tribe and the Kwicksutaineuk/Ah Kwah Ah Mish First Nation, known together as the Four Tribes,

have reiterated their disapproval of the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Plan (CCLRMP) stakeholder process, and want it known that they do not endorse any aspect of the plan as it relates to their territories in British Columbia. A press release from Eric Joseph, chairman of Tsawataineuk First Nation, said the nations have their own vision for the territory based on a distinct relationship with the land and have asked the B.C. government to remove these territories from the CCLRMP map and cease all discussions of any areas in the territory. He said forestry activity in the area last year forced the Four Tribes to demonstrate at a place called Wasilas (Holden Creek) to stop International Forest Products from "blasting a road through an old growth cedar stand", thereby protecting a place the Four Tribes consider sacred. Joseph further said the tribal council has passed a resolution to boycott the 2010 Olympics as a result of "our environmental concerns and the impacts to our marine resources." The Four Tribes have been given the support for their position by the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs who have resolved to intervene in the Cabinet approval of any recommendations of the stakeholders until government-to-government consultations can occur with the Four Tribes.



Eric Joseph

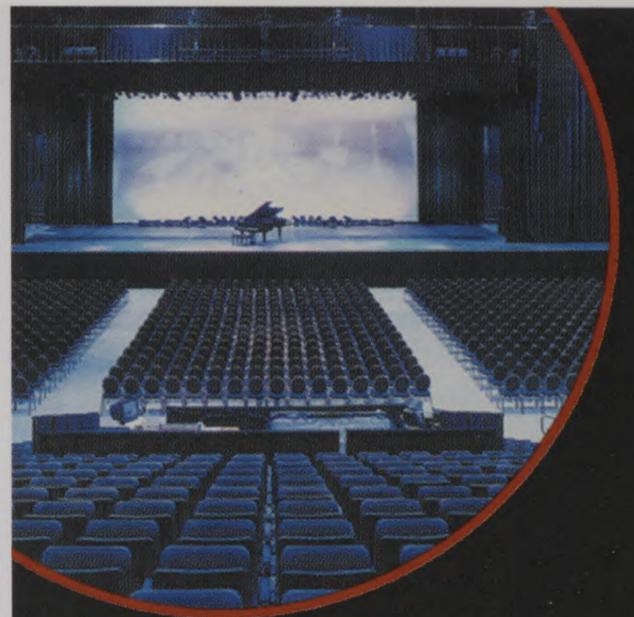
Windspeaker Business Quarterly

A much dreamed about plan to build a \$60-million office complex that will house the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

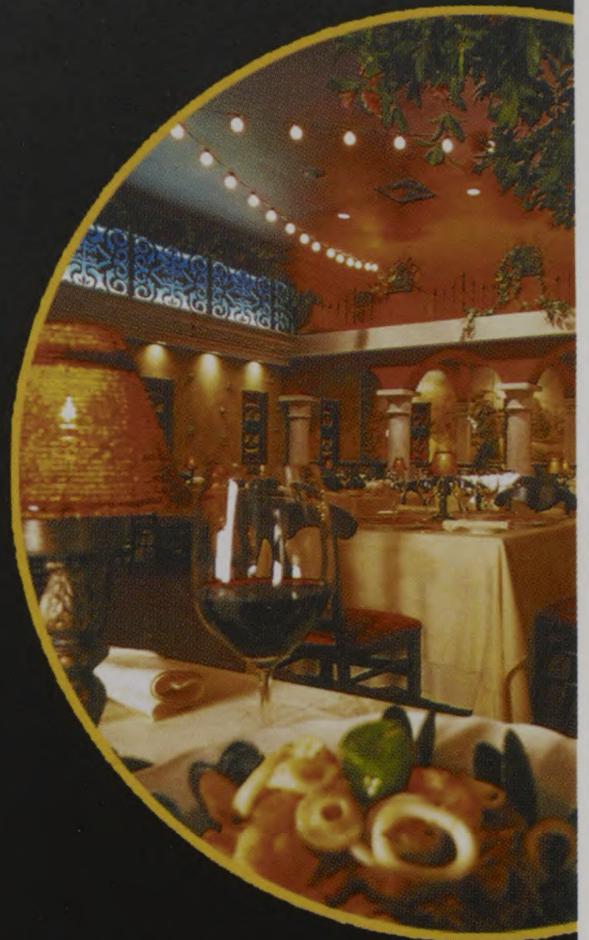
got a step closer to reality when Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz took a stroll through Saskatoon to get a better appreciation of how an urban reserve functions and contributes to the greater good of the community. Now, Katz said, it's just a matter of time before an Aboriginal business zone will be negotiated for Manitoba's capital city. Katz recently visited the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation's 35 acres in the industrial section of Saskatoon, and called the experience "very enlightening." He said key to moving the Winnipeg development along will be educating a public that thinks the tax-free environment carved out by Native groups within city centres means Native people are getting special treatment. Katz said it's important for people to understand that, in lieu of property taxes, service agreements are put in place to cover such things as fire and police protection. He said people who have a negative reaction to the urban reserve concept don't understand what it is.

