

BANK ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEES TO GET BEHIND COMMUNITY CAUSES

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Half of the employees of the Scotiabank on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation are members of the First Nation.

That success in recruiting local talent is exciting to Kaz Flinn, vicepresident of social responsibility for the bank.

As it does business across Canada and around the globe, Scotiabank seeks to reach out to local communities through the causes that matter to its workforce, Flinn said.

Employees participating in two matching donation programs logged 325,000 volunteer hours in one year, Flinn said.

The bank wants to help strengthen communities because its employees are part of those communities and because strong communities are good for business, adds senior regional vice-president George Marlatte.

"Because we're good corporate citizens, we're part of a community. We absolutely believe that if our communities thrive, we'll thrive," he said.

When the Opaskwayak branch opened in 1975 it was the first full service, stand-alone, chartered bank on a reserve in Canada, Flinn says with a touch of pride.

The community of 3,500, which lies adjacent to The Pas, Man., was and still is a thriving business community, described by its chief as the economic driver for the region.

Just as employees at all Scotiabank branches are encouraged to support the causes that are important to them, staff from the Opaskwayak branch will mentor high school students participating in an Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

A \$280,000 donation to support the program, offered in partnership with the First Nation and former prime minister Paul Martin's Aboriginal Education Initiative, will introduce Grade 11 and 12 students to banking, business and economics, thereby opening a world of possibilities for their futures, Flinn said.

The bank hopes some of those teens will one day become Scotiabank employees too.

Bank employees who volunteer for 50 hours for any organization are eligible to receive a \$1,000 donation for that cause.

"What are employees passionate about? It's different in different communities, but it always brings the corporation and grassroots together, Flinn said.

That strategy does more than put dollars into helping organizations - it promotes involvement, Marlatte said.

"Involvement solves as many problems as money," Marlatte said. "We do better in communities that are better communities."

