



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**VISION QUEST CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW:
Something for everyone at Canada's longest running
Aboriginal economic development conference...**

Winnipeg MB (April 18, 2017) -- The **Vision Quest Conference & Trade Show** takes place **May 16-18** at the **RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg**. It is Canada's longest running Aboriginal business, community and economic development conference, and has earned the reputation as a dynamic gathering that serves multiple purposes.

"Vision Quest's goal is to educate, enlighten and entertain through a schedule packed with workshops and courses, inspiring speakers, an expansive trade show, cultural demonstrations, and entertainment," says **Kim Bullard**, Chair of Vision Quest Conferences Inc. "It's this winning formula that has granted Vision Quest a long and successful history."

Since 1997, nearly 15,000 participants have come together at Vision Quest from Manitoba and across North America, consisting of entrepreneurs, industry and business leaders, community organizations, innovators, and youth. Highlights of Vision Quest include:

- Acclaimed and inspiring keynote speakers – **Adam Beach** and **Kyle Nobess**
- 13 interactive workshops about business, leadership and personal development
- Empowering and engaging youth program
- Pre-conference courses
- Evening lecture on ice roads and cargo airships – FREE for public to attend!
- Trade Show with 90 exhibitors – FREE for public to attend!
- Networking and partnership opportunities
- Dragon's Quest business plan competition
- Presentation of the Elijah Harper Service Dog Award
- Gala banquet with special performances and award
- Culture and tradition

TWO KEYNOTE PRESENTERS:

Adam Beach is an Anishinaabe actor, known for many acclaimed film and television projects including *Suicide Squad*, *Law & Order*, *Windtalkers*, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, and more. Born in Ashern, Manitoba, Beach spent his early years growing up on the Lake Manitoba/Dog Creek First Nation. After the tragic deaths of both his mother and father, Adam and his two brothers went to live in Winnipeg with an aunt and uncle. It was at Gordon Bell High School where Beach attended his first drama class, and began performing in local theatre productions. Acting eventually led Adam to a very successful career in entertainment. In response to his dream of helping Aboriginal youth find a better way in life through film, Adam founded the Adam Beach Film Institute in Winnipeg. In early 2012, an initial gift of donation from San Gold Corporation enabled Adam to begin to see the realization of this dream.

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Kyle Nobess has always dreamt of being an actor, and through perseverance, hard work and self-belief he has been fortunate to work in film and television in various ways. Today he is a recognizable and established Aboriginal actor and screenwriter, YouTube artist, entrepreneur and motivational speaker. Kyle's passion is to share his courage and message with youth around the world, that dreams are possible and anything is achievable when you set your mind to something. Drawing from his own experiences, Kyle shares his journey of recovery from drugs and alcohol and the healing path to getting a second chance at life. Through personal development and finding inner strength, Kyle is proud to say he has experienced true freedom within his body, spirit and mind – that well-being is attainable, and that dreams are indeed possible for each of us.

HONOURARY CHAIR:

Each year, Vision Quest chooses distinguished members of the Aboriginal business community to be recognized as **Honourary Chair**.

Sheila North Wilson is a member of Bunibonibee Cree Nation and was elected as Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) in September 2015. Previous to this, she enjoyed a career as the Chief Communication Officer at Assembly for Manitoba Chiefs, a CBC journalist and CTV correspondent, an economic development officer, a radio personality, and a Cree translator. She holds diplomas in business and community development, a certificate in radio and television broadcasting, and a diploma in Creative Communications. Sheila is a gifted writer, a Radio Television Digital News Association award winner, and a Gemini Award nominee. She is passionate about the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW). With this in mind, she created the hashtag #MMIW which is now commonly used on social media. She continues to work closely with families, friends, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders to advance the political will to address racism and the issues around violence against Indigenous people.