Intergrated Pole Ltd. has won the Northern B.C. Business and Technology Award in the Aboriginal Business category.

The awards ceremony was held in Prince George, B.C. on Jan. 12. Integrated Pole Ltd. was established in 2003 to respond to the local need for high quality log production to meet the high demand of log home builders in the South Cariboo area. Owner Dee Law developed a homemade bark stripping system to produce the finished logs. His innovation has rivaled large production units for speed and quality. He now employs four staff and is developing a sanding system. The company is located in 100 Mile House. It can provide spruce, pine and fir house logs in varying sizes and lengths.



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Rudy Rojas, founder and CEO of Native Threads, had a cushy job in the surf industry before he decided to break into the clothing market.

Native Threads

Native Threads is a clothing design and manufacturing company based in the United States, which claims to be the leader in its field in Indian Country. Will Canada embrace the southern business as it crosses the border and launches its extensive line of products into our economy this year? We think there is a very good chance that it might.

“Our biggest thing this year is to go into Canada and make a big splash and cause ripples throughout,” said Shonta Chaloux, sales and cultural promotions manager for Native Threads. “We want the people of Canada to know that there’s a clothing

became a household name in the U.S. Rojas is as a very outgoing person who believes that he was sent on this path by his ancestors and the Creator, Chaloux said.

“He looks at himself as somebody who was given this responsibility to spread the message of pride, and just to share who we are as Native people,” Chaloux said. “When he started his journey he wanted to create images to show the beauty of our people and to show our people the greatness we come from, and to spread empowerment throughout Indian Country, and I think our clothing line has quickly done that.”

Since joining the Native Threads team in 2003, Chaloux has been fostering new

tree or a big nose Indian on a hat, because those are the images that you see out there on clothing,” said Chaloux.

For those who haven’t seen the images on Native Threads clothing, it is “just basic stuff that is powerful and meaningful to Native people.” Images include portraits of Sitting Bull and Geronimo, of a simple hand or foot print, of feathers or other iconic representations that Rojas has custom created.

“Other people have adopted a lot of our ways and maybe we’re not given that credit.”

Chaloux said the quality of the clothing is the core reason for Native Thread’s success, but it’s the family atmosphere at the company that makes it all really happen.

“That’s what we truly have, a good family who truly believes in this company and what we’re doing,” said Chaloux. It

breaks into the Canadian market

line out here that represents Aboriginal people in a good way.”

Chaloux is responsible for co-ordinating the company’s participation in powwows, trade shows and cultural events. He took Native Threads to two premier events to introduce the line to Canadian Native shoppers. Native Threads was seen in Toronto at the annual international powwow held there in November, and the company became one of the sponsors for the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards gala held in Vancouver in January.

Before starting the business 16 years ago, Rudy Rojas, founder and CEO of Native Threads, was in the surf industry, said Chaloux.

“He had a very cushy, happy job and he could’ve stayed there but he left that behind because he was tired of the stereotypical images that were constantly put out there about Native people,” said Chaloux. “There was nothing that represented us in a good way.”

Rojas gave birth to his dream from his garage, and Native Threads quickly

business relationships with organizations such as the National Museum of the American Indian, National Congress of American Indians and high-profile casinos in Las Vegas. He is currently in negotiations with The North West Company to carry the Native Threads products in their chain of 144 stores.

“So far, everywhere we’ve gone the reception has been incredible,” said Chaloux.

Since starting up in 1990, Native Threads quickly inspired the creation of other similar clothing companies, but “none of them have the capacity or the in-house capabilities,” said Chaloux. “We print our own stuff in-house, where everyone else has to farm it out and have it printed by non-Native people.”

Chaloux said what makes the Native Threads products successful is the artwork that adorns it, which depicts Native heritage as rich in culture and something that people can be proud of.

“We don’t want to be depicted as wolves howling at the moon or an owl sitting on a

also helps to have a strong mission statement to refer to everyday, he said.

