

# **Report on Aboriginal Labour Force Participation in Alberta**

Prepared for the  
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to describe Aboriginal labour force participation in the Alberta labour market.

## **B. APPROACH TO RESEARCH**

The approach to this study included primary data gathered through interviews and secondary data gathered through document analysis.

Telephone or in-person interviews were conducted with career counselors, employment/job placement specialists and persons responsible for employment training programs for Aboriginal persons. Many of these interviewees are Aboriginal persons.

Secondary data sources included 1996 Canada Census data as well as data drawn from several national, provincial and local reports.

## **C. BACKGROUND ON ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION IN THE ALBERTA LABOUR FORCE**

### **1. Definitions and Key Concepts**

According to Statistics Canada, “Aboriginal persons” includes persons resident in Canada who can trace their origins to:

- the native people or First Nations people who inhabited the area (of what is now Canada); and/or,
- the native people or First Nations people who were members of the linguistic families who occupied traditional lands in Canada and that bordered on what is now Canada.

In addition, some people have gained Aboriginal rights under legislation (i.e. the spouses of Aboriginal persons). (Statistics Canada. *Statistical Methods. Definitions of Concepts and Variables- Aboriginal Persons*)

The term “labour force” is defined as the “civilian non-institutional population 15 years of age and over who, during the survey reference week (of Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey) were employed or unemployed.” “Employed” are “those persons who, during the reference week did any work for pay or profit, or had a job and were absent from work.” “Unemployed” refers to “those persons who, during the reference week were available for work and were either on temporary layoff, had looked for work in the past four weeks or had a job to start within the next four weeks.” (Statistics Canada. *Guide to the Labour Force Survey*. February 2002).

“Industries” are those designations developed and based on the 1980 Industrial Classification. “Occupations” are commonly defined, broad job clusters based on the 1990 National Occupation Classification. (Ibid.)

“Labour market initiatives” are interventions designed to train and place workers in the workforce (supply side).

“Community development policies” are those policies are intended to create employment (demand side) for trained workers. Consideration of both labour market supply and demand interventions is needed in order for successful economic development to occur.

## **2. Available Quantitative Data on Aboriginal Labour Force Participation in Alberta**

According to recently released data from the 2001 Canadian Census, the number of individuals identifying themselves as Aboriginal in Canada rose from 1,101,960 in 1996 to 1,319,890 in 2001, an increase of 19.8 percent. (*Globe and Mail*, pg. A6). Of the total Aboriginal population in Canada, 211,182 Aboriginal persons (16% of the total Canadian Aboriginal population) reside in Alberta. (Ibid.)

The *Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative Employer Toolkit* (1998) presents the following compelling business reasons for increasing Aboriginal workforce participation:

- Aboriginal employees will help reach and service the large, growing Aboriginal market
- Aboriginal peoples represent an important source of new entrants and new skills for the workforce
- Aboriginal employment opportunities contribute to local community support for new resource development projects
- Providing employment opportunities facilitates successful business joint ventures with Aboriginal communities
- Aboriginal employees bring knowledge and values that can assist corporate change and growth
- Aboriginal employment helps companies meet their legal obligations and improves their access to federal contracts
- Aboriginal employment opens international opportunities, especially in the resources area.

(p. 3.3 – 3.8)

The most recent Aboriginal labour force data for Alberta is still derived from the 1996 Canadian Census. Statistics Canada is currently compiling and analyzing data from its 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. This data, which is expected to include Aboriginal labour force data, is scheduled for release in September 2003.

