

## Diversity and Inclusion Challenge 6 – Enhancing Opportunities for Career Progression for Indigenous Employees

### The Opportunity

The minerals industry in Saskatchewan has long been one of Canada's leading industrial employers of Indigenous people, particularly in Northern Saskatchewan, where companies such as Cameco Corporation have been recognized for their employment efforts in the North. Understanding that a diverse labour pool provides strength to any competitive industry, as an employer's ability to draw from a wide range of talented individuals can be an advantage, all the IMII's major minerals company members are working to have a workforce that is representative of the communities from which they draw their employees. With respect to Indigenous peoples, the industry's efforts have resulted in a labour force participation rate of approximately 10% - equal to that of their participation in the province's labour force.

Notwithstanding such efforts, IMII's members recognize that there are lower numbers and percentages of Indigenous people in jobs for which the educational and skills requirements are higher, such as professional and physical science occupations (e.g., engineers, scientists), as well as in supervisory and managerial roles (MiHR, 2015).

### The Challenge

Unlike the challenges for Indigenous peoples in obtaining employment in trades or production occupations (where work readiness and essential skills dominate), the challenges involved in improving diversity in occupations with higher educational and skills requirements are more often tied to the level of formal educational attainment and career progression. This suggests a need for innovations in continuing education, on the job training (for higher level or mining-specific technical skills), and leadership/mentoring programs for Indigenous employees (MiHR, 2015).

### Improving Levels of Formal and Informal Education for Professional and Physical Science Occupations and Supervisor and Managerial Roles for Indigenous Employees

For 2018, IMII is seeking innovative and new approaches to improving both the formal and informal educational and skills levels of its Indigenous employees, to support them in achieving higher levels of career attainment in professional and physical science occupations, as well as success in supervisory and managerial roles. The innovations could be related to:

- Attracting and supporting Indigenous students in professional and physical sciences educational programs for careers in mining;
- Attracting and supporting Indigenous peoples into supervisory and managerial roles in mining;
- Developing new training and development strategies to foster career progression for Indigenous employees that reflect and respect cultural considerations; or
- New approaches to making continuing education, on-the-job training and/or leadership programs available to Indigenous employees in more accessible or meaningful ways; and
- New approaches to making mentorship programs for Indigenous employees more impactful in promotion and advancement.

Examples of aspects or practices that could be supportive of this Challenge include:

- Building linkages and partnerships between post-secondary education institutions, including the recognition of academic credit between technical colleges/institutes and universities, to support academic upgrading;
- Offering flexibility in the delivery of upgrading programs to allow adult learners to pause and restart programs as required due to family, community or work obligations without major financial penalty;
- Developing and delivering community-based education programs that are aligned with the labour market needs of industry;
- Legitimizing traditional knowledge by giving post-secondary credits for this knowledge as well as for other skills and areas of expertise;
- Developing new human resources development strategies for increasing the number of Indigenous professionals and managers;
- Developing new career development and counselling strategies for Indigenous employees earlier in their careers that expose them to higher level post-secondary programs and related career opportunities in the minerals industry;
- Developing new career development and counselling strategies for Indigenous employees that recognizes that social variables may have a different effect on career aspirations for First Nations and Métis employees than others;
- Developing new mentorships and role models for Indigenous employees;
- Fostering opportunities for college/institute-industry engagement and joint projects to build higher levels of education;
- Developing a guide to support culturally appropriate selection practices in the industry for supervisory and managerial roles;
- Scoping a secondment program for Indigenous employees to support the development of new skills and experiences and career opportunities;
- Developing guidance on how to set up a shadowing arrangement with a senior professional or manager to transfer knowledge and develop capability;
- Developing guidance on strategies that support the professional development of Indigenous employees through experiential learning, learning through relationships and acquiring knowledge through formal training or study;
- Designing mentorship or leadership development programs that explicitly consider Indigenous cultures; or
- Developing external Indigenous leadership programs relevant to the minerals industry.

### Conditions

The innovations proposed must also recognize that the traditional educational approach to “sit to learn” is likely not the most appropriate learning model for innovations related to academic and career progression. More success is likely to be found in approaches that recognize the intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples. As a result, the innovations proposed must as a minimum have been developed in consultation with an indigenous community or have a meaningful Indigenous partner (e.g., a college or institute, a Friendship Centre or Tribal Council).