

It's the Dawning of a New Day for Aboriginals

The fourth Resource Expo for Aboriginal Energy & Resource Development took place in Vancouver November 7-10, 2004, with over one hundred delegates and Canada's largest corporations and many important politicians on hand. Clear, sunny skies, unusual for November on the West Coast, may have been a signal of brighter days ahead for First Nations people. With oil hovering near \$50 per barrel, possible new oil and gas pipelines from the north, and a glittering and expanding diamond industry, the stage is set for boom times ahead.

B.C. Energy and Mines minister Richard Neufeld was the first of many politicians to address the meeting, with glowing details of recent successes in oil and gas developments in the northeastern part of the province. It has resulted in over \$2 billion in royalties to government coffers, second only to the forestry sector. B.C. is now Canada's second-largest natural gas producer supplying 17% of production. Northeast oil development affects 65,000 residents of which 3,000 are members of seven native bands in the Treaty Eight area. B.C. off-shore oil has a 10-billion barrel potential, and maybe 50-80 tonnes per cubic front of natural gas which is currently under environmental and feasibility assessment. If conditions warrant, the federal government moratorium on drilling may be lifted. We can expect multi-billion dollar development similar to

senior management, we have made employment, training and career development opportunities become realities for local residents.

Our employees have helped prove to the industry that locally owned, Aboriginal companies can *get the job done* safely, efficiently and reliably.

We are proud to salute our employees who have helped us earn a reputation for quality and service.

- **Mechanical Systems**
- **Pressure Piping**
- **Welding**
- **Equipment**
- **Maintenance**
- **Project Management**

Box 5144 Fort McMurray
Alberta T9H 3G2

Ph: (780) 791-1480

Fax: (780) 791-2002

Hibernia, if off-shore drilling proceeds. Agreements with First Nations on job creation, revenue sharing and equity partnerships will follow, and are already underway in preliminary negotiations.

Presenting the other side of the picture was Chief Garry Oker of the Doig River First Nation, with 235 members. "Our people have over 10,000 years of history and have survived as hunters, gatherers and fishermen. Treaty Eight was signed in 1899, a treaty of peace and sharing. The current agreements tied to production revenue are not sustainable. What happens when the production runs out? We want meaningful consultation, not token involvement, we want full partnership in decision making and long-term compensation for our rights". However, Oker is optimistic about the future and his band has laid out 23 steps for a meaningful and collaborative process.

One driving force behind the conference is Dave Tuccaro, president of the National Aboriginal Business Association headquartered in Fort McMurray. In 2003, aboriginal-owned companies did over \$400 million worth of oil sands



business, and that's just the beginning of the potential. More and more companies are forging strategic partnerships with the giants of the oil and gas industry, which is paying off in big dividends for both groups. Tuccaro Inc., is the parent company of eight vertically integrated subsidiaries operating under the Neegan name and includes an aboriginal skilled workforce of over 300, doing important jobs such as restoring tar sands-mined areas back to their natural states, technical services, construction and trucking. In the diamond mining sector, aboriginal companies are also doing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of work. This results in more profits for industry corporations now utilizing local people rather than flying southern workers back and

forth from their homes to distant job sites.

Another key leader in this conference was Calvin Helin, president of the Native Investment Trade Association. He said, "It's time for natives to move from grievance to an era focused on development, to obtain the needed skill through education and training, and to take advantage of the many opportunities throughout our country. Self-deter-

For more information on APTN, visit www.aptn.ca.

Additional notes from Resource Expo 2004

Royal Bank:

The Royal Bank has always been supportive of Aboriginal aspirations and business ventures. One of their innovative programs is the *Put a Feather in Your Cap* initiative to help keep First Nations students in school by offering part-time summer employment and scholarships. Education is clearly the key for a secure future for young Aboriginals.

APTN:

Watch out for a new media star! Brenda Chambers has been producing Canada's first Aboriginal business series on APTN, the Aboriginal People's Television Network. Starting in January, *Venturing Forth* will feature intriguing stories in natural resource development, profiling chiefs, corporations and Aboriginal leaders who make a difference.

By Tony Mayer

Siksika Environment Ltd. is proud to offer this broad range of service to communities, companies and government agencies throughout Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

Head Office:

P.O. Box 1520, Siksika,
Alberta T0J 3W0

Phone: (403) 734-5244

Fax: (403) 737-5342

Web: www.siksikaenvironmental.com

Email: info@siksikaenvironmental.com