Table One presents the following labour force characteristics of the Aboriginal labour force in Alberta during 1996:

**TABLE ONE: Aboriginal Labour Force Characteristics in Alberta, 1996**

| <b>Aboriginal Labour Force Characteristics</b> | <b>Total Aboriginal</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| Total labour force                             | 68,830                  |
| Employed                                       | 56,845                  |
| Unemployed                                     | 11,980                  |
| Not in the labour force                        | 35,735                  |
| Participation Rate (%)                         | 66                      |
| Unemployment Rate (%)                          | 17                      |

**Source: Statistics Canada. DIAND Core Census Tabulations, 1996, T-11.**

According to the 1996 Census, there were in Alberta 104,565 Aboriginal people aged 15 years of age and over. The Aboriginal labour force in Alberta in 1996 totaled 68,830 individuals.

In Alberta, the Aboriginal participation rate (the total labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 years of age and over) was 66% in 1996, compared to 73% for Non-Aboriginals in Alberta. Aboriginal males in Alberta during 1996 had a higher participation rate (72.9%) than Aboriginal females (59.5%). Registered Indians in Alberta during 1996 had a participation rate of only 55% (Alberta Intergovernmental & Aboriginal Affairs, March 1999)

The unemployment rate for all Aboriginal Albertans in 1996 was 17%, compared to 7% for non-Aboriginal Albertans. The unemployment rate for male Aboriginals in Alberta during 1996 was 18.2% compared to 16.5% for Aboriginal females in Alberta. (Ibid.). Registered Indians living on reserves in Alberta had an unemployment rate of 27%. (Statistics Canada. DIAND Core Census Tabulations, 1996, T-11).

According to 1996 Canadian Census Data, the number of self-employed Aboriginals in Canada increased from 7,485 in 1981 to 20,195 in 1996, an increase of 170%. This compares to a 65% increase in self-employment among all Canadians. (Industry Canada, L-1). Of these 20,195 self-employed Aboriginals in 1996, 17% (3,445) were in the Alberta labour force. (Ibid. P-1).

In Alberta during 1996, approximately 56% of self-employed Aboriginals resided in urban areas and 44% lived in rural areas. Approximately 64% of self-employed Aboriginals in Alberta were male and 36% were female. (Ibid.).

## **D. ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS IN ALBERTA**

### **1. Current Industries and Occupations Where Aboriginals are Working**

The 1996 Census provided an indication of Aboriginal industry preferences in Canada. The vast majority of Aboriginal labour force participants in Canada during 1996 (82.8%) were employed in tertiary industries (technological, social and health services, artistic, religious, teaching and culture). This closely mirrored the non-Aboriginal Canadian population where 80.1% were employed in tertiary industries in 1996. Another 9.8% of Aboriginals in the labour force were employed in secondary industries (processing and manufacturing) during 1996 compared to 14.4% of non-Aboriginal labour force participants. Finally, 7.3% of Aboriginal labour force participants were found in primary industries (fishing, trapping, forestry, logging and agriculture) during 1996. This compared to 5.5% of the Non-Aboriginal population in 1996. (Statistics Canada. *DIAND Core Census Tabulations, 1996, T-18*).

Among Aboriginal labour force participants in tertiary industries in Canada during 1996, the largest percentage of employment was in public administration and defense (35.5%).

Occupations where Aboriginal labour force participation was greatest during 1996 included:

- Sales and service occupations (29.8%);
- Trade, transportation & equipment operators & related (18.3%);
- Business, finance & administration (15.7%)

Self-employed Aboriginals are found in as wide a range of businesses as non-Aboriginals. According to Barry Irwin, Manager Alberta/NWT, Industry Canada, Aboriginal Business Canada receives applications from Aboriginals seeking funding to establish a wide variety of businesses in Alberta. These range from hair salons to law offices, construction businesses to eye clinics.

During 1996, the industries where Aboriginal self-employment was highest in Alberta on a percentage basis were:

- Recreational and Personal Services (19.9%)
- Construction (18.9%)
- Retail & Wholesale Trade (11.9%)
- Agriculture (8.8%)
- Health & Social Services (8.6%)
- Transportation & Storage (8.0%)

The 1996 Canadian Census data and responses from interviewees strongly suggest that Aboriginal peoples, like their non-Aboriginal counterparts, have diverse industry and occupational preferences. As for working conditions, Aboriginal workers, like their non-Aboriginal counterparts, can have a range of preferences including: year round work, seasonal work, full-time or part-time work, local or distant, and stationary or camp.

