

## **Indigenous Businesses and Communities Tackle Tech Deficit**

**Toronto – February 28, 2019** – A holistic approach to bringing emerging digital technologies to Indigenous businesses and communities is urgently required to ensure their participation in the new economy, according to a report jointly released today by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

Called [\*Digital Directions: Towards skills development and inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the new economy\*](#) the report contains sweeping recommendations to ensure the Indigenous workforce and youth have access to the fast-evolving skill sets needed to participate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) professions.

“We must prepare for the opportunities of tomorrow by recognizing the realities of the new world of work,” says JP Gladu, CCAB President and CEO. “The World Economic Forum estimates that, by 2020, a third of the skill sets required to perform jobs will be completely new. Coordinated action by governments, Indigenous communities and the private sector is needed now to ensure our people have the education and skills required for a resilient future in the evolving digital economy.”

Key insights and recommendations:

- Creating a digitally fluent, Indigenous workforce requires integrated levels of government investment, community outreach, educational innovation and corporate engagement. The goal: increase access to education and training to develop cross-functional STEM skill sets in computational thinking and innovation excellence that are aligned with the needs of business. The best way to accomplish this is in partnership with industry leaders who understand what these skill sets will be.
- Indigenous community infrastructure – health services, housing, educational facilities and high-speed internet services – must be brought up to national standards and sustained. Addressing these basic needs is fundamental to Indigenous inclusion in the new economy.
- Corporations and SMEs should avoid “parachute programs” when engaging with Indigenous communities. Co-development of education and up-skilling initiatives is essential to meeting local needs and making STEM studies relevant and exciting to Indigenous students and employees. These initiatives must be grounded in Indigenous culture and connectedness with the natural world. Indigenous-focused curriculum provides a foundation for effective learning and fosters valuable Indigenous approaches to innovation.
- CCAB research shows that Indigenous women entrepreneurs are highly adept at innovation. Close to 80 per cent of female Indigenous business owners report a net profit in their most recent fiscal year yet their participation in STEM fields is low. Businesses aiming at innovation excellence would benefit richly by identifying the needs and challenges of Indigenous women to increase access to education and training for the skills of the future.

The findings of the Digital Directions report are being presented at the *2019 Forward Summit* being held today in Calgary to advance economic reconciliation and understanding of the future of work and its implications for the Indigenous economy.

“Tata Consultancy Services is proud to partner with the CCAB on a meaningful dialogue around the importance of access, equity and inclusion in the technology industry,” says Balaji Ganapathy, Head of Workforce Effectiveness. “Diversity is a driver of innovation. Therefore, we need to acknowledge and work through long-held hurdles so that our workplaces are truly reflective of society. Identifying and understanding how to scale these obstacles can provide new pathways to education, skills, employment and facilitate progress towards economic reconciliation.”

There are now over 43,000 Aboriginal-owned businesses in Canada. Indigenous entrepreneurs operate in every province and territory across a range of sectors – including natural resources, construction, manufacturing, retail and services.

#### **About CCAB**

CCAB is committed to the full participation of Indigenous peoples in Canada’s economy. A national, non-partisan association, CCAB offers knowledge, resources and programs to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal owned companies that foster economic opportunities for Indigenous peoples and businesses across Canada.

#### **About Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS)**

Tata Consultancy Services is an IT services, consulting and business solutions organization that has been partnering with many of the world’s largest businesses in their transformation journeys for the last fifty years. TCS offers a consulting-led, Cognitive powered, integrated portfolio of IT, Business & Technology Services, and engineering. This is delivered through its unique Location Independent Agile delivery model, recognized as a benchmark of excellence in software development.

A part of the Tata group, India's largest multinational business group, TCS has over 417,000 of the world’s best-trained consultants in 46 countries. The company generated consolidated revenues of US \$19.09 billion for year ended March 31, 2018 and is listed on the BSE (formerly Bombay Stock Exchange) and the NSE (National Stock Exchange) in India. TCS' proactive stance on climate change and award winning work with communities across the world have earned it a place in leading sustainability indices such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), MSCI Global Sustainability Index and the FTSE4Good Emerging Index. For more information, visit us at [www.tcs.com](http://www.tcs.com).

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#### **For more information, contact:**

Dave Bennett  
Xposure PR  
[dave@xposurepr.com](mailto:dave@xposurepr.com)  
905.339.6668

Tia Thomas  
Tata Consultancy Services  
[Tia.thomas@tcs.com](mailto:Tia.thomas@tcs.com)  
647.203.4035