“We believe that our company exists to promote and preserve our Native American culture and traditions through our contemporary clothing designs to spread good will and prosperity among all. I think having that strong mission statement always reminds us of who we are and where we come from,” Chaloux said.

To learn more about the company or to get your hands on some Native Threads, visit www.nativethreads.com.

“Anybody who wants to show pride in their culture, here’s the gear and clothing,” said Chaloux.

By Laura Stevens



A made-in-Canada solution

to the skills shortage

By Dr. Sam Shaw, president
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Ask business leaders from coast to coast if there is a national skills shortage and they're likely to respond with: Does Tim have bits? The real question, however, is: What are we going to do about it?

Recently, Kevin O'Leary, host of ROB TV's *Squeeze Play*, asked me if the market could take care of the shortage by paying more for skilled workers. My answer was, not really. Salaries are already rising, and businesses are bidding against each other for talent.

Reasons for the skills shortage are well documented, starting with basic demographics. Fewer people are entering the workforce. Many of today's skilled workers are baby boomers. Over the next decade, 40 per cent of our workforce is likely to retire.

The Canadian economy is strong. In 2004, eight provinces boasted increased employment rates. Subsequently, in a recent survey of Canadian businesses, 56 per cent reported that they were forced to hire people who weren't suitable for the job. Another 30 per cent had to

forego business opportunities.

And it's only going to get worse. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the province will face a shortage of about 100,000 skilled workers in the manufacturing sector in the next 15 years. A Conference Board of Canada report noted that by 2025, the country will face a skilled labor force deficit of 1.2 million people.

And, while we need to attract more skilled immigrants to the country, the global competition for skills is going to remain strong. Moreover, wouldn't it be tragic if Canadians were unable to benefit from a made-in-Canada employment boom?

We need to encourage more young people, especially women and Aboriginal people, to enter skilled trades and technical programs. Yet, how many high school counsellors have a trades-related background or know that entrance requirements for many programs include Grade 12 with Math 30, English 30 and Physics 30?

How many parents know that the trades and technology fields are not only lucrative, but can lead to careers in senior management, as a contractor, entrepreneur or even inventor? Many graduates of the trades programs at the

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), a public post-secondary institution, own their own companies.

Although 60 per cent of the post-secondary graduates in Canada are female, few are attracted to careers in the trades. Women need to know that these careers are not about physical labor. They're about advanced technology.

The Aboriginal population is one of the fastest growing segments of Canada's population. It's time to work with our Aboriginal people to open doors, create access and develop new strategies to allow them to participate in one of the best global economies in the world. We must improve Aboriginal high school completion rates and encourage more students to study math, science and technology. We need improved training in Aboriginal communities to include relevant, culturally-sensitive programs, not more pilot projects.

At NAIT, we're working hard to address the skills shortage and increase productivity, including training anywhere, anytime. Together with our partners in the private sector, we built two 1,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art mobile classrooms to deliver trades training in remote

Alberta communities, at a capital cost of \$1.2 million.

We also offer distance training, with apprentices learning on the Internet and on the job and returning real value to their employers.

But that's just the start. With major projects on the books valued at \$116 billion and growing, Alberta needs huge numbers of skilled people.

That's why NAIT's current business plan has identified a 15-year, \$500-million campus expansion plan to train 160,000 skilled workers — everything from accountants, welders, ironworkers, to MRI technologists.

In 2004, the Alberta government, realizing a skills shortage could be a real threat to those major projects and a drag on the provincial economy, earmarked a \$44-million investment for our \$72-million trades expansion.

Far from being a boon exclusive to Alberta's economy, oil sands development has far-reaching benefits for the national economy. More than 40 per cent of the jobs generated by oil sands investment are outside Alberta, 16 per cent in Ontario alone.

How many people know that 40 per cent of government revenue generated by oil sands goes to the federal government? In addition, goods, materials and services used to construct and operate the projects come from across Canada.

Even if these projects were not generating jobs and wealth across the country, it would still be in the national interest to train more people. The last thing provinces such as Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia need is an exodus of skilled workers to the booming Alberta oil patch or the proposed \$7 billion Mackenzie Valley natural gas pipeline project.

By investing \$15 million in NAIT's campus expansion for trades, the federal government is making the right investment for the right reasons for Canadians to have the right skills for employers large or small.

But governments alone should not be expected to pay the full cost of training skilled workers. After all, the private sector reaps tremendous benefits when it hires employees with the latest technical skills.

