



# Supporting Indigenous Cultures

## Q&A with Carey Price

Mediaplanet spoke with **Carey Price**, Olympic gold medalist, goaltender for the NHL's Montreal Canadiens, and member of the Ulkatcho First Nation, about his life on the ice and back in Anahim Lake, BC.

**How did growing up in Anahim Lake help shape who you are today?**

I wouldn't be as resilient as I am without having grown up in Anahim Lake. It has given me a lifelong love of fishing and appreciation for the outdoors.

**What have been some of the most meaningful highlights from your hockey career thus far?**

There have been many moments throughout my life that would make this list but the most endearing to me would be the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. Win-

ning an Olympic gold medal with my family and countrymen was a fulfilling experience.

**When off the ice, what are some of your favourite hobbies?**

Without a doubt my go-to hobby right now is fishing. It's an endless pursuit, although such is the case with most hobbies. A few other hobbies of mine are team roping, archery, long-range shooting, and golf. I'm passionate about them all but assuredly not a master of any.

**What has it been like being away from home so often for your career?**

Being on the road and away from family has been the most challenging part of my career. I now carry my family and part of my culture everywhere I go.

**How can Canadians better support and celebrate Indigenous cultures?**

My grandmother faced social injustices as a young girl in residential school. I learned at an early age that these acts are not tolerable. The mistreatment and misplacement of First Nations peoples in Canada has echoed generations of poverty and substance abuse. These facts must

be brought to light. I believe in today's society what needs to be demonstrated by everyone is humility and kindness. What a celebration we could have then.

**What advice do you have for Indigenous youth in pursuit of their dreams?**

To Indigenous youth: if you truly want to attain that dream, earn it. That's it. There's no substitute for dedication. Oh, and don't forget to laugh along the way! ■

## The Organization Diversifying Canada's Supply Chain

Ken Donohue



**Cassandra Dorrington**  
President & CEO,  
CAMSC

**H**ow often does your business consider supplier diversity? Not enough, according to the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC), a non-profit organization that connects underrepresented businesses to the corporate supply chain.

"It's about economic inclusion," says Cassandra Dorrington, President and CEO of CAMSC. "While startups founded by Indigenous people, minorities, and women are being launched

at a faster rate, these diverse businesses are still not being invited to the table. We're seeing real innovation happening, but we need to enable it."

Dorrington adds that if we aren't aware of all the suppliers, we can't identify the best solution. And diversity in suppliers can often bring savings because they may have a more efficient economic model.

**Finding opportunity in crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided the perfect opportunity

for governments and businesses to expand the supply chain to include new suppliers. "Many of our members have been able to pivot and address current needs, such as making personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer for front-line workers, along with remote learning solutions," says Dorrington. "We can help them to think about their strengths and rejig their businesses."

CAMSC provides huge benefits for its members by opening up opportunities that suppliers may not have heard of, connecting them

directly to the people responsible for procurement, and providing educational opportunities to help with business development. One such opportunity is the annual Diversity Procurement Fair (July 21 to 23), which will be a virtual event this year.

"I'm excited by what we've seen in recent years," says Dorrington. "People are coming to us because they see the value in working with diverse suppliers. We're changing the economic landscape and giving opportunities for these businesses to shine." ■



To learn more about this year's Diversity Procurement Fair, visit [camsc.ca](http://camsc.ca).

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**Mediaplanet Canada** is grateful to be working on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples and what is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

## CELEBRATING NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

Today, and everyday, we honour the unique histories, cultures and contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit heritages.





## Setting up Indigenous Graduates for Success in a Virtual World

Krystal Abotossaway



**Krystal Abotossaway**  
President,  
Indigenous  
Professional  
Association of  
Canada (IPAC)

**A**s the world around us changes dramatically with the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have had to adapt how their business operates while remaining competitive and still providing value to customers, colleagues, and communities across the country.

What seemed to be a bright future for young graduates this spring soon became an unsettling feeling that left many concerned about job opportunities and their future. The Indigenous Professional Association of Canada (IPAC), an organization that connects, supports, and promotes outstanding leadership within the Indigenous professional community, took it upon itself

to reflect, innovate, and come up with solutions that could assist with this crisis.

### Remote work means more opportunities for Indigenous youth

One of the most critical things to address was empowering Indigenous youth to use the virtual world in ways that they never had before. Many are now using their personal branding power to engage with organizations, hiring managers, and recruiters alike.

What organizations have in front of them is one of the fastest-growing demographics in Canada, ready to work virtually. There's always an opportunity to drive better Indigenous employment within your organizations — you just need to ask for it.

