

***For Immediate Release***

**Alliance Grain Traders named 2012 Saskatchewan Business of the Year**

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce named Alliance Grain Traders the 2012 Business of the Year at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Achievement in Business Excellence (ABEX) Awards event in Regina October 20<sup>th</sup>.

Alliance Grain Traders was also an ABEX category winner for Export.

Established by Murad Al-Katib and the Arslan family in 2001, Alliance has found success in producing value-added pulse, staple food and ingredient processing for export and domestic markets.

Alliance Grain Traders, also known as Saskcan Pulse, operates 12 processing facilities in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, as well as 29 facilities worldwide. The company employs 720 people.

Most recently, Alliance Grain Traders placed 15<sup>th</sup> on the 2012 Sask Business *Top 100 Companies* list.

“We are proud to name Alliance Grain Traders as the ABEX Business of the Year for 2012,” said Steve McLellan, CEO of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. “Business of the Year is a special award which acknowledges the success and capacity of a business within a variety of areas. In just over a decade, Alliance Grain Traders has become a leader in exporting products to more than 100 countries across the globe. They are truly an outstanding Saskatchewan success story.”

Sponsored by the W. Brett Wilson Centre for Entrepreneurial Excellence, the *Business of the Year* is selected from all ABEX entrants and is awarded to the business demonstrating exceptional performance that is particularly outstanding and deserving of praise. The performance may represent either individual achievement or overall success. The Award is judged according to profitability, growth, stability, investment strategy, and impact based on the relative size of the corporation.

In a rare occurrence, Saskatoon’s Neechie Gear took home two ABEX Awards, for *Aboriginal Business Partnership* and *Community Involvement*. Entrepreneur Kendall Netmaker has made the clothing company Neechie Gear a platform to inspire young athletes to excel.

Also at the event, PotashCorp was inducted into the Saskatchewan Business Hall of Fame. Since its privatization in 1989, the company has become a leading global fertilizer company, playing a principal role in world food production. In response, the company has committed to an \$8.2 billion expansion of its operations.

Close to 700 people from across the province attended the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual ABEX Awards at the Delta Regina Hotel.

Eleven ABEX Awards in addition to the Business of the Year were presented to companies representing a variety of regions across the province. A complete list of 2012 ABEX Award Winners can be found below.

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## The 2012 ABEX Award Winners

### The Innovation Award

*Sponsored by Innovation Saskatchewan*

The Innovation award is awarded to a Saskatchewan business that demonstrates excellence in the utilization of an innovative product, technology or system which has tangibly contributed to improved sales or productivity. IRC was founded in 1997 by Garry Derenoski, and although the company has expanded across Western Canada, growing from two to 24 employees, it continues to be Saskatchewan owned and operated.

**WINNER:**                    **Innovative Rehabilitation Consultants - Saskatoon**

*IRC provides wellness Healthcare and Human Resources solutions for employees. This is an added benefit employers provide, knowing that healthier employees result in reductions in sick leave and often limit time loss claims for worker compensation injuries.*

*IRC employs an innovative approach to its protocols toward workplace wellness and employer relationships. They focus on ability, rather than disability. This, combined with the company's ties to the medical community, allows them to ensure that individuals receive the care they need, and helps employers with their need to have employees well, and at work.*

#### Contact

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### The Aboriginal Business Partnership Award

*Sponsored by SaskEnergy*

The Aboriginal Business Partnership award is presented to a business or individual who has demonstrated leadership and commitment to the growth of Aboriginal business in Saskatchewan.

**WINNER:**                    **Neechie Gear - Saskatoon**

*Award winning clothier Neechie Gear is on a mission to empower positive athletic role models, partnering with various First Nations communities to empower youth.*

*The word "Neechie" is derived from the slang Plains Cree word meaning "my friend". Entrepreneur and founder Kendal Netmaker has made a splash within the business community when he successfully won a business plan competition put on by CBC and Dragon's Den star Brett Wilson, winning sufficient startup capital to begin Neechie Gear.*

*A purpose-driven clothing company with an aim to support young athletes and foster a love of sport, Neechie Gear has turned into a very positive role model for all Saskatchewan youth – and now people from all across Canada, and across the world, are sporting Neechie Gear products.*

#### Contact

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306.880.5598

## **The Export Award**

***Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership***

The Export Award goes to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in exporting Saskatchewan goods or services nationally or internationally.