## 2. Preferences for Rural or Urban Settings

According to Pat Tanaka, many Aboriginal students are interested in returning to their reserves in order to improve their quality of life and to be close to family. She indicates that often Aboriginal students do not wish to move to urban centres where they lack both cultural and family supports. A number of Aboriginal students at the University of Lethbridge are in the Faculty of Education and, upon graduation, they return to their reserve to teach. However, there are Aboriginal students whom Tanaka says would like to work off-reserve before returning to their reserve.

Preferences for employment in rural or urban settings appear to be tied to whether Aboriginal people want to remain in their home community usually because of family commitments (Gardener, Ferguson) or they view working in an urban center as more socially and/or financially attractive (Horseman, Ferguson).

### E. CAREER CHOICES FOR ABORIGINAL PERSONS

It is difficult to determine to what extent most labour force participants, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, make intentional decisions about careers. Don Gardener, who is actively involved with the *First Nations Training-to-Employment Partnerships* program, questions the extent to which Aboriginal persons, particularly those who lack a high school education, are making informed employment choices. Perhaps the greatest evidence of informed career choice by Aboriginals is among those persons who have chosen to further their education at the post-secondary level.

According to Pat Tanaka, Coordinator of Career and Employment Services at the University of Lethbridge, Aboriginal students currently studying at the University are concentrated in the Faculties of Education, Management, or Business. A number of these Aboriginal students have shown considerable interest in teaching or working as Aboriginal Coordinators in post-secondary institutions.

Lynda Ferguson, Manager of the Aboriginal Education Centre at Grant MacEwan College, interacts with a variety of Aboriginal students from across Alberta. Based on her experience she states the “number one” influence on career choice is a desire to make a difference in their community. She has identified the following factors that influence career choice for Aboriginal students:

- Previous enjoyable work experience in their target career
- Pursuing a “passion”
- Career choices of past teachers, mentors, influential family members
- Wanting to help their people reach their potential
- Understanding the value of higher education
- Desire for an improved quality of life
- Income earning potential
- Achieving a position of influence

- Changing negative stereotypes of Aboriginal persons
- Desiring acceptance by society at large

All those interviewed commented that Aboriginal persons of all ages have limited knowledge of potential careers. In some cases this is because these individuals did not remain in school long enough to receive career planning information (Gardener, Ferguson). For others, career options are limited due to their current level of education (Ferguson, Horseman). Even those who have successfully completed their high school education often have limited exposure to role models who would encourage them to consider a diverse range of career opportunities (Ferguson, Horseman).

McCormick and Amundson suggest that the unique career counselling needs of Aboriginal people can best be met with a career life planning model based on traditional First Nations values and beliefs (1997, 1999). The McCormick/Amundson model recognizes the importance of three components of career and life success – the individual, the family and the community. These components are further influenced by the following eight factors:

- Values, meaning
- Personality, spirit
- Interests
- Gifts, aptitudes, skills
- Labour market options
- Work, life roles, and responsibilities
- Educational background
- Balance (spiritual, physical, emotional, mental needs)

This research illustrates the importance of family and community members in Aboriginal persons successfully achieving their career goals, including completing career studies and maintaining successful attachment to the labour force.

The Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA) operates 17 Employment Service Centres across the province as part of the terms of an Aboriginal Human Resources Development (AHRDA) agreement with the federal government. Staff in these Centres help clients make career decisions, improve their skills, and find and maintain jobs.

The use of a holistic approach to service delivery has been critical to the success of these Employment Centres. In particular, when working with youth, they include life planning skills that address personal development, goal setting, work experience and community involvement.



