Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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RAPID CITY – "Native Americans Entrepreneurs: Blueprint for Economic Development in the Great Plains" is the theme of the 9th Annual Great Plains Regional/Tribal Economic Summit to be held April 1718, 2007, at the Ramkota Hotel in Rapid City, S.D. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Great Plains Regional Office in Aberdeen, S.D., is a sponsor of this annual event.

This year's Summit is designed for Native American business owners, or those thinking about starting a business, in the Great Plains Region, which includes the states of South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska. The Summit is a forum where Native American entrepreneurs, tribal business enterprises and Corporate America can come together to address and work towards economic development on reservations. The overall concept of this year's program is to discuss the various stages Native economies and businesses are in: whether the beginning phase or advanced stage of growth.

"We have seen an explosion of entrepreneurial spirit throughout Indian country in the past few years, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs is committed to nurturing that spirit and increasing the resources necessary to provide more opportunities," said BIA Director W. Patrick Ragsdale. "The Great Plains Economic Summit plays a significant role in helping to foster knowledge about and the desire for economic success within the Indian business community."

This Summit will be an open forum format where all participants will be invited to actively engage in open conversations with panelists. Discussion panels include:

- Creating the Environment for Economic Change Setting the Legal Foundation
- Infrastructure Planning – The Who, Why, When, How and What?
- Discussions with Successful Entrepreneurs Showcasing Technology
- Work Force Development; Diversification: Developing New Industries
- Financing in Indian Country
- 8(a)/Government Contracting Successful Native Models and Native Woman Owned Businesses.

Each panelist will discuss how their progression has led to further success.

The Annual Trade Show, a popular feature of the Summit, is designed for Native businesses to showcase their products and services while providing networking opportunities with others to potentially create additional economic opportunities. It is common for Native businesses to leave the Summit with additional demands for their products and services.

In conjunction with this year's event, the Great Plains Regional Office also is holding its 3rd Annual Future Native Entrepreneur competition. This business plan competition is open to Native American students currently enrolled in school (college and junior and senior high school students) within the Great Plains Region. Students must submit business plans and finalists will be given an all expense paid trip to the Summit where they will present their plans to a panel of judges. Winners will be chosen from each of the two categories with their names announced at the conference banquet scheduled for April 18, 2007. Each winner will receive a fully loaded computer sponsored by the 7th Generation Community

Services Corp. and Upper Mohawk, Inc.

For more information on the Summit, sponsorships and vendor opportunities, please call or write Ms. Onna M. LeBeau at (605) 2267381 or at Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Plains Regional Office, Branch of Economic Development, 115 Fourth Avenue S.E., Aberdeen, S.D., 57401.