**WINNER: Alliance Grain Traders - Regina**

*Alliance Grain Traders Inc. is a value-added pulse, staple food and ingredient processor for export and domestic markets. Through its offices and processing facilities located in some of the best agricultural growing regions in Canada, the U.S., Turkey, China, Australia and South Africa, merchandising and sales offices in the U.K., the Netherlands and Spain and origination offices in Russia, AGT produces a full range of pulses specialty crops (including lentils, peas, chickpeas, beans and canary seed) and food ingredients (pulse flours, proteins, starches and fibers). Through its Turkish subsidiary, AGT also produces staple foods (Arbella Pasta, rice, and milled wheat products, including bulgur and semolina).*

**Contact:**

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## **The Service Award**

***Sponsored by Handy Special Events***

The award for Service goes to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in providing quality customer service (wholesale and retail trade, purchasing and distribution, transportation, brokering, professional services, communications, financial, etc.)

**WINNER: MAACO Collision Repair & Auto Painting - Regina**

*The Regina Maaco location opened in 1987, when co-owners Marty and Charlene Klyne opened a location in the city. In 1999, the business built a new location, and Charlene took over as General Manager.*

*Offering clients full service collision repair, small damage repair and auto painting as a specialty service, Maaco serves fleet and personal car owners alike.*

*The Regina Maaco has been recognized many times for its excellent service, was ranked as the top performing store in Canada, and is consistently placed among the top 10 stores across the 475-location North American-wide network of Maaco locations. A recent customer survey compiled by CSi Complete indicated that 100 per cent of Maaco Regina's clients are indeed happy with its services.*

**Contact**

Mrs. Charlene Klyne  
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## **The Community Involvement Award**

*Sponsored by BHP Billiton*

The Community Involvement Award is awarded to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in its support of arts and culture, amateur sport, education or volunteer groups.

**WINNER: Neechie Gear - Saskatoon**

*Neechie Gear is a purpose-driven clothing company with a social aim – and one that gives back to the community at large, while inspiring youth to strive to achieve.*

*The word “Neechie” in the company name Neechie Gear is derived from Plains Cree slang for “friend”, and founder Kendall Netmaker knows the importance of the help of friends. A young person who lacked the means to take part in sports, Kendall found success after a friend’s family gave him the help he needed to take part, and distinguish himself as an athlete. That set the intent in his mind to help others achieve, and the dream of Neechie Gear was born.*

*Kendall has used the company as a platform to empower positive athletic role models, establish bursaries for young Canadians and create youth sports teams ranging from volleyball to soccer to basketball. A portion of the company’s profits go to support the nonprofit organization NG Athletics Club Inc., which helps youth in need pursue athletic endeavours.*

### **Contact**

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## **The Environment Award**

*Sponsored by SaskWater*

The Award for Environment goes to a business that demonstrates excellence in the development of innovative programs, products and/or services offering improvement for environmental purposes. Improvements may relate to soil, air, water, noise or visual pollutants, or energy conservation.

**WINNER: Confederation Inn - Saskatoon**

*Originally built in 1978, the Confederation Inn was purchased in 2006 by current owner Brian Sawatzky, who had a long history of engaging in sustainability during his career as a science teacher.*

*Brian and his staff have made continuous changes to reduce the hotel’s CO2 output and reduce utility consumption. Among the energy efficiencies were the replacement of incandescent bulbs with more energy efficient fluorescent units, installation of motion sensors in public washrooms to automatically turn lights off when not needed, programmable thermostats, the addition of 40 solar thermal panels to provide hot water, a move to sustainable, locally grown food suppliers, and a paper and cardboard recycling program.*

### **Contact**

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## **The Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award**

*Sponsored by Cameco Corporation*

The Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award is presented to an entrepreneur between the ages of 18-35 who has achieved success in the startup and operation of a new or existing business.

**WINNER: Tyler Boyd, Boyd Excavating – Pilot Butte**

*Boyd Excavating began in Moosomin with a single excavator. Thanks to adherence to the values of loyalty, reliability and quality, the company was able in 2010 to open its Regina location, and now the bulk of its work is done in the Queen City.*

*Boyd Excavating engages in excavating, sewer and water, trucking, sand and gravel and directional drilling. Joined by his 19 year old brother, President Tyler Boyd is leading the way for Boyd Excavating, continually looking for faster, easier, safer ways to conduct business as the company moves proactively into the future.*

### **Contact**

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## **The Marketing Award**

*Sponsored by KPMG LLP*

The award for Marketing goes to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in the execution of a successful marketing strategy.

