

Indigenous youth get help to achieve their career potential

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TORONTO, Oct. 15, 2013 /CNW/ - Through a new national charity, Kocihta; foundations, corporations and Canadians are providing Indigenous youth, including youth with disabilities/special needs, greater access to mentors, career opportunities, and help to stay in school and succeed in the workplace.

The Counselling Foundation of Canada has granted Kocihta \$100K to help support its start-up costs in its first year (2013/14), and launch the eMentorship pilot in Saskatoon high schools this fall, with the added support of corporate partners and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. "We are happy to support the work of Kocihta and its belief that a career offers the best way for Indigenous youth to achieve their potential," said Bruce Lawson, Foundation Executive Director.

Additional funding will be raised to support Kocihta's programming under the watchful guidance of the Kocihta board chair, Charles S. Coffey, O.C., and board vice-chairs, Anne Noonan and Rob G. Johnston. "We expect to raise funds from within all economic and philanthropic sectors of this great and generous nation," said Charles S. Coffey, retired Executive VP of RBC Royal Bank and long time advocate of inclusion in Canada. "The least we as Canadians can do, is to support Indigenous youth / youth with disabilities/special needs, and give them what they rightfully deserve, and want, and what the majority of us Canadians have come to expect -- equal opportunity to dream big and excel within a career-of-choice."

"Indigenous people are our nation's largest under-leveraged asset. Securing a positive future for Indigenous youth, and preparing Canada's youngest and fastest growing workforce for employment, will help close the socio-economic gap in Canada, and strengthen the economic future of Indigenous Peoples and the nation," said Kelly J. Lendsay, president and CEO of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council -- a national social enterprise that created Kocihta to build capacity in the Indigenous workforce and complement its work to help corporations access skilled Indigenous workers within inclusive workplaces.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that the average child poverty rate for all Indigenous children in Canada is 40 per cent, compared to 15 per cent for non-Indigenous children. Regionally in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, two out of three First Nations children live in poverty. "Youth that live in poverty across the nation need help, and Canadians are in the position to help Indigenous youth break free of poverty and the cycle of unemployment by giving generously to Kocihta," said Coffey.

Kocihta will launch at a comedy fundraiser, Stand Up for Indigenous Youth, in Toronto on Wednesday, October 23 with the support of comedians Scott Thompson, Candy Palmater and

Don Kelly. Visit aboriginalhr.ca to purchase tickets and learn more about Kocihta. Fundraiser event sponsors include: Shaw Media, RBC Royal Bank, Syncrude, Goldcorp, Talisman Energy, ConocoPhillips, Symcor, Centennial College, NationTalk.

SOURCE Aboriginal Human Resource Council

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