

Workshop seminars create large Ripple Effects

by John Copley

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When Robert Laboucane began delivering his Aboriginal Awareness Training program some 22 years ago, he never realized that the business he created to help one culture gain a better understanding of another, would continue to grow and be in great demand more than two decades later. But his company, Ripple Effects Ltd., is doing just that. What was for many years a slow to medium growth rate, has now developed sharply, and in the past couple of years, to meet this demand Robert Laboucane has added more expertise to his growing team of professionals.

Robert will be at Edmonton's Greenwood Inn on Wednesday, September 12, 2007, where he'll join Ripple Effects' Edmonton facilitator, Debbie Coulter, as they deliver a full day Aboriginal Awareness seminar to a sold out group of 25.

"We like to average 25 people per seminar or workshop," explained Laboucane, adding that "good eye contact and good voice-to-ear contact is essential if you want people to understand what you are saying - 25 is the perfect number."

During the past 22 years Ripple Effects has delivered more than 840 workshops and seminars to over 20,000 people. And that number includes more than 500 corporate clients.

"The list is growing," nodded Laboucane, "but there is a need for the information we share and it is gratifying to note that people want to learn, and that helps to make the job a lot easier."

Laboucane, originally from Ft. McMurray, Alberta, is the president of his Calgary-based Aboriginal awareness training company. Ripple Effects offers two main seminars, or workshops. Both are conducted by Robert and/or his team, which in addition to Coulter, includes Bernice Shadow in Grande Prairie and Lynn Halliday in Calgary. The first workshop deals with the intricacies of Aboriginal Awareness, the other with Outreach, Recruitment and Retention for Aboriginal Employees. The latter is facilitated via a workshop offered by Lynn Halliday and is primarily designed for Human Resource professionals and managers.

The company's Aboriginal Awareness Training Program is designed to enhance knowledge through education within industry, governments and the public at large. "This is the key ingredient if the Aboriginal people of Canada are to realize their dream of selfgovernment, self-sufficiency and the utilization of all their skills and talents toward the betterment of their community and their country," said Laboucane.

Among its goals, the program seeks to create understanding, awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and nurture the workplace by providing awareness to increase understanding of workforce diversity and the employment inclusion of Aboriginal peoples. Other goals include developing strategies and gaining tools to effectively outreach, recruit and retain Aboriginal peoples to the workplace and enhancing the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and communities through dialogue, respect and mutual understanding.

"It is important to learn how to build positive, trusting relationships to enhance your effectiveness with Aboriginal people," he explained. "You must learn about history, terminology, treaties, land claims, geography, populations, demographics, political structures, decision-making, cost of the status quo, landmark court cases and so much more. You must also address the issues and concerns around outreaching, recruiting, and retaining qualified Aboriginal employees.

Whether you are an executive, a senior manager, in public affairs, supervision, human resource departments, or are contractors, you will find all of this information of utmost value. By raising awareness and comfort through knowledge you will enhance the effectiveness of every person in your employ."

Over the years Robert Laboucane has helped dozens of major corporations, federal government departments, educational institutions and Aboriginal organizations to gain understanding, awareness and knowledge of



Canada's Aboriginal people. The extensive list of Ripple Effects clients includes the Royal Bank, ATCO Group, Enbridge Pipelines, Shell Canada, DeBeers Diamonds, Encana, Keyano College, Calgary Police Service, Schlumberger, CC Energy Trust and the Athabasca Tribal Council.

Ripple Effects Ltd. has an interactive website that allows potential clients to browse an extensive menu, learn about the value of trusting relationships and participate in a 30-minute on-line Aboriginal Awareness Seminar. The latter is just a sample of the powerful on-line workshop presentations the company recently implemented into its organizational structure.

"You are now able to complete the workshop online," said Laboucane, who urges readers to check out the interactive website. When you log on you'll also want to hit the NEWS button and then click on Robert's Views and Comments for a look at his most recent comments as they appeared in PEGG, the monthly magazine for the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA), for whom Robert is currently writing a monthly column.

Robert is a graduate of Alberta College in Edmonton and has a Diploma in Agricultural Sciences from Caribou College in Kamloops. He's lectured at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge on issues pertaining to the Aboriginal community at the local, provincial and national levels as well as numerous international conferences. His speaking engagements are on the increase across the country and more and more Canadians take up the call to learn more about their fellow citizens.

"I really enjoy teaching other cultures about the significant role that Aboriginal Canadians have played in Canada over the centuries," assured Laboucane. "I enjoy watching the light bulbs go on in the heads of those who attend our seminars and workshops; it's almost like they've discovered something for the first time, but just did not realize how easy that understanding would come to them."

"To know is to understand," he concluded, "and understanding comes easily to most of us; all you have to do is give it a try."

Mr. Laboucane is a former District Superintendent for Economic Development and Employment with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Alberta, a former Executive Director for the Calgary Aboriginal Awareness Society and the former Executive Director for the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, a position he maintained from 1992-99. In 1995 he was a recipient of the Garth Leask Award from the Interprovincial Association for Native Employment for his outstanding achievements in Aboriginal employment initiatives. In 1996 he received an award for his outstanding service to the Metis business community and in 2001 the Metis Nation of Alberta recognized Ripple Effects Ltd. as the Entrepreneur of the Year, with an award of distinction.

For more information visit www.ripplefx.ca or contact Robert Laboucane at robert@ripplefx.ca. Phone (403) 242-1618.