



STRATEGIES AND ADVANCES FROM GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Aboriginal Procurement in Canada: Snapshots of Success

What does the term “aboriginal procurement” mean to your purchasing organization?

If you work in the private sector, the term might mean nothing, or it might sound vaguely like a support program run by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). If you work in the municipal or provincial public sector, it might mean a little more, depending on where you are located. But if you work in the federal public sector, chances are, you will know that the Canadian government has been implementing a successful strategy since 1996 to promote aboriginal business development through the federal contracting process.

The Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) doesn't give money; it helps create opportunity, by stimulating aboriginal business development and increasing the number of aboriginal firms competing for federal contracts. Helping aboriginal businesses help themselves contributes to a more level playing field for competitive procurement at the federal level – and, by extension, at other public-sector levels and in the private sector.

Why should that strategy in particular, and aboriginal procurement in general matter to your organization – especially if you work in the private sector?

As you will read in the ‘snapshots’ in this Special Issue, forward-thinking organizations in both sectors are embracing aboriginal procurement. Why? To meet current needs as well as longer-term objectives to grow capacity in their supplier or partnership/joint venture communities, extend their capabilities, buy locally, encourage innovation and ownership, open up new markets, obtain local market intelligence, and open doors to new opportunities.

In addition, the federal government has signed land-claim agreements with aboriginal groups that may include specific procurement and contracting obligations that will apply when your organization does business in those areas. And those agreements take precedence over the AIT and international trade agreements. Working with aboriginal suppliers or partners can help buying organizations navigate those complexities when business or delivery takes place on treaty or traditional lands.

Canada's Aboriginal Population

According to the latest census, the Canadian aboriginal population surpassed the one-million mark in 2006, reaching 1,172,790. That represents a 45% increase from 1996, which is nearly six times faster than the rate of increase among the non-aboriginal population. The aboriginal population grew 95% in Nova Scotia, 67% in New Brunswick, 65% in Newfoundland and Labrador, 53% in Quebec, and 68% in Ontario. In the western provinces, the fastest growth was in Manitoba, at 36%.

Eight in 10 aboriginal people live in Ontario and the western provinces, and in 2006, 54% lived in urban areas, up from 50% in 1996. Winnipeg was home to the largest urban aboriginal population in 2006 (68,380), followed by Edmonton (52,100), Vancouver (40,310), Toronto (26,575), Calgary (26,575), Saskatoon (21,535) and Regina (17,105).

In 2006, almost half (48%) of the aboriginal population in Canada was under 24 years old, compared with 31% of the non-aboriginal population. This is an important pool of young talent: employees, contractors, partners and entrepreneurs.

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