



## **The Provinces and Territories**

Travelling electronically among the various provinces and territories in Canada has been simplified by the federal government's well-constructed and easy-to-use Aboriginal Canada Portal ([www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca)). The portal is a single entry point for aboriginal online resources, including businesses and associations, and for provincial and territorial government programs and services.

All of the provinces and territories in Canada either work in conjunction with the federal government or directly to offer services to help aboriginals source information, access capital or contract-guarantee instruments, and establish or grow their businesses. MERX, the online tendering service, is open to all three levels of government and Crown corporations in Canada.

But the view across our provinces and territories is still an evolving one when it comes to specific jurisdictional policies on aboriginal procurement. Some jurisdictions have distinct, established strategies and policies. Others have articulated a statement of intent. Some, like British Columbia, are in the process of developing policies.

Why are policies and strategies important? One reason is the value of public procurements, and the need to develop and maintain as level a playing field as possible for aboriginal and non-aboriginal suppliers. According to the AIT, in 2005/06, the value of procurements as reported by the provinces and territories (excluding Yukon and Nunavut, which were not reported) totalled \$11.2 billion.

What have the more forward-thinking jurisdictions done well? Here are snapshots of some examples.

### ***Snapshot: Saskatchewan***

Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan (CIC: [www.cicorp.sk.ca](http://www.cicorp.sk.ca)) is the umbrella or holding company for Saskatchewan's commercial Crown corporations, such as SaskTel, SaskEnergy, SaskWater and SaskPower. Among the largest companies and employers in the province, the Crowns purchase some \$2 billion of goods and services each year from Saskatchewan-based suppliers. Recognizing that aboriginal businesses are an important and growing part of the provincial economy, CIC has created a business-to-business website marketplace – the Aboriginal Business Directory Saskatchewan (<http://aboriginalbusinessdirectory.com>) – to help bring Crowns and aboriginal suppliers together.

### ***Snapshot: Manitoba***

Manitoba researched aboriginal procurement strategies and policies in other jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S. Finding that the PSAB was “the most comprehensive existing model” and the Manitoba Hydro’s Northern Procurement Policy “the best local model,” it used both to shape its Aboriginal Procurement Initiative (API).

The API ([www.gov.mb.ca/mit/psb/api/ab\\_proc.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/psb/api/ab_proc.html)) has four guidelines, all of which have been adopted government-wide:

- aboriginal business sourcing: buyers identify potential aboriginal suppliers from the *Aboriginal Business Directory*, to proactively inform them about upcoming opportunities,
- aboriginal business content: this is a condition of a tender that specifies aboriginal involvement, as a contractor, partner or subcontractor,
- set-asides: these are similar to the PSAB set-asides, and
- scoping: this involves breaking down a contract into smaller parts, so that aboriginal businesses, which might not have the capacity to fulfill the entire contract, can handle at least a portion of it.

As a place to start with API, Manitoba’s Procurement Services Branch website does a good job of providing resource links for both buyers and suppliers, including links to aboriginal media and business and financial resources ([www.gov.mb.ca/mit/psb/api/api\\_bus\\_links.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/psb/api/api_bus_links.html)).

### ***Snapshot: Nunavut***

The Nunavummi Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti (NNI) Policy came into effect on April 1, 2000. It speaks plainly to four key objectives: to obtain good value through fair competition; to strengthen the Nunavut economy through increased business-sector capacity and employment; to encourage a level of Inuit participation in supplying goods and services to the government that reflects the Inuit proportion of the Nunavut population; and to increase the number of trained and skilled Nunavut residents to also reflect that proportion.

The NNI website is a straightforward and effective tool for buyers and suppliers alike, and viewable in four languages, including English. Buyers can search for registered Inuit and Nunavut firms, and Inuit and Nunavut firms can search tenders and Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Through the toolkit link (<http://nni.gov.nu.ca/toolkit>), the NNI Secretariat encourages buyers and suppliers to ‘test’ automated tender analysis forms, to assess the potential advantage of using registered Inuit and Nunavut firms in their submissions.

### ***Snapshot: Atlantic Canada***

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA: [www.acoa.gc.ca](http://www.acoa.gc.ca)) is the federal government department that is responsible for helping build economic capacity in the Atlantic provinces by working with the people of the region.

In March 2003, in conjunction with the Canadian Institute for Research and Regional Development, ACOA published “Aboriginal Economic Development in Atlantic Canada: Lessons Learned and Best Practices.” While not a statement of policy or strategy of any of the provincial governments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova

Scotia or Prince Edward Island, the report has a great deal to say about the status, successes, best practices, challenges and prospects for aboriginal procurement in Atlantic Canada.

The study profiles four very different aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada which have successfully created foundations for their own economic development. In the process, it examines the best practices and success factors that have worked, including building foundations in community capacity, building on existing human capital, gaining access to and control of their resources, making traditions work, building networks of support and co-operation, and encouraging entrepreneurship by leading initiatives to expand economic development.

The ACOA report is now five years old, but it is still very much worth reading, particularly for its case studies and best practices. The report is available at: [www.acoa.ca/e/library/reports/aboriginal/index.shtml](http://www.acoa.ca/e/library/reports/aboriginal/index.shtml).

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