

we are **in your community**

## **COMMUNITY AND ABORIGINAL RELATIONS: A LOCAL SOLUTION**

**THE ERCB IS AN ORGANIZATION** that prides itself on being proactive, outward facing, and transparent and, above all, one that serves Albertans.

The ERCB's Community and Aboriginal Relations (CAR) team embodies that vision.

Located in communities around Alberta, CAR team members are committed to assisting the public, First Nations, local governments, and the petroleum industry in understanding Alberta's energy development processes, rules, and regulations.

By establishing CAR as its outreach advocate to address issues and concerns, the ERCB has demonstrated that it values employing local staff to deal with local issues. This involvement of employees who live in rural Alberta communities helps to increase stakeholder confidence in the ERCB.

The backgrounds of CAR team members are as diverse as the communities in which they work. They include members of First Nations groups, farmers, health care workers, journalists, oil and gas workers, peace officers, and long-term ERCB employees.

Some of CAR's roles are

- responding to stakeholder inquiries, issues, and concerns;
- participating in and/or initiating local synergy groups;
- organizing and attending open houses and relevant meetings and events;
- delivering presentations to audiences of all types;
- attending emergency response exercises;
- providing "back-of-the-room" public support at ERCB hearings; and
- enhancing ERCB relations with First Nations.

For CAR to succeed, stakeholders must be confident that they have had a fair, transparent, and open chance to engage the ERCB. Stakeholders must also feel that their input has been considered and acted upon. CAR stakeholder relations specialists visit homes and communities and attend meetings daily in an effort to supply clear and easy-to-understand information about energy development and explain how to engage the ERCB and energy companies.

CAR team members are able to meet with thousands of Albertans each year and attend hundreds of meetings and open houses. The team sets up booths and displays at various events across Alberta, especially at agricultural trade fairs. This type of exposure offers farmers and ranchers the opportunity to stop by to say hello and ask questions.

CAR also engages First Nations and Métis communities. CAR staff travel extensively across the province to meet with First Nations and Métis communities and to work with ERCB staff on aboriginal awareness training, dealing with cultural differences, resolving issues, and building trust and respect between the ERCB and First Nations. In 2008, CAR staff more than doubled the number of aboriginal community contacts to over 100.

The team also engages local government at every opportunity. In fact, direct engagement of local governments has become increasingly important to CAR as towns, villages, and other municipalities across the province grow, which sometimes results in conflicts with existing or new energy development. Thanks in part to the work of CAR staff, the vast majority of issues are resolved quite easily.

CAR's capabilities have been strengthened over the past year. In 2008, the team experienced additional growth as new members were hired in the Bonnyville, Drayton Valley, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, and Midnapore Field Centres. As well, staff in Calgary coordinate performance reporting, monitor trends from emerging issues, and organize public events. The team has grown from 3 in 2005 to 16 in 2008. The CAR team's activities are expected to increase in 2009, as the new staff complete their training and become ready to engage stakeholders across Alberta. ↗

### **CAR by the numbers**

In 2008, the CAR team

- Engaged **167** key stakeholders to discuss ERCB roles and responsibilities.
- Conducted **172** presentations to communities, industry, and government.
- Attended **209** synergy group meetings.
- Contributed to the formation of **9** new synergy groups.
- Participated in **47** community and industry open houses.
- Attended **12** ERCB hearings to provide assistance to stakeholders.
- Conducted **104** aboriginal community contacts, mostly involving meetings between aboriginal leadership, band oil and gas liaison, and ERCB staff.