That's why companies such as Suncor Energy Foundation, Waiward Steel Fabricators Ltd. and Spartan Controls have made major investments in NAIT's expansion. Edmonton-based Ironworkers Local 720 also stepped up with an investment.

The challenge is for business and industry to support training more Canadians in our post-secondary institutions, because it is the right thing to do, at the right time, for the right reasons. By working with our partners in business, industry, government and organized labor, we're creating short- and long-term solutions to the skills shortage. Solutions that are as made-in-Canada as, well, Timbits. **BQ**

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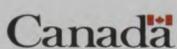
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Windspeaker Business Quarterly

Business meets community needs

If you asked Laureen Wassaykeesic a decade ago what she'd be doing in the future, owning her own business probably wouldn't have topped her list, but the people of Mishkeegogaming Lake First Nation are likely very happy that's where she's ended up.

Wassaykeesic owns and operates Laureen's Grocery and Gas, which sells gas and fuel, a full line of grocery products, and has recently expanded to include a Canada Post franchise. She divides her time between the store and her duties as a member of the Mishkeegogaming band council.

Wassaykeesic was attending university, working toward earning her degree in nursing when a cousin asked her if she would establish a store in the community and offered to provide the equity she'd need to get the business started. She agreed, and in 1998, the doors of Laureen's Grocery and Gas opened for the first time.

"We started out with pop and chips and gas and just small staples, bread, flour, all those general things," Wassaykeesic said. The offerings were limited, but it provided the people in the community with an alternative to having to drive 35 km to Pickle Lake for everything they needed, the only other option available to them after the band-run store closed in 1995.

Laureen's Grocery and Gas is open nine hours a day, six days a week, but people in the community know that Wassaykeesic will open the store for them at all hours of the day or night if need be.

"Even if we're closed at three o'clock in the morning, we go and open the store for them. We actually cater to the community. It's almost like 24-7 service," she said.

Pretty much everyone in the community uses the services provided by Wassaykeesic, as do many of those travelling the winter roads that pass by Mishkeegogaming.

"I'm right on the highway. You cannot pass the reserve unless you go through here ... and a lot of people do come in and stop," Wassaykeesic said.

Part of the reason the business has been so successful is the courtesy of the staff and their willingness to go out of their way to meet the needs of their customers. If they can provide a service, they will, but if they can't they will try to find someone else who can, Wassaykeesic said.

"Like a lot of times we have somebody that has a flat tire or their car breaks down. We try to assist them; we try to connect them to the people that they can get help from."

Wassaykeesic's business success has not gone unnoticed. The Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund has named her its Business Woman of the Year on three separate occasions. She first



Laureen Wassaykeesic (right) accepts her Business Woman of the Year award from the Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund.

received the award in 2000, then again in 2001 and 2005. Winning the award for the third time was very unexpected, Wassaykeesic said, but to her it meant that someone is noticing her efforts.

"Because a lot of times it seems like nobody really notices your hard work, like nobody appreciates you ... and then I got this phone call saying 'You've won the Business Woman of the Year award again,' and I thought, 'Oh my, somebody is acknowledging my work.'"

Wassaykeesic is quick to add that she isn't the only one responsible for the success of Laureen's Grocery and Gas. She employs four or five staff to work in the store, mainly hiring youth from the community to fill the positions, and their hard work and dedication are part of the reason the business is doing so well.

"My success has to be a credit to them because they're the ones that operate the store day to day, and I just kind of overlook to make sure that they're not out of bounds. But within the last three years I haven't had to watch over them. They've taken off. They know their market. They know how to run the business. And so a lot of credit goes to them. They know their stuff."

Providing opportunities for young people to work and gain valuable experience is an important part of what her business provides to the community, Wassaykeesic said. "Because when you tell them, 'This is what you've done, this is the success,' the business wouldn't have been where it's at today if it hadn't been for them. And when you tell them that, they have this esteem, that this is something they could go

into if they wanted to."

Her employees learn about the responsibilities that come with holding a job, including showing up on time and putting in a good day's work once you get there; lessons that sit them in good stead when they leave Wassaykeesic's employ to work in other positions.

"When they do leave and they go to work somewhere else, you always get good reports back that this person is a good worker. And what they've learned at the store, whatever they gain, they take somewhere else and continue it. So in that way it's very positive."

When she first opened the business she wasn't sure if she would be able to make a go of it, but it didn't take long before the business began to flourish. Today it is a thriving business, and an important part of the community.