## **F. LOOKING TO FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**

The *Lessons Learned Background Report – Building Communities: Effective Practices in Aboriginal Communities (1999)* presented the following view of the limitations of employment training programs for Aboriginal persons:

“Historically employment programs did not match with priorities of employers or communities and gave little consideration for Aboriginal persons’ financial and family obligations. The focus was on job acquisition not job retention.”

(p.20)

A survey of 800 youth conducted by the Yukon Department of Education in fall 2001 found that only 38% of First Nations students expected to complete post-secondary education compared to 67% of non-Aboriginal youth. One conclusion drawn from this research was the importance of First Nations governments advising youth that, with land claims settled, there are jobs and career opportunities for them if they have higher education.

The Government of Manitoba has developed an inventory of skills and occupations required particularly in Aboriginal and reserve communities. This listing has general application (which provided in Appendix A) for Aboriginal communities in Alberta as well.

In considering areas to target for employment and training for Aboriginal persons, the recently published *Alberta Careers Update* report (2003) provides the following general findings about future employment trends in Alberta:

- Employment growth in Alberta will continue at a slower pace.
- Employment growth will not fit neatly into any one category or industrial sector. Resources, Manufacturing, Services and Information and Communications Technology will be strong sectors.
- More education and training will be the key to success in the new economy.
- Over the next five years, there will be a strong demand for occupations that need university degrees.
- Nearly one-third of all new jobs will be in occupations requiring post-secondary college, technical and trades training.
- Just over one-quarter of all new jobs will be in occupations requiring completion of grade 12. The demand for these occupations will be driven by growth in sectors such as Retail, Food and Accommodation, and Tourism.
- Occupations requiring less than grade 12 will only account for one out of every ten new jobs.

(p. 37)

The *Alberta Careers Update* report (2003) identified the following general outlook for occupational groups in Alberta over the next five years:

**“The demand for tradespeople looks robust.** This is especially true for construction-related tradespeople. There will be major projects in oil and gas, power plants and pipelines along with many infrastructure and retail space projects. There will also be construction of basic infrastructure such as roads and light rail transit.

**Health care workers are in high demand.** After several lean years, there will be strong demand for nurses, medical radiation technologists and other health related occupations. Many health occupations are in skill shortage (this is defined by an unemployment rate of less than 3 percent).

**Engineers in many areas will be in demand.** This will mainly be in the industrial and electronic areas. There may also be more demand for the Crude Oil and Natural Gas industry.

**There should a strong demand for occupations in business, financial advisory and personal services.** As modern society becomes more complex, the demand for specialized management and financial expertise will grow. In a world of limited time, more people will contract out services. Such services as landscaping, food delivery services, house cleaning and household repair.

**Highly trained computer engineers, scientists and technicians will be in demand.** The Information and Communications Technology sector is a key part of the Alberta economy.”

(p.38)

These trends need to be taken into account in the design of training programs for Aboriginal persons to enter and remain in the labour market.

## **G. TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES IN ALBERTA**

### **1. History of Aboriginal Training Programs**

It is important to understand the evolution of Aboriginal human resources development in Canada.

“ In the 1970s, Aboriginal people were recognized as a segment of the clientele accessing mainstream programs. Some exceptions existed, such as the long running *Native Internship Program* launched by Canada Employment and Immigration in 1977 and a variety of programs offered by Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC).

In the 1980s, government introduced Aboriginal-specific policies and programs to develop local economies. For example, Industry Canada introduced the *Native Economic Development Program* while Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) introduced *Pathways to Success*.

In the last decade, Aboriginal organizations have assumed increased responsibility for federal programs. Relationships with other levels of government have also grown in importance, evidenced by the entry of the provinces into the field of labour market development. At the same time, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recognized the problems of adapting mainstream programs to Aboriginal communities, and the lack of continuity and coordination among programs. In response, the federal government introduced *Gathering Strength* – an agenda for working together with Aboriginal people. Many initiatives were announced as part of *Gathering Strength*, including a comprehensive Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy.”