### Ask yourself:

- Has your organization invested in technology to set up virtual coffee chats with members of an Indigenous association to network while they work or study from home?
  - Have you created a virtual recruitment initiative that focuses on communities?
  - Organizations have adapted and evolved over the last few months to hire and onboard new employees. But have we dug deeper and had a diversity lens on our recruitment initiatives?
- Now that we have the technology invested, the real opportunity begins. Can you do more? ■



**What organizations have in front of them is one of the fastest-growing demographics in Canada, ready to work virtually.**



The Indigenous Professional Association of Canada provides an online forum called the IPAC Sharing Circle. Sign up today to connect with Indigenous professionals to share career advice, skills, and best practices through networking and mentoring.

To connect with IPAC, visit [indigenousprofessionals.org](https://indigenousprofessionals.org).

## Increased Knowledge of Indigenous Cultures Plays a Vital Role In Indigenous Learners' Success

**T**he Cultural Resource Elders Program at Bow Valley College in Alberta provides the opportunity for learners to witness, experience, and ask questions about Indigenous ways of knowing and to learn about ceremony, spirituality, and history. The elders bring expertise as knowledge keepers, ceremonialists, and historians to the

touch point and a cornerstone of college culture. "Our elders give learners the knowledge, the encouragement, and the confidence because they've been there before. This is stuff you just don't find on Google," she says.

As Bow Valley College's Indigenous student population has grown, the number of elders has also grown. Starting with one elder in 2008, there are now seven elders from across southern Alberta and Canada. These elders are an invaluable resource for Indigenous learners, as some learners have little or no connection to their Indigenous identity, culture, language, community, and ceremony. Through the elders, learners can find out who they are. The elders give them the knowledge, awareness, and confidence to say, "I am Cree, I am Tsuut'ina, I am Siksika, I am Piikani, I am Kainai, I am Niitsitapi."

In addition to celebrating cultural, emotional, physical, and spiritual support, the elders act



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOW VALLEY COLLEGE

as influencers for learners and are proven to help with learner retention and graduation success. In the words of a recent Indigenous graduate: "I was thinking of quitting school, but the elders inspired me to stay in school to learn more and to help other people in the future, just like they did."

Many of the Cultural Resource

Elders are survivors of residential schools. Their experiences, memories, and learnings provide understanding of the trauma that so many of Canada's Indigenous peoples have experienced. The elders play an important role in keeping the conversation alive to make the world a better place for Indigenous peoples everywhere. ■



**The elders are an important touch point and a cornerstone of college culture.**

College. They're the people who can share their knowledge with all learners and bring an important understanding of Indigenous experiences.

For Noella Wells, Director of the Iniikokaan Centre, Bow Valley College's gathering place for Indigenous learners, the elders are an important

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## Q&amp;A

## Bobbie Racette on Overcoming Barriers in the Tech Industry

**Bobbie Racette**, Startup Canada's 2019 Indigenous Entrepreneur of the Year, is the Founder and CEO of Virtual Gurus, a Talent as a Service solution platform that connects organizations with skilled remote teams. Mediaplanet caught up with Bobbie to discuss her entrepreneurial journey, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and what's next.

**What drew you to entrepreneurship and how did you find success?**

I had the idea for Virtual Gurus a long time ago when I was living and working in Montreal, but then a job in oil and gas brought me to Calgary. When the 2015 recession caused layoffs across the sector, I started working as a virtual assistant. It wasn't long before I started to secure more work and sign more clients, and I hired my first Virtual Guru, Wajeeha, who's still with the company today. Growing the business hasn't been easy, but I'm proud to say that we're scaling rapidly. We secured our first round of funding

this year and have some exciting announcements coming up. Our new by-the-task Slack app, ask-Betty, launches soon.

**What challenges did you face in the tech industry? How did you overcome them?**

I've faced barriers in the tech industry as an Indigenous person, a woman, and an LGBTQ2+ entrepreneur. There aren't many Indigenous startup founders in Canada. The main challenge that I found was in raising capital. Although investors liked our pitch decks, as soon as I walked into the room, they'd quickly lose interest and decide not to invest with us.

However, we kept booking meetings, growing the company, and proving our business model. We were ultimately fortunate to find investors who believed in our company and our values such as Raven Indigenous Capital and The 51.