**WINNER: Flaman Group of Companies - Saskatoon**

*The Flaman Group of Companies started in 1959 on Frank Flaman's homestead in Southey. Today, Flaman is a diversified retailer of agricultural equipment, trailers, grain cleaning products, and fitness equipment.*

*Among its 300 employees, Flaman Group has an innovative, creative and industry leading in-house marketing team. Using solid marketing principles, the company has built a marketing strategy that gets results.*

*Flaman is committed to giving back globally through the Flaman Foundation, as well as locally to customers, through initiatives such as Stuck in the Muck, an annual contest which showcases equipment predicaments, as well as a forum for farmers to share useful advice on ways to get unstuck, should they find themselves in such a situation.*

### **Contact**

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## **The New Venture Award**

**Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy**

The New Venture Award is presented to the new business venture which has been in existence for three years or less and which has shown positive performance in terms of current or expected profitability, job creation or entrance into new markets.

**WINNER: Contango Strategies Ltd. – Saskatoon**

*Contango Strategies came about when Dr. Monique Haakensen saw an opportunity to take scientific information from the laboratory and apply this knowledge to respond to environmental challenges in resources sectors. Contango's eight staff members engage in contract research and development, design, piloting, and implementation of constructed wetland treatment systems, genetic sequencing, microbial ecology for bioremediation strategies and the creation of value-added products.*

*In doing so, Contango has been able to help companies in the resources sectors reduce their environmental impacts in ways that result in cost savings or generation of profits. In the year since Contango opened its doors, the company has experienced growth of more than 250 per cent. As a result, Contango has expanded its laboratory to meet demands, and added greenhouse facilities for new services.*

### **Contact**

Dr. Monique Haakensen, President  
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## **The Growth & Expansion Award**

**Sponsored by PFM Capital Inc.**

The Growth & Expansion Award is given to a business that has made significant changes to their business resulting in growth, or expansion. Changes may relate to job creation and/or investment.

**WINNER: Solvera Solutions - Regina**

*Solvera Solutions came about seven years ago from the merger of two well-aligned Saskatchewan-based firms: Quay Solutions and Vercom Systems, who combined their strengths to become a prominent IT consulting firm headquartered in Regina. Solvera provides a wide range of IT and business consulting services to an impressive list of public and private sector clients in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba.*

*Solvera has experienced an impressive revenue growth rate of 20 per cent per year. In the past two years, Solvera has focused on developing its regional operations and deepening its relationships with existing clients in Saskatchewan, resulting in even more impressive growth in both 2011 and 2012. This growth is all about meeting the needs of Solvera's clients, and the company is proud of its track record in delivering results.*

### **Contact**

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## **The Business Leader of the Year Award**

*Sponsored by Viterra Inc.*

The Business Leader of the Year Award goes to an individual who exemplifies the qualities of the business visionary. This person has shown outstanding success in business or industry through the development of a new process, product or service or for meaningful contributions to the local business community.

**WINNER:**                   **Holly Hetherington, David Aplin Group - Regina**

*Holly Hetherington founded Executive Source Partners in 1997, assuming the executive search business from Deloitte. The company, headquartered in Regina, celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a merger with David Aplin Group, a privately owned \$40 million Canada-wide recruitment firm. As well as retaining responsibility as Vice-President of the Saskatchewan region, Holly has now assumed the role of National Executive.*

*In addition to her contributions to education, aboriginal employment and labour market matters, Holly has had a personal hand in selecting and attracting over 500 business leaders in and to the Province of Saskatchewan throughout her 20+ years in business.*

**Contact:**

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## **Saskatchewan Business Hall of Fame Inductee**

**PotashCorp**

The Saskatchewan Business Hall of Fame was established in 1990 to recognize cornerstone businesses which have demonstrated excellence over an extended period of time, contributing to the economic well-being of the people and the province.

*Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan was created as a Crown Corporation in 1975 and was privatized in 1989. Since that time, it has grown to become one of the world's largest fertilizer companies, with a current market capitalization in excess of \$40 billion. The company plays an integral role in global food production, and its products will play an even more important role in feeding the world in the future. Recognizing this, PotashCorp has committed to an \$8.2 billion expansion of its potash operations, driving employment and growth in the Saskatchewan economy.*

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