(p. 5)

The Government of *Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework – Strengthening Relationships* (2000) caused Alberta Human Resources and Employment to revisit the employment profile of Alberta's Aboriginal people. Through this review, it was determined that

“ while most of Alberta's workforce has benefited from the buoyant economy, Alberta's Aboriginal workforce has not yet been able to participate in this “new economy.”

(p.3)

This review further determined that:

“...close to \$200 million is allocated to Aboriginal education, training and income support programs by the federal or provincial government in Alberta. Notwithstanding these significant expenditures, there exists little information either within or across governments as to whether these expenditures are achieving identified goals. This lack of coordination has often resulted in disjointed service delivery, as Aboriginal clients do not have a clear transition path from education to training to work.”

(p.7)

The *Alberta Human Resources and Employment Aboriginal Strategy* (2002) is intended to address these issues and achieve the following long-term outcomes:

- Higher participation rates in post-secondary education and training programs
- Higher labour force employment rates
- Increase in Aboriginal business start-ups/self-employment
- Decreased reliance on income support
- Enhanced workplace safety and compliance
- Comparable employment outcomes to other Albertans
- Satisfaction with employment/training programs
- Comparable skills and training achievements to other Albertans

The *First Nations Training-to-Employment Partnerships* initiative is designed to support the outcomes of the *Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) Aboriginal Strategy*. This program assists First Nations people (primarily living on-reserve and who are unemployed or underemployed) with the skills needed for sustained employment in occupations with long-term employment prospects. The program supports the development of partnerships between First Nations people, industry, the private sector, unions, training providers, the federal government and AHRE. A partnership can only proceed if there is representation from at least one First Nations, Tribal Council or Treaty organization and an employment provider. These partnerships can be broadened to include other Aboriginal groups representing Metis and non-status Indians under certain conditions.

## **H. LESSONS LEARNED FROM EMPLOYMENT TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

The findings of the 1999 HRDC commissioned study, *Lessons learned on employment, labour market, economic development policies, programs and services for Aboriginal peoples*, were based upon:

- Studies from Canada, Australia and the United States over the last 30 years;
- Past program and policy evaluations from several federal government departments; and,
- Key informant interviews with federal, provincial/territorial staff and representatives of Aboriginal organizations throughout Canada.

While the authors of this study found

“ little written on Aboriginal-specific labour market and employment training programs, many lessons from mainstream programs are directly relevant to Aboriginal policy makers and program designers in developing new programs or initiatives.”

(p.9)

Specific lessons from the employment and training literature reviewed in this report included:

- Employment and training programs consisting of classroom, on-the-job training, and life skills development have had minimal impact on earnings and job holding and do not reduce dependency on social assistance.
- Interventions that are short-term in nature do not prevent participants from returning to social assistance after having worked for several months, especially during recessions.
- Attributes of the individual are critical factors in successful outcomes. This is especially so for their “job readiness” as determined by their level of general education and job experience prior to interventions and the time on social assistance.

- Individual case management that addresses all aspects of an individual's social, health and educational deficits appears to be promising; however, the financial implications of such programming are significant.
- Training that responds to specific employment requirements is effective while block training (general classrooms) that does not address Aboriginal community and labour market needs may not be. The exception is the essential academic upgrading needed for workers to participate in higher technology occupations.

Further findings presented in this research reported included:

- Short-term skills do not compensate for poor basic education. Addressing literacy and numeracy deficits is a prerequisite for entry into employment and training programs.
- Preventing high school drop out is most important and providing programming for youth is critical.
- In-house training offered by the private sector is more effective than training offered by the public sector. Success is measured as trainees who are able to retain employment and seek new jobs or a career path.
- Partnerships with government and business in delivering training programs have proven to be effective. It is important to remember that employers are focused on their business needs and not the longer term needs of the employee. Consequently, changes in the economy or wage subsidy programs may result in layoffs of these newly trained employees.
- Training programs for seasonal and laid-off workers showed significant benefits in raising incomes however had little impact on the welfare system. These programs had somewhat better results than training programs for the disadvantaged.
- Lessons from welfare to work programming included
  - Minimal increases in earnings did not provide sufficient incentive to reduce overall dependency on social assistance.
  - Partnerships between employers and training service providers may create a pool of low wage workers, but the long-term effectiveness of this strategy has yet to be proven.

