



Vision Quest
CONFERENCES Inc.
May 14-16, 2013 Winnipeg Convention Centre

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***FROM VISION TO REALITY: VISION QUEST CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW
Popular Gathering Features Three Keynote Presenters,
Three Brand New Initiatives***

Winnipeg, Manitoba (March 18, 2013) -- Now in its 17th year, the Vision Quest Conference & Trade Show has expanded to include three keynote presenters, and three brand new initiatives.

This year's annual gathering takes place at the Winnipeg Convention Centre from May 14 to 16. More than 1000 Conference participants – including 80 Trade Show exhibitors – will come together from across Canada and throughout Manitoba to discuss and promote Aboriginal business, community, and economic development. Delegates include entrepreneurs, innovators, industry leaders, community organizations, and youth. The desired outcome is building capacity, inspiring new initiatives, and encouraging success in Aboriginal communities.

Vision Quest educates, enlightens and entertains, which is why so many people come back year after year. Since inception, more than 11,000 participants have taken part, and contributed to Vision Quest's national profile and highly respected reputation. Some of the highlights of this dynamic three-day event are:

- Ø Three acclaimed and inspiring keynote presenters
- Ø 10 workshops focusing on business, community programs, personal development, and topics of interest to youth
- Ø Trade Show featuring 80 exhibitors with free public admission
- Ø Networking and partnership opportunities
- Ø Empowering youth programming
- Ø Cultural events and traditional ceremony
- Ø Awards, prizes, and special recognition
- Ø Opening night kick-off with entertainment
- Ø Closing night gala banquet with performances and presentations

THREE KEYNOTE PRESENTERS ANNOUNCED

This year, the Vision Quest Conference & Trade Show welcomes three keynote presenters.

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At the opening night kick-off event on Tuesday, May 14, award-winning recording artist **Crystal Shawanda** will share her personal journey. Born on the Wikwemikong Native Reservation on Manitoulin Island, Crystal's single *You Can Let Go* was the fastest rising single in Canadian BDS history. Her 2008 debut album *Dawn of a New Day* was Billboard's highest charting album by a Native American, and sold over 400,000 copies. Her latest album *Just Like You* was released in 2012 on her label New Sun Records, with the single *Chains* released in November. Crystal performed at the presidential inauguration in Washington DC on January 21, 2013.

On Wednesday, May 15, **Dr. Ernesto Sirolli**, chairman of the Sirolli Institute, will deliver the keynote presentation. Italian-born, Dr. Sirolli received a Laurea di Dottore in Political Science from Rome University in 1976 and a Ph.D in Philosophy from Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia in 2004. A noted authority in the field of sustainable development and job creation, Dr. Sirolli is an Adjunct Professor at University of British Columbia. He has worked in Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South America, Asia and the US, in the field of local economic development and corporate social responsibility.

Accomplished and celebrated actor **Tantoo Cardinal** is keynote presenter on Thursday, May 16. Known for her authenticity, Tantoo has brought to life complex and diverse Aboriginal characters, and worked to dispel stereotypes. She has advanced Aboriginal performing arts throughout the world, and her performances on stage and in film and television helped blaze a trail in an industry where few roles for Aboriginal women previously existed. Her 80 plus credits include *North of 60*, *Shattered*, *Legends of the Fall*, *Dances With Wolves* and *Black Robe*. In 2010, Tantoo was inducted as a Member into the Order of Canada for her outstanding contributions.

NEW TO VISION QUEST THIS YEAR

Three brand new initiatives will take place at Vision Quest this year.

- Ø **Dragon's Quest** is a business plan competition in partnership with the Aboriginal Business Service Network. Six finalists in two categories will present plans to a panel of judges in front of the Conference delegation, with the winner announced at the closing night Gala Banquet.
- Ø **Ask The Entrepreneur** is a new feature at the Trade Show, in partnership with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, where delegates will have the opportunity to ask business development questions of successful young entrepreneurs.
- Ø A third new initiative will see a **Film Festival Presentation** take place on Thursday afternoon, with the film chosen for screening to be announced soon.

HONOURARY CHAIR NAMED

This year's Honorary Chair is **Leslie Lounsbury**, publisher of SAY Magazine. Leslie fulfilled her life-long dream in 2002 with the launch of the largest lifestyle publication for and about Native people. Since then, SAY Magazine has received six Native American Journalists Association Media Awards. A Métis single mother of six children, Leslie experienced firsthand the need for education, economic, entertainment, sports and health information addressing Native people, especially youth. SAY's mission statement is HOPE, and its mandate is Celebrating Our Successes. Leslie has attended just about every Vision Quest Conference on her own journey for personal and professional development, and continues to inspire countless others.

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TRADE SHOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

More than 80 exhibitors will take part in the 2013 Vision Quest Trade Show, representing business suppliers, service providers, hospitality groups, career opportunities, economic organizations, educational institutions, information services, and a wide selection of artists and artisans with one-of-a-kind creations. The Vision Quest Trade Show offers **free public admission** on Wednesday, May 15 (8:30am to 4:30pm), and Thursday, May 16 (8:30am to 2:30pm).

DELEGATE REGISTRATION & EXHIBITOR/ SPONSOR APPLICATIONS

Registration for the 2013 Vision Quest Conference & Trade Show is now available online at www.vqconference.com. Register by April 9 and save \$75. Exhibitor and sponsor applications are also available online.

ABOUT VISION QUEST

Vision Quest Conferences Inc. is a community based charitable organization formed through partnerships with five Community Futures Development Corporations (Cedar Lake CFDC, Dakota Ojibway CFDC, Kitayan CFDC, North Central CFDC, Southeast CFDC). Vision Quest thanks the following Sponsors to date for their support: Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada, The Winnipeg Foundation, Enbridge Pipelines Inc., Manitoba Telecom Services, First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, Aboriginal Business Service Network, Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries. Thanks also to the many Media Partners, service providers, and other supporters.

www.vqconference.com

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