

## **Good for the Goose**

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Winnipeg – Higgins International Inc., an executive search and human resources consulting company, has joined the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program, and Brenda LaRose, the managing principal of Higgins International couldn't be happier.

“It's a really important initiative that the (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business - (CCAB) is doing. They are leading the way by providing this measurement, and it is very important that Aboriginal businesses get involved as well,” she said.

Through the PAR program, member companies are given tools to assess how well they're doing in their efforts to improve their relations with the Aboriginal community. The program looks at these efforts in four areas – employment, business development, individual capacity development and community relations.

LaRose said it's not just non-Aboriginal companies that should be making assessments. Aboriginal companies need to be accountable as well.

“We want corporate Canada to know that we're also being involved with this process. If we're the ones who are saying that this is important, we should also be participating,” said LaRose.

LaRose said large corporations are making big commitments in order to meet the PAR standards.

“It's an investment in terms of dollars in order to be a part of it.”

But she advised small companies to consider joining in as a show of support for the PAR program and to grow their business. “We're putting our money where our mouth is,” she said of Higgins International.

“We're saying to companies like Bank of Montreal, Xerox, IBM, that we think this is important from my standpoint, as a company that is working with those corporations. They're putting huge dollars into it. It's a bigger commitment for them because they have to go right across the board and measure everything in order to conform to PAR.

Higgins International Inc. is a Winnipeg-based company that has been in business for six years. Brenda LaRose has been in the human resources field for more than 18 years. She was working at another consulting company in Winnipeg and started to do more work in the Aboriginal community because she is Metis.

LaRose felt that there was a market for an Aboriginal human resources company, especially on the executive search side, as she was bringing in about a third of her previous company's revenue.

LaRose wanted to take on a mentoring role and have more control so she went out on her own and started Higgins International. (Higgins is LaRose's maiden name). Higgins International Inc. now operates right across the country with 50 percent of its business in the Aboriginal community.

"We're not just Aboriginal. I don't think that Aboriginal businesses should just do business in the community. Jewish business doesn't do business just in the Jewish community. I'm a big advocate of that," she said.

Higgins International has done placement for the Assembly of First Nations, placing both the chief executive officer and the chief financial officer and helping to restructure the management system of the assembly itself.

Higgins International also placed the management team for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

LaRose serves on the board of the Arts and Cultural Industries Association of Manitoba. She also serves on the board of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, an Aboriginal family and community development center, and the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development.