(Adapted from pp. 10 - 12)

Don Gardener offered the following observations based on twenty-five partnerships undertaken by the First Nations Training-to-Employment Partnerships Initiative:

- Aboriginal communities need timely, relevant local labour market information;
- Employment training should be combined with work experience as early as the first week of training;
- Aboriginal communities need assistance in establishing contacts with industry or training partners;
- Work experience during the early stages of a career training program can consist of job shadowing;
- Where possible, Aboriginal trainees should be placed in Aboriginal owned or operated businesses;

- Responsibility for costs associated with employment such as clothing, tools, WHMIS, first aid, etc. should be clarified prior to commencement of training;
- Trainees should be made aware of testing requirements such as drugs and other substances prior to commencement of training;
- Employment training has tended to focus on occupations appropriate for adult Aboriginal males. There is a need to focus on employment training opportunities for Aboriginal women and youth;
- Cultural awareness training is important for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers; and,
- Business or trade “culture” awareness training needs to be part of any employment training curriculum.

## I. EMPLOYMENT TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH

In November of 1997, Premiers, Territorial Leaders and Leaders of the five national Aboriginal organizations identified the priority need to:

“address social issues related to Aboriginal peoples, a comprehensive process of social policy renewal and the needs of Aboriginal youth.... Premiers and National Aboriginal Leaders met in March 1999, in Regina and pressed for timely completion of the National Aboriginal Youth Strategy.”

(Aboriginal Youth Strategy, p. 2)

The resultant *National Aboriginal Youth Strategy* (2000) identified several initiatives to address two economic goals:

- To increase the awareness of Aboriginal youth regarding a range of economic opportunities; and,
- To increase Aboriginal youth participation in these economic opportunities.

(p.31)

The *Strategy* outlined the following initiatives to achieve these goals:

- Incorporate economic awareness and information into the school curriculum;
- Facilitate job placement for Aboriginal youth including skilled, professional and apprenticeship areas to develop transferable skills in partnership with the private sector;
- Prepare Aboriginal youth for employment through job market analysis information, pre-employment training, counseling and work experience in rural and urban areas;
- Encourage partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth;
- Establish cross-cultural training for the workplace and the private sector; and,
- Establish programs to assist Aboriginal youth in exploring careers.

(Aboriginal Youth Strategy, pp. 20-21)

Ongoing research into the career choices of Aboriginal youth is a priority for both Alberta Learning and Alberta Human Resources and Employment. It is thought that if Aboriginal youth can have successful attachment to the labour force this may lead to ongoing success in the workforce. Some findings from research on career resource requirements of Aboriginal youth have illustrated:

- The importance of personal, face-to-face contact and role models;
- The need to reach youth and parents early in the schooling process;
- The need for culturally and socially relevant resources;
- The importance of using widely accessible media;
- The value of “bridging programs” to help youth move from the classroom to the workplace; and
- The importance of providing cultural knowledge and awareness training for teachers, guidance counselors and employers.

(Gardener)

Authors of *Lessons learned on employment, labour market, economic development policies, programs and services for Aboriginal peoples* stressed the importance of youth remaining in school and the value of school to work transition programs. They further expanded upon the impact of school to work transition programs as follows:

“These programs link vocational and occupational training to regular academic curriculum and include job preparation activities, work placements, and summer student programs. Students participating in these programs are more likely to invest in job related education once employed.”

