



Strong Workforce Nets Morgan USA

When a major American manufacturer from the Deep South is determined to invest in a major project in southern Alberta, someone has done something right. The achievement is even greater when the venture breathes life into a dormant facility and creates employment in the community.

So the folks from the Blood Reserve can take a bow on the national stage for luring Morgan USA, a key manufacturer of industrial accommodation, to Standoff and the former Kainai Industries building, a facility that has sat vacant for some 17 years.

"The entire Blood Tribe Council was committed to this project once we knew we had a true tenant," says Rob Crow, Director of the Tribe's Economic Development Department. "When that became clear, it was full steam ahead."

"Full steam" meant completing renovations to the derelict building, not an easy proposition in these Alberta Advantage times; convincing contractors to take on renovations can be difficult.

"We were victims of the boom," says Crow. "We were waiting in line for a construction company for some time."

However, the Tribe is counting on Morgan to move into its new home in May and begin producing accommodations for Alberta oilfield workers. Chief among Morgan's clients is Canadian Natural Resources Limited, a major player the Horizon Oil Sands Project, north of Fort McMurray.

"Morgan saw a market for its products in Canada and began investigating different proposals for locating here, says Crow. "In the end, they liked ours. The buildings they produce in the U.S. will now be built in Standoff."

Under the agreement, Morgan will start out as a tenant and the Tribe as landlord for at least three years. Morgan will create work for about 50 Tribe members, many of whom have already been sent on training courses to Morgan's main plant in the U.S. The ready and willing workforce, says Crow, contributed to convincing Morgan to come to Standoff.

"They looked at Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Calgary, but were worried about employee loyalties," he says. "Here, we had an existing facility and a strong workforce."

Tribal, Federal and Provincial government programs and services combined to provide the resources required to complete the project.

"Council, too, has been very supportive," says Crow. "And Morgan deserves credit for hanging in there during all the negotiations. It's been a great learning experience."

Did you know:

- The Blood Tribe (Kainai) is the largest First Nation Reserve in Canada, with an area covering 356,755 acres of prime agricultural land.
- Blood Tribe registered population is about 10,062.
- The Kainai Nation is governed by an elected council of twelve, with one Chief. The term of office is four years.
- Blood Tribe Economic Development strives to create a self-sufficient environment through a comprehensive cooperative economic development plan utilizing the Principles of Kainayssini.
- The Blood Tribe's first step into the oil and gas drilling business was through a joint venture with Western Lakota Energy Services and the acquisition of a 50 percent share in an oil and gas drilling rig.
- The Blood Tribe was winner of the Excellence in Investment Attraction Award at SouthGrow's 2007 Recognition Event.

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