



ETC. global news briefs

Canada

A federal program for integrating aboriginals into the workforce has been given a \$33.1million boost. The Northern Career Quest Partnership will help about 1500 First Nations people gain skills and experience, as well as relieve the labour shortage, in the mining, mineral, and oil and gas sectors. In announcing the funding, Conservative MP Carol Skelton said, "The aboriginal workforce is key to Canada's prosperity." Northern Career Quest is a project of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP), launched in 2003 as an \$85million labour initiative.

New Zealand

Aiming to strengthen underemployment among newcomers, the Committee for Auckland Limited launched its Opportunities for Migrant Employment in Greater Auckland (OMEGA) initiative last month. Modeled on the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), the program hopes to integrate skilled foreign workers into the New Zealand labour market. Alan Broadbent, chair of the Maytree Foundation, was on hand for the kick-off to share some of TRIEC's experiences. OMEGA is endorsed by more than 30 of Auckland's top employers who will be sponsoring paid internships and mentoring programs.

South Asia

A former doctor made history last month by becoming Pakistan's first female Speaker in the National Assembly. Fahmida Mirza of the Pakistan People's Party was elected by more than two-thirds of Lower House of Parliament, winning 249 seats out of 342. Mizra replaces outgoing Speaker Amir Hussain.

The Indian government has launched its first interactive web portal for persons with disabilities. www.punarbhava.in offers a link to a disability register, a chatroom, a blog, an online "court" and screen reader software for the visually impaired. India officially has 21million disabled people but little or no access to buildings or government websites, even though the Persons with Disabilities Act became law in 1996.

The Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme introduced last year in an attempt to close the gap in education between minority boys and girls has shown that almost 50% of the scholarships are going to girls. Aimed at "poor and meritorious students" of Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsi and Buddhist communities, the scholarships provide assistance to enable them to pursue higher education. The data collected showed that most girls are interested in professional courses such as engineering and medicine, and boys in technical courses. Since its launch last June, the Indian government has handed out 20,000 scholarships.

United Kingdom

Again this year Dell Ireland has launched Work-Life Effectiveness Week when it encourages its employees to maintain a healthy balance between their job and their personal lives. Activities in Limerick and Dublin included seminars on stress awareness and planned walking routes around industrial parks. "While we dedicate a specific week to work-life effectiveness each year," said Ciara Lynch, head of corporate communications, "we have a policy in place at all times and a range of services we offer to our employees on an ongoing basis such as variable start time policy, part-time working and remote working." Dell Ireland has received numerous awards for its best practices for employment of persons with disabilities and women, as well as a diversity award by Chamber of Commerce Awards for Corporate Social Responsibility.

A recent study by the Universities of Stirling and Strathclyde found that although women-run businesses contribute £60billion to the economy, women are still less likely to start a new business and represent only 27% of the country's self-employment rate. In 2007 the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said that if levels of entrepreneurship for women matched those of men, there would be 1.7million more self-employed women in the UK.

Recently named the most gay-friendly employer in Wales, the South Wales Police flew international Gay Pride Flag at their headquarters in Bridgend to celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Month. Deputy Chief Constable Peter Vaughan called the flag with its rainbow motif "a sign of diversity, peace and inclusiveness." The police service placed 17 in the top 100 British businesses for GLBT in a survey by Stonewall, the national gay rights organization.



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United Kingdom (cont'd)

For the first time in history, a sexual orientation charge has resulted in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) extracting an apology and compensation from a school. The teacher identified only as 'David' said he was forced to resign his job at a London school because of homophobic comments made by his supervisor, including references to him as "Gay Dave." David complained to an employment tribunal that the head teacher's comments were in breach of Employment Equality Regulations 2003. NUT General Secretary Steve Sinnott said, "Employers have a duty to prevent harassment and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, indeed all, teachers."

United States

A group of 500 foreign welders and pipefitters has filed a class action suit claiming they were lured to the country under false pretenses, then forced to live in inhuman conditions. The workers who were recruited in India and the United Arab Emirates were hired to work at Signal International under the government's temporary guest worker program. The workers stated they gave up their life savings and paid up to \$20,000 in migration and travel fees after being assured they would become permanent residents of the United States. The oil rig repair and construction company declared it spent "over \$7million constructing state-of-the-art housing complexes" for the workers who claim they were forced to live in overcrowded bunkhouses with inadequate plumbing and unhygienic kitchens.

C. Vivian Stringer became only the third women's college basketball coach to win 800 games when she led her Rutgers University team to victory over DePaul recently. Stringer who has been named National Coach of the Year 3 times and was assistant coach for the gold medal-winning U.S. Olympic team in 2004, joins the ranks of Pat Summitt and Jody Conradt in the 800 club.

The man who became New York State's first black governor and the nation's first blind chief executive following the resignation of Eliot Spitzer is facing charges of reverse discrimination. Joseph Maioriello, who served as the Senate minority photographer from 1989 to 2003, claims he was fired by then-Democratic state Senator David Paterson, so that his job could be given to a black man. Paterson insists that the replacement was race neutral because he literally couldn't see the difference. Upstate Federal Judge Norman Mordue disagreed, stating there was evidence to the contrary.

The Dallas District Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has settled its largest race discrimination case. The suit against Allied Aviation Services resulted \$1.9million in damages being paid to 15 African American and Hispanic workers who were the targets of slurs, graffiti, cartoons and hangman's nooses at a facility in the Dallas/Ft. Worth airport. The settlement also requires diversity training for all Allied Aviation's employees in the US.

A paraplegic supervisor for the City of San Francisco is suing her employer for not building a \$1.1million wheelchair ramp in the city chamber. Michela Alioto-Pier who has been paralyzed since a ski lift accident at age 13 said, "This is a direct slap in the face to every disabled person in San Francisco." The project which would have created a 10-foot long ramp to the president's podium was rejected by a 6-5 vote, primarily because of the cost of construction. **DI**