"It is, actually ... you can feel it. We close for two days and people are phoning, people are outside. 'When are you going to open?'" Wassaykeesic said. "If we're closed, they feel it. They have to get in there. I don't think they realized how much need they have for it, for the community store. And I don't know how they managed before when they didn't have a community store, but it must have been very costly for them to travel back and forth to the municipality next door."

So what does the future hold for Laureen's Grocery and Gas? If all goes well, a restaurant will soon be added to give travellers a place to stop for coffee and a bite to eat on their way through the community.

By Cheryl Petten



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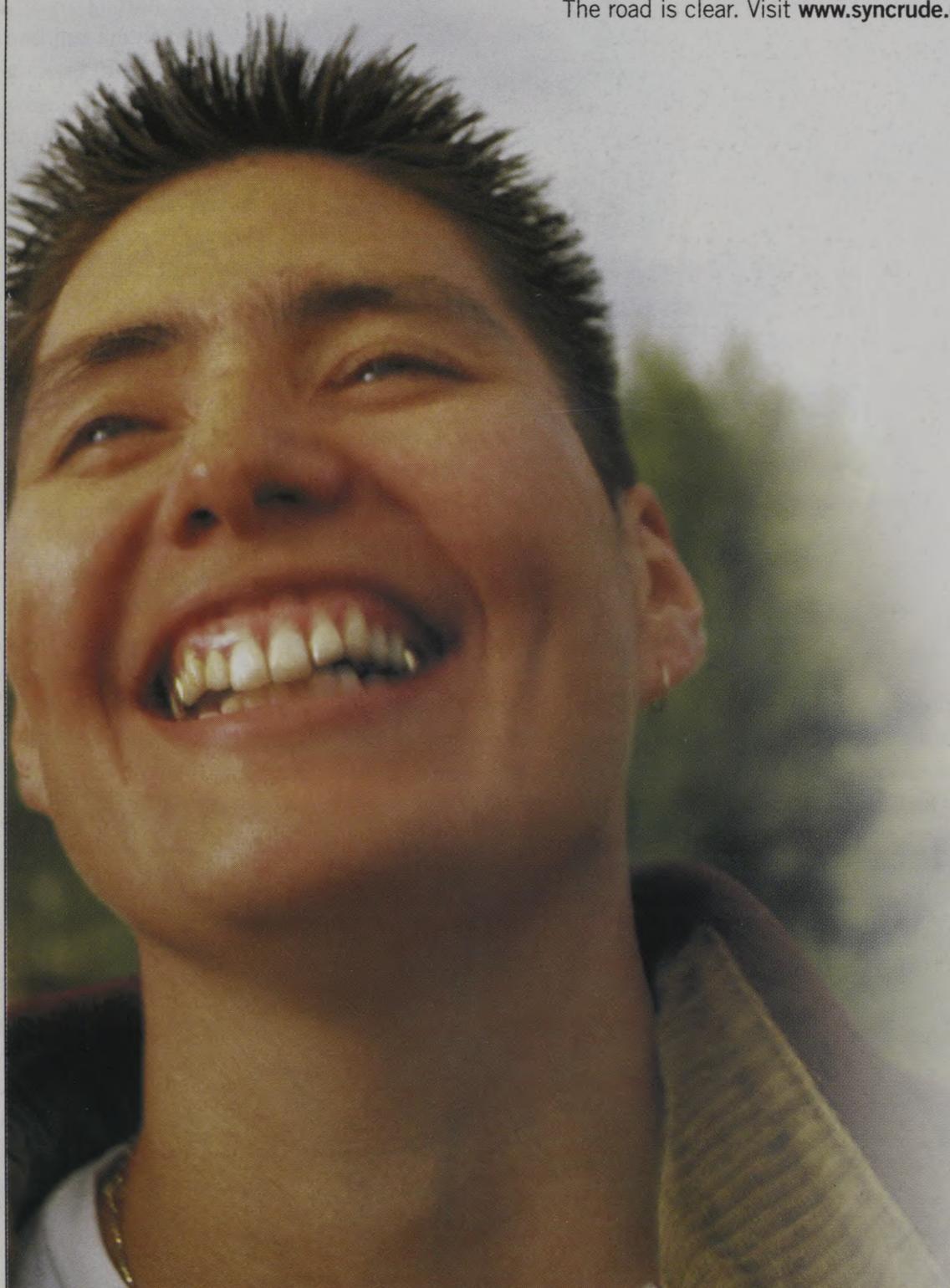
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