

February 27, 2009

Recipients of 2009 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction



Excellence in Alberta's business community was celebrated tonight in Edmonton as the winners of the 18th annual Alberta Business Awards of Distinction were announced at a gala.

The winner of the **Premier's Award of Distinction**, the evening's most prestigious honour, was **Rogers Insurance** of Calgary. The following is a list of the other nine recipients:

Aboriginal Woman Entrepreneur

Muskwa Productions and Consulting – Tsuu T'ina

Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur

Hytek Computer Sales and Service Limited – Rocky Mountain House

Diversity Leadership

Frito Lay Canada – Lethbridge

Employer of Persons with Disabilities

Canada Safeway Limited – Calgary

Employer of Youth

Good Earth Coffeehouse and Bakery – Calgary

Small Business

Mathieu Hryniuk LLP – Peace River

Marketing

Spindle, Stairs & Railings – Calgary

Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice

ESS Support Services – Calgary

Aboriginal Relations – Eagle Feather

Samson Management Limited – Hobbema

NOTE: A backgrounder profiling the winning companies is attached.

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Recipients

2009 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction

Aboriginal Woman Entrepreneur

Recognizes outstanding achievement by an Aboriginal woman entrepreneur who exemplifies effective leadership, innovation, and a commitment to enhancing the well being of the larger aboriginal community.

Muskwa Productions & Consulting – Tsuu T’ina

1 employee

Nicole Robertson is passionate about the ability of the media to break down stereotypes about Aboriginal people. Nicole, who has 10 years of experience in print, radio and TV, launched her Calgary-area business after noticing Aboriginal communities were not engaging the media. She has long wanted First Nations people to empower themselves by taking control of their own publicity, and four years after starting her business, the young Cree woman’s insight and advice had helped highlight 1,000 Aboriginal-related stories in the mainstream media. Nicole’s proactive approach recognizes media can be used as powerful tool for positive change.

Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur

Awarded to a young entrepreneur who best exemplifies the qualities of effective leadership, innovatively applied know-how, and excellent potential for growth, and who shows a level of social, cultural, and environmental awareness.

Hytek Computer Sales and Service Ltd. – Rocky Mountain House

6 employees

In 1996, Hytek Computers set out to offer its customers superb technical services and support. In the ensuing years, Hytek not only expanded its products and services by opening a larger, better location in Rocky Mountain House, it’s responding to its growing corporate client base in Drayton Valley with plans to open a new business service centre in that community. Preston Irwin, the president and general manager of Hytek, has overseen this growth for the past 12 years. His strategy for success is simple and effective – surround yourself with qualified people from whom you can learn.

Diversity Leadership

Awarded to an organization that embraces diversity in its workforce, encourages respect and inclusion, eliminates discrimination and barriers, and helps create welcoming and inclusive workplaces and communities.

Frito Lay Canada – Lethbridge

744 employees

A few years ago, Frito Lay’s Southern Alberta facilities were having difficulty recruiting and keeping staff in an employee-friendly labour market. The largest manufacturer and distributor of snack foods in Canada responded by developing new techniques to deepen its access to new talent pools and retain its employees. It found a successful recipe and it has the figures to prove it. In 2007, Frito Lay reduced its total staff turnover by nine per cent, followed by

another six-per-cent last year. Employee satisfaction also shot up. Frito Lay knows there are no magic solutions, but it plans to continually improve with a long-term commitment to fostering a truly inclusive workplace.

Employer of Persons with Disabilities

Awarded to a business demonstrating creative leading-edge practices in hiring, training, and developing employees with disabilities.

Canada Safeway Limited – Calgary

14,532 employees

Canada Safeway's commitment to employing people with disabilities extends to hiring specialists, known as "onboarders," who act as a personal connection between the store and its disabled employee. A key to Safeway's success in melding employees into the workplace involves custom-tailoring their job descriptions to their abilities, and developing relationships with fellow workers and customers, which makes the staff member feel valued and helps remove attitudinal barriers. Hiring people with disabilities is more than a co-operative initiative to Safeway – it is a living part of its culture. Safeway believes the diversity of its workforce, customers and partners is one of its strengths.

Employer of Youth

Awarded to an organization that has demonstrated outstanding achievement in hiring youth and providing them with career-oriented opportunities.

