

UNITED STATES

MINORITY SUPPLIER CERTIFICATION

In the United States, special opportunities are available to businesses that are owned by people of selected minorities. These opportunities exist through programs developed by 'Corporate America' on the private industry side and such entities as the U.S. Small Business Administration on the government side. Their aim is to help disadvantaged businesses to succeed, to assist the workforce in becoming more diversified, and to enrich and empower minority individuals economically.

While Canadian minority-owned businesses would either have to incorporate in the United States or partner with a U.S. minority-owned business to qualify for most of these programs, there are many opportunities for increased sales that might make it worth considering one of these options, and the benefits of identifying and networking with people in the United States.

There are incentives given to corporations in the United States who do business with qualified minority-owned businesses. More than that, the corporations believe that it is in their best interest to support minority businesses for a wide variety of reasons—not just financial ones. This gives an advantage to minority-owned businesses, though their products or services still must adhere to quality, pricing and service standards as required by the purchaser.

The National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) was formed voluntarily in 1972 as a private industry-led organization that very actively promotes minority businesses, through its 39 regional councils across the United States. According to their Web site, "There are 3,500 corporate members throughout the network, including most of America's largest publicly owned, privately owned and foreign-owned companies, as well as universities, hospitals and other buying institutions." For more information on this organization, visit their Web site: <http://www.nmsdcus.org>

The NMSDC is hoping to stimulate a mirror organization in Canada and is willing to speak to Canadians about how this might transpire, given their vast experience. The key contact there is **Eric Vicioso**
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As well, the Canadian Consulate General in Minneapolis has a brief report entitled *Selling to American Corporations as a Minority Supplier* on their Web site: <http://www.can-am.gc.ca/minneapolis>

AMERICAN INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Native Americans to Create National Chamber of Commerce Organization to Promote Business Development, Improve Economic Opportunities

HINCKLEY, Minn., Aug. 21 /PRNewswire/—Native Americans in the United States and Canada have joined together with business owners and corporate representatives across the continent to create the first national American Indian Chamber of Commerce. The agreement was reached last week at the annual meeting of the Native American Business Alliance (NABA) held in this gaming and convention centre north of Minneapolis.

"This is an historic agreement that will serve to unite, promote and grow existing Indian business," said Bill Largent, NABA executive committee member. "We'll use the national Chamber to create links between existing native businesses and state Indian chambers, and to provide a strong, common vision and focus."

Delegates from NABA, five of the country's six largest state Indian chambers, tribal enterprises, Canadian tribal and private businesses, the U.S. government and some of the largest U.S. corporations unanimously authorized the creation of the Chamber. "The Chamber will serve as the business-development link between native businesses, corporations and other large organizations, including state and federal governments," said Largent. "The new Chamber will work to expand NABA's relationships with Fortune 500 companies to assist tribes with their diversification strategy and to link smaller, urban-based Native businesses with minority-supplier development programs at corporations such as American Express, Daimler Chrysler, Disney, EDS, Ford, General Motors, IBM, Phillip Morris, Texaco and UPS."

The official name, headquarters location and principal business activities of the Chamber will be finalized, when delegates meet again in September 2001.

A number of the Canadian participants reminded the others that Canada (and probably Mexico) should, if possible, be included on the ground floor of this new organization. As a result of this interest, Canadian EXTUS mission delegates, Robin Wortman (rawortman@hotmail.com) of the Calgary-based National Aboriginal Business Association and Lorraine Bear (hlbear@mts.net) on behalf of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce's Aboriginal Economic Development Committee, have volunteered to be on the steering committee.