**How does Virtual Gurus help individuals overcome barriers to employment?**

Virtual Gurus is an online marketplace that uses a proprietary algorithm to match businesses and entrepreneurs with freelancers. We vet and hire virtual assistants based on their skills and experience, wherever they are in Canada and the US. We have a social impact mission: to provide employment to marginalized communities as well as those who may have a harder time finding work. This includes stay-at-home parents or single parents, Indigenous peoples who live in remote communities, people living with alternate abilities, and the LGBTQ2+

community. They all deserve opportunities and a fair wage.

**What advice can you share with Indigenous entrepreneurs starting their own ventures?**

I've had the pleasure of meeting and mentoring young Indigenous entrepreneurs through different events and organizations and have been impressed by the business ideas they've shared with me. I encourage them to work hard and keep going to realize their ideas. It's difficult and you'll face challenges, but it's worth it.

I've recently connected with Jeff Ward, a fellow Indigenous entrepreneur and founder of Animikii. We're looking to start an Indigenous technology and business community to support and grow other Indigenous entrepreneurs. Our goal will be to provide a safe space for Indigenous people with business ideas to offer support in areas such as pitching, web development, and even finding investors. ■



**Bobbie Racette**  
Founder and CEO,  
Virtual Gurus

## Helping New Indigenous Students Gain a Sense of Belonging

Humber College's Indigenous Education and Engagement support service centre, formerly known as the Aboriginal Resource Centre, helps Indigenous students find their home and family away from home.

Anne Papmehl

**A**djusting to a new school in a big city and far away from friends, family, and traditional culture can be a source of anxiety for many Indigenous students.

The Department of Indigenous Education and Engagement (IE&E) at Humber College works in partnership with Indigenous

communities to support and connect Indigenous students to their learning environment — academically, culturally, and socially. IE&E also creates an awareness and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and histories within the greater campus community.

**Resources to help Indigenous students thrive**

By providing convenient study spaces, social gatherings, traditional workshops, and musical performances showcasing Indigenous talent, IE&E helps students gain a sense of belonging on campus.

"As an Indigenous person, it's

difficult at times to find where you fit in, but the moment I walked into the Centre, I felt at home," says James Wilson, a graduate of the two-year Social Service Worker program at Humber's Lakeshore campus. "The Centre offered so many resources that not only supported my success in the program, but also helped me connect with other Indigenous students on campus."

Emma Petahtegoose, a graduate of both the General Arts and Science certificate program and the Media Communications diploma program, credits IE&E with helping her blossom during her

time at Humber. "They really know how to take care of their students and I truly felt I could be myself in the safe space they created," she says.

Both Wilson and Petahtegoose encourage new Indigenous students at Humber to connect with the Department of Indigenous Education and Engagement. "They know what you're going through and will support you in any way they can," says Wilson. Adds Petahtegoose: "Regardless of where you attend school, always connect to the Indigenous student services because they can be a great help to you and become your family away from home." ■

**i** For more information, follow **@HumberIndig** on Twitter, **@HumberIndigenous** on Instagram and Facebook, or visit [humber.ca/indigenous](http://humber.ca/indigenous).

This article was sponsored by **Humber College**.



**As an Indigenous person, it's difficult at times to find where you fit in, but the moment I walked into the Centre, I felt at home.**



## Successful Indigenous Partnerships Begin with Mutual Understanding

Ken Donohue

PHOTO COURTESY OF UOTTAWA

**A**dvancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples isn't only the responsibility of Canada's governments. Individuals and organizations who want to learn more about Indigenous peoples should seek out Indigenous voices and listen to their stories and experiences. Only then can we establish a strong enough base to help build healthy and lasting relationships.

The University of Ottawa (uOttawa) has been striving to improve its relationship with Indigenous communities and in particular with the Algonquin nation, upon whose ancestral lands the main campus is located. Its latest resource, "Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers: uOttawa Guide to Indigenous Protocols," encourages others to connect with Indigenous communities more respectfully and confidently. Readers can learn about some

of the most populous local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities within the National Capital Region, and about topics such as the protocols that are expected when contacting, meeting, and engaging with Traditional Knowledge Keepers.

**Bridging communities through collaboration**

With continuous support from uOttawa's Indigenous Education Council, the project was completed in collaboration with many representatives of local Ottawa-area Indigenous communities. "Our work is to ensure that we build and maintain strong relationships with them," says Tareyn Johnson, uOttawa's Director of Indigenous Affairs. "This guidebook is entirely the intellectual property of the diverse Indigenous community, who were gracious and generous enough to allow our team to compile their know-

ledge into a resource that will assist the university in building respectful and informed relationships with Indigenous communities."