Good Earth Coffeehouse and Bakery – Calgary

100 employees

This chain of coffeehouses in Alberta and B.C. provides its staff with incentives to volunteer in the community, promotes education, and plants seeds for future endeavours. About two-thirds of staff members at the 19 Good Earth Cafés are under the age of 25 and a number are young immigrants. The chain's nurturing management practice has won it loyal employees, many of whom go on to flourish personally and professionally. The cafés also offer apprenticeship opportunities for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's culinary students. Young employees and the students profit from a workplace that exposes them to career paths in the food and hospitality industry.

Small Business

Awarded to the small business owner who best reflects the outstanding spirit and success of the province's small business community.

Mathieu Hryniuk LLP – Peace River

40 employees

The law firm of Mathieu Hryniuk has deep roots in Alberta's Peace Region where it's been helping strengthen and build communities for more than 60 years. The firm is based in Peace River and has eight other locations throughout the region. Mathieu Hryniuk LLP provides legal expertise to residents who would otherwise have to travel long distances to receive similar services. But just as important as the legal services it provides to citizens spread across a

58,000-square-kilometre area is the firm's commitment to assisting, sponsoring and donating to non-profit organizations that make Northern Alberta a better place to live and raise a family.

Marketing

Awarded to the organization that has best developed and implemented a successful marketing strategy that has had a significant impact on the organization.

Spindle, Stairs & Railings – Calgary

40 employees

Spindle, Stairs & Railings of Calgary registered great success with its "Build-a-Stair" website feature that allows customers to design their own staircase. In the past, inviting a client to select the design and materials for their stairway has been a patience-building exercise for builders and contractors. The introduction of the "Build-a-Stair Workshop" makes the process quick, easy and fun. The virtual workshop was just one feature of Spindle, Stairs & Railings' successful website redesign. It also introduced a unique 24-hour quotation system that has proven tremendously popular. The six-year-old company's innovative website has boosted its volume of renovation projects and allowed it to establish valuable relationships with home builders.

Aboriginal Relations – Best Practice

Awarded to a non-Aboriginal business that demonstrates outstanding achievement in Aboriginal relations, including economic development, employment and training, and Aboriginal community support.

ESS Support Services – Calgary

1,148 employees

ESS Support Services forges mutually beneficial partnerships with citizens in the northern communities that help it supply a comprehensive menu of services to remote worksites. The Calgary-based business is an operating arm of Compass Group Canada and ESS North America, the world's largest camp and remote-site servicing company. ESS Support Services measures its success on the relationships it builds with First Nations businesses because it believes it can only achieve healthy growth when the communities in which it works receive fair value for their participation. The company has five mutually profitable Aboriginal Joint Venture Partnerships in Alberta, which provide employment opportunities and economic benefits to their communities.

Aboriginal Relations – Eagle Feather

Awarded to a First Nation's-owned business that demonstrates outstanding achievement in business and has incorporated entrepreneurial and cultural concepts into its operation for long-term success.

Samson Management Ltd. – Hobbema

58 employees

Samson Management Ltd. is a First Nation business-investment company which is a profitable and growing subsidiary of the Samson Cree Nation. The company is an economic generator in its community with significant business holdings and real estate investments. It's also a major employer. In addition, Samson Management is a proud nurturer of the Cree culture and language. Every board of directors' meeting starts with an opening ceremony and prayer conducted by an elder representative, it has a native-design logo, its businesses carry Cree names, it supports First Nation entrepreneurs, and its general manager fosters cultural awareness in all management aspects.

Premier's Award of Distinction

Awarded to an Albertan firm that embodies the Alberta Advantage, exhibits overall outstanding achievement and leadership in Alberta, and demonstrates ongoing, consistent involvement in community events and organizations, both locally and/or provincially. All finalists from each category were automatically eligible and considered for this award.

Rogers Insurance – Calgary

140 employees

Rogers Insurance of Calgary is a leading insurance brokerage that's earned an outstanding reputation for providing its clients with superior insurance solutions. Rogers credits its success to its strong commitment to innovative human resources strategies, which include the following: employee-ownership of the firm; recognizing staff efforts and achievements; job satisfaction; competitive compensation; creating a fun and comfortable work environment; staff training; and top-notch internal and external customer service.