

Non-traditional Products: Different challenges face those Aboriginal firms that sell non-traditional products such as engines, peat moss, curling brooms, etc. These include:

- gaining a sufficient track record, a critical mass of sales, financial acumen, management expertise and credibility to enter the export support system;
- overcoming the lack of awareness of the contribution that Aboriginal businesses can make to the Team Canada export initiative; and
- surmounting obstacles created by distances from major markets.

Strategic Direction

The government's key goal is to help current and potential Aboriginal exporters to compete effectively in international markets, both as an integral part of the broader Team Canada effort, and as a specific sector that is increasingly making a unique contribution to the overall trade initiative. To achieve this goal, a comprehensive strategy has been developed to promote the development and competitiveness of Aboriginal-owned businesses in domestic and international markets. This forms the core of Aboriginal Business Canada's *Aboriginal Trade and Market Expansion Initiative*, which is being implemented in conjunction with Aboriginal firms, federal departments, provinces and territorial governments. The National Sector Team (NST) is expected to review and further refine the strategy. The overall strategy is composed of a general component as well as two sector-specific components: Traditional Aboriginal Products and Services, and Major Market Products and Services.

General Component:

The general elements of the strategy are as follows:

- continue to identify existing and prospective exporters;
- ensure that exporters are aware of opportunities, and encourage them to take advantage of these leads;

- bridge gaps in areas such as specific company weaknesses, requirements for business and marketing plans, financing needs, consulting needs, export advice and referrals;
- respond to the need to increase communications within government to reach clients more effectively;
- create increased awareness in the private and public sectors of Aboriginal-export capabilities;
- network firms with each other and with those in other trade networks;
- stream clients into existing trade services offered by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, and private-sector organizations; and
- in partnership with Aboriginal producers, examine the feasibility of developing an "Indigenous trade mark" to facilitate international recognition.

Sector-specific Components:

Traditional Aboriginal Products and Services: The goal of the strategy for this area is to realize the export potential of the entire range of traditional Aboriginal products and services — those where the label "Aboriginal" serves to give the product or service a unique appeal to a specific market or group of markets.

Three specific areas, which warrant individual treatment, have been identified within this overall category:

- *Culturally Based Products, including Aboriginal Tourism;*
- *North of 60; and*
- *Indigenous-to-Indigenous Consulting and Technology Transfer.*

Private-sector/government teams, which will take their direction from the NST, are being set up to focus on trade support for each group. Each team will have a mandate to:

- build international awareness of traditional Canadian Aboriginal products and services in the three specific markets (United States, Germany and Japan);

- increase direct exposure of Canadian producers in these markets;
- address the training needs of exporters;
- improve the distribution infrastructures needed to sell into these markets; and
- provide support on a case-by-case basis for companies targeting other markets.

Culturally Based Products: To take advantage of the unrealized potential in this area, a subsector team will be formed to support exports from Aboriginal industries. It will liaise with the Cultural Industries Sector Team, the Consumer Products Sector Team and the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC). This subsector team, composed of industry and government, will concentrate on companies in the areas of arts, crafts, food, fashion, music and tourism, and will:

- determine gaps in sector needs, especially those in marketing and distribution, and export training;
- champion specific marketing and distribution-related activities, including increasing participation of Aboriginal artists and artisans on international trade missions, and at trade fairs and gift shows;
- ensure that individual companies are informed of the lessons learned by other Aboriginal companies in the field; and
- carry out research, promotion and trade-development activities related to tourism.

Tourism in Canada nets \$27 billion a year and is a fast-growing sector. Aboriginal tourism accounts for about \$270 million. Many of the Aboriginal tourism sites are located on reserves and offer rich cultural experiences to visiting tourists. Aboriginal tourism has significant growth potential with an estimated capability to create another 2000 businesses and 30 000 new jobs. The main challenges faced by those involved in Aboriginal tourism are the deficiencies in packaged tours, marketing skills, knowledge of the tourism industry, and tourism training.

Aboriginal Business Canada, in collaboration with the CTC and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, is undertaking activities to enhance the contribution that Aboriginal tourism makes to the Canadian economy. A national inventory of Aboriginal tourism products will be completed to provide more comprehensive information to both tourists and tour operators. In addition, an Aboriginal tourism travel guide will be published and distributed worldwide. Other strategic directions are to enhance the supply capacity through Aboriginal tourism training workshops in product packaging and marketing; and to develop, through major airlines, brochures for large European and Canadian travel agents. In 1997-98, Aboriginal Business Canada will fund costs related to planning, capital and market support of Aboriginal tourism firms.

North of 60: A North of 60 team is being contemplated, which would focus on exports from the geographic area north of 60 degrees latitude. This team will address trade development in Inuit arts, tourism, transfer of technology in circumpolar regions, communications and air transport, mining and resource-based industries, and Aboriginal-based food products and fisheries technology. The team will:

- review Aboriginal trade in the sectors identified;
- identify the major problems encountered by Aboriginal companies and determine their need to access international opportunities;
- champion and promote Aboriginal exporters, in part by co-ordinating with other departments and agencies;
- provide co-financing and joint management for trade initiatives;
- develop strategies and plans to promote Aboriginal exports from the region and work toward formulating and implementing a business strategy;
- support the development of trade initiatives; and
- ensure continuous, dynamic communications among the team members.