This indispensable guide is not only for the university's faculty, staff, and students, but for other organizations that want to actively engage with Indigenous peoples. In fact, the City of Ottawa is making the resource available to its staff. And while the focus of the document is on Indigenous communities in the Ottawa area, Canadians elsewhere are encouraged to learn about the Nations and protocols unique to their own regions.

**Take time and communicate before you begin**

Johnson encourages businesses and organizations to first build a relationship with Indigenous communities and organizations before attempting to develop projects. The foundation needs

to be built on mutual respect and consultation because communities and institutions tend to operate differently, which should be understood and respected. The "Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers" document took a lot of time, effort, and communication to complete. Institutions hoping to create something similar should be considerate and communicative in their plans and should keep in mind that such a guide is only the first step to a lasting relationship with Traditional Knowledge Keepers.

"We encourage people to be in constant pursuit of knowledge, as change requires action," says Johnson. "But the most important thing for Indigenous communities is to have someone show genuine interest in their well-being and take the time to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect before making any requests of them." ■

**i** The University of Ottawa's next resource, an Indigenous Action Plan, is scheduled to be released in the fall. For more information, visit [uottawa.ca/indigenous](http://uottawa.ca/indigenous).

This article was supported by **the University of Ottawa**.



**Tareyn Johnson**  
Director of  
Indigenous Affairs,  
University of  
Ottawa

## How COVID-19 Is Impacting Indigenous Businesses

Tabatha Bull



**Tabatha Bull**  
President & CEO,  
Canadian Council  
for Aboriginal  
Business (CCAB)

**A**t the end of May, we learned that Nish-Dish, a popular Toronto restaurant serving Anishinaabe cuisine, was closing for good. This is just one of the many Indigenous-owned businesses across Canada that are experiencing the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), we understand from many of our members that there's an extremely high number of Indigenous businesses that have been negatively affected by COVID-19. Many have had to temporarily shut down their offices, while others have had to close permanently.

At CCAB, we understand the impact of the Indigenous economy on Indigenous communities. Just like for all Canadians, when businesses are thriving, communities thrive. The difference is that Indigenous communities

have been historically under-served, under-resourced, and systemically kept out of the Canadian economy, so they have further to go to reach the same levels of well-being and wealth as non-Indigenous communities.

To mitigate some of the negative effects of the pandemic on businesses, the federal government set up different sources of relief and has provided much-needed funding — taking considerable effort to stay ahead of the country's needs. While the policy response has been greatly appreciated across the nation, in many programs there was a delay in closing the gap for Indigenous business support, which has led to an increased negative impact. When devising the programs that will aid all Canadian businesses, Indigenous issues need to be top of mind for governments and the public alike.

Many of CCAB's members have retooled or restructured

to help stimulate the economy and to be able to aid the country's most vulnerable during this public health and economic crisis. Some Indigenous businesses are producing vital personal protective equipment (PPE) to help slow the spread of the virus. While the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are awarding contracts to Indigenous businesses for PPE, we know that increasingly, there's demand for both medical- and non-medical grade PPE in everyday life. We encourage corporate Canada to look at our growing list of Certified Aboriginal Businesses that are providing PPE and to consider procuring from them. Take the money you were planning to spend anyway and spend it where it's going to have a greater impact — on Indigenous businesses.

In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day, CCAB acknowledges how important

it is to build a new economy based on mutual respect and shared prosperity. We continue to collaborate with communities, organizations, and governments to identify and narrow the gaps and to promote and enhance the strength and capacity of Indigenous businesses. Efforts to increase procurement opportunities and provide access to shovel-ready projects for Indigenous businesses will prove mutually beneficial for businesses and governments. Supporting Indigenous businesses and our members through the recovery phase is a priority. ■

**i** Join CCAB on Sept. 16 for their live virtual Business Recovery Forum and help rebuild and strengthen the path toward a healthy and prosperous Canada.

For more information, visit [ccab.com/events](http://ccab.com/events).

## The Power of Buying Local to Restart Ontario's Indigenous Economy

PHOTO COURTESY OF HYDRO ONE



**A**s the full impacts of COVID-19 become clear, governments, industry, and individuals will be taking action to kick-start Ontario's economy. Hydro One says it will support the economic rebound by investing in infrastructure and buying local. In 2019, the company contributed \$1.5 billion to the economy by purchasing goods and services, with \$41.3 million going to Indigenous businesses.

"We have a responsibility to unlock the potential of the Indigenous economy through partnerships, procurement, employment, and community investment," says Jason Fitzsim-

mons, Chief Corporate Affairs and Customer Care Officer, Hydro One.