PRE-CONFERENCE COURSES:

Delegates of Vision Quest have an exclusive opportunity to register for one of two full-day **Pre-Conference Courses**, running concurrently on Tuesday May 16. Delegates can choose from one of the following two courses:

FROM VISION TO REALITY: HOW TO START A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS – This business workshop will provide answers to get businesses up and running, and share information about tools, resources and money that may be available to help start businesses.

RISE ABOVE: LIVING A LIFE TEACHINGS – From tipi to talking stick, interactive and experiential, this course explores cultural teachings that challenge participants to reflect on the sacred, identity, their own untapped potentials and personal barriers to the life they want.

FREE PUBLIC LECTURE:

On Wednesday May 17, from 7-9pm, the public is invited to come out for a free public lecture on a topic of great importance to northern communities.

ICE ROADS AND CARGO AIRSHIPS: STATE OF THE TECHNOLOGY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NORTH – The impact of climate change on the ice roads of Manitoba is impossible to ignore. Since 1997, their season has been halved, and the wide temperature variations now experienced are increasing the risk of using these life-lines to remote, fly-in communities. Fortunately, a solution to the failing ice road system may be just around the corner – cargo airships. Airship technology is being rediscovered, just like electric cars and wind turbines, as part of a new low-carbon future. Dr. Barry Prentice is a recognized expert in airship technology, and will be presenting the results of 17 years of research in this field.

PRESENTATION OF ELIJAH HARPER SERVICE DOG AWARD:

On Thursday May 18 over lunch, the Manitoba Search and Rescue (MSAR) service dogs program will be making a special presentation to a deserving candidate. The award is named after Elijah Harper, a founding member of MSAR, who was instrumental in the development and advocacy of service dogs for the disabled.

The inaugural recipient in 2014 was a military veteran suffering with a rare disorder that caused him to shake uncontrollably. The miracle dog awarded to him cured his pacing and speech issues. In 2015, the recipient was a child who had a rare seizure disorder. Her service dog was trained to detect and notify of these seizures, saving the little girl's life on multiple occasions, and giving the family peace of mind. In 2016, a dog was awarded to a firefighter who suffered physical and psychological injuries while saving the life of a fellow firefighter. This year, the award will go to an RCMP officer suffering from PTSD.

DRAGON'S QUEST BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION:

Vision Quest Conferences Inc. is pleased to once again partner with the Aboriginal Business Service Network in presenting the Dragon's Quest Business Plan Competition. Cash prizes totaling \$10,000 are awarded in two categories – Rural and Urban (City of Winnipeg) – to assist winners in turning their business dreams into reality. Three finalists in each category will present their business plans to a panel of judges, with the winners announced at the Gala Banquet on Thursday May 18.

GALA BANQUET:

It's a Vision Quest tradition to close the conference with a Gala Banquet on Thursday evening. This year's Gala features a three-course dinner, presentation of awards for the **Dragon's Quest Business Plan Competition** and **Steve Prince Memorial Bursary**, cultural presentation by **Plains Ojibway Singers and Dance Troupe**, and entertainment by renowned comedian **Don Burnstick**.

TRADE SHOW WITH FREE PUBLIC ADMISSION:

More than 90 exhibitors will be on display at Vision Quest's 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. **FREE PUBLIC ADMISSION** on Wednesday May 17 (8:30am to 4:30pm) and Thursday May 18 (8:30am to 2:30pm).

ABOUT VISION QUEST:

Vision Quest Conferences Inc. is a community based charitable organization formed through partnerships with Manitoba's five Aboriginal 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: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Province of Manitoba, MSAR Service Dogs, South Beach Casino & Resort, World Trade Centre Winnipeg, First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, Aboriginal Business Service Network, Animikii Indigenous Technology, Bell MTS, City of Winnipeg – Oshki Annishinabe Nigaaniwak, Enbridge Pipelines, Northern Values, Amik.ca, APTN, First Nations Voice, NCI FM, NOW Country 104.7, and SAY Magazine. www.vqconference.com

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