Last year, Hydro One partnered with Six Nations of the Grand River Development Corporation and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to finish the Niagara Reinforcement Project. This 76-kilometre transmission line will deliver economic value to the people of Ontario, while flowing long-term benefits to local First Nation communities.

Hydro One also hosted an Indigenous Business Fair and created an Indigenous Business Directory to make it easier to buy locally. To help with cash flow during this unprecedented time, the company is fast-track-

ing payments to small, medium, and Indigenous suppliers.

"Now more than ever, we are here to support and champion Indigenous customers, businesses, and communities," says Fitzsimmons. "We must also ensure our talent better reflects the world around us through scholarships, training, and recruitment opportunities."

As the province reignites its economic engines, Hydro One will be working alongside Indigenous communities to build a better, brighter future for Ontario. ■

**i** To learn more, visit [hydroone.com/about/indigenous-relations](http://hydroone.com/about/indigenous-relations).

This article was supported by **Hydro One.**



JONATHAN KRUGER, PHOTO COURTESY OF SODEXO

## Pride in Partnerships: How Sodexo Works With Indigenous Communities

**S**odexo Canada, the quality of life service provider, has spent years learning how to work with impacted communities in ways that focus not just on its day-to-day business, but also on what impact the company's actions will have tomorrow, and on the future of Indigenous prosperity as a whole. This approach has helped Sodexo gain recog-

**“ Sodexo believes in prosperity and quality of life for everybody, and it's an important part of doing business in Canada on Indigenous lands.**

nition for its commitment to fostering impactful partnerships with Indigenous Communities, Nations, and businesses. Jonathan Kruger, a member and former Chief of Penticton Indian Band/Okanagan Nation, guides Sodexo's continued commitment to supporting Indigenous Communities and Nations as its Director of Indigenous Relations.

### **Why is supporting Indigenous businesses an important part of Sodexo's strategy?**

A better tomorrow means prosperity for Indigenous Communities and Nations and I believe Sodexo supports that. Sodexo believes in prosperity and quality of life for everybody, and it's an important part of doing business in Canada on Indigenous lands — you have to create those relationships and partnerships moving forward.

### **What might a partnership between Sodexo and Indigenous Communities and Nations look like?**

My responsibility as Director of Indigenous Relations is to continue to put ourselves out there when projects start coming about in Canada. We approach Indigenous Nations and Communities to offer partnerships. We share what our plan is, our capacity building, our training programs, and the opportunities for Indigenous businesses that can be created out of these projects instead of Sodexo owning them. We ask ourselves how we can work together to create something so that the Community can take on some of those contracts.

### **Why is it important to foster relationships with Indigenous Communities and Nations?**

Through my passion and life journey as an Indigenous leader who has entered the corporate world and is always learning, the one thing that I always turn to as my personal mission is Indigenous prosperity. Now that I'm in the corporate world working for Sodexo, I get the opportunity to help with the Indigenous prosperity of many Communities and Nations.

We're working with 25 Communities and Nations on 15 projects, and within those 15 projects, we have 89 Indigenous suppliers. That means we've helped create 89 Indigenous businesses — and the number is growing. Over 600 Indigenous band members work on



those projects, meaning that 63 percent of our employees are Indigenous. That's what helps build relationships with Communities, not just with the leadership but with actual Community members. I'm really proud of that and to know that we have a plan that actually works.

### **What has made the Indigenous training and professional development programs successful?**

We're doing some employee training and development programs and we have a really excellent model — we'll be using it across the country. We've actually brought in Indigenous Community members into kiosks as a training program. Then, we bring them into the project that we've established near their Community.

We've created this hub and we've collaborated with other businesses, colleges, and universities so that we're not limiting ourselves. With diversity at Sodexo, we think out of the box and plan a lot about how we can make these things happen, and we get it done — I'm really proud of that.

### **What can other organizations learn from these experiences when implementing their own Indigenous engagement strategies?**

Consider our 89 Indigenous suppliers: if other big companies can do this — and some of them already are doing this — we're working toward fulfilling our obligation to the 94 Calls to Action as put forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada. The 92nd Call urges companies to step up and do real business with Indigenous Communities and Nations. I can tell you right now that Sodexo is following this action amazingly. We're talking with the Indigenous Communities and Nations and we're coming up with plans so that they and their band members can be successful.

That's what builds the relationships, that's what builds the partnerships, and that's what builds pride. I'm so proud of Sodexo for doing what we've been doing and I'm honoured to be a part of this team. ■

**i** To learn more, visit [ca.sodexo.com](http://ca.sodexo.com).

This article was sponsored by **Sodexo.**