(p. 12)

*Pihtakosiwin – ‘Voice, Being Heard*, a report published by Oteenow Employment and Training Society and Freehorse Family and Wellness Society, is based on quantitative and qualitative research that examined the education, training, labour market barriers and future aspirations of Edmonton First Nation youth between 14 and 24 years of age.

This research demonstrated that

“Youth often do not have the family supports necessary and integral to achieving success in their daily lives. This leads to a lack of motivation and purpose, as they receive no encouragement and direction for their futures.

Despite these obstacles and challenges, these youth do have some semblance of goals. They value hard work and the benefits of an education and hope that they will be able to acquire the tools required for success. Generally, they do not view their Aboriginal heritage as an obstacle but as integral to their identities.”

(p .7)

Youth who participated in this study identified the following seven factors that serve as barriers to their employment and training:

- Lack of financial resources
- Limited knowledge of information resources
- Educational goals versus actual achievements
- Program criteria, recruitment and assessment

- Class size, hours, attendance and location
- Work experience/placement component
- Cultural values, self-esteem and identity

While this research was conducted in a large urban the setting, it has wider application for Aboriginal youth living in other environments. (Appendix B outlines the 56 recommendations that youth offered to address these seven barriers).

## **J. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Northern post-secondary institutions and NADC can play a key role in the economic development and labour market environment in Northern Alberta. Much can be learned by the experiences of Northern regions of other jurisdictions in Canada. There are numerous training programs, employment services and on-line resources developed specifically for Aboriginal persons. A good review of best practices in this area is provided in the report, *Strengthening Aboriginal Participation in the Economy* (2000).

The following conclusions and recommendations are proposed for consideration by the Labour Market Information Clearinghouse partners:

1. Work together with Aboriginal leaders to provide labour market information to their communities on current and emerging in-demand occupations
2. Work with Aboriginal community leaders and industry to provide training programs for current and emerging in-demand occupations.
3. Offer more labour market training opportunities for Aboriginal women and youth.
4. Explore Aboriginal entrepreneurship, web-based business training opportunities for Aboriginal women or those living in remote Aboriginal communities to sell their arts and crafts.
5. Market success stories of Aboriginal graduates from northern post-secondary institutions.
6. Work with on-reserve schools and schools with significant Aboriginal student populations to raise awareness among their students of career and employment opportunities.



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Canada and worldwide initiative to share knowledge, interests and best practices

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#### **5. Newspaper Articles**

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### Inventory of Skills and Occupations Required by Aboriginal Communities

#### **Business Management Skills**

- Retail management (small business)
- Accounting skills
- Community and economic development skills (including a cultural awareness component)
- Project management
- Band management/administrator (with negotiation and conflict resolution skills)
- Housing property management
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Surveyors (land claims and development)

#### **Health and Medical Skills**

- General practitioners and traditional healers (someone who has obtained a medical degree but all apprentices with an elder or practicing traditional healer)
- Specialist physicians, optometrists and chiropractors
- Nurses
- Public health nurses and health care aides
- Public health educator (especially with knowledge of diabetes)
- Teachers (especially high school math and science, Aboriginal languages and reading clinicians)
- Teacher aides
- Early childhood educators/daycare managers
- Social work (family violence counselor)
- Alcohol, substance abuse and general addictions counselor

#### **Experienced/Certified Tradespersons**

- Plumber
- Electrician
- Carpenter
- Sheet metal worker
- Heavy-duty equipment mechanic
- Motor vehicle mechanic
- Small engine repair (outboard motors, chain saws, automobiles)
- Heavy-equipment operator

#### **Self-government**

As First Nations communities move increasingly to self-government, the following skills and occupations will be required:

- Political science training and leadership (B.A., Certificates)
- Treaty/Land Claim Settlement specialists

- Lawyers
- Justice workers (B.A. in Law, specialized)
- Education administrators
- Project managers and proposal writers (accessing and managing funding dollars)

### Summary of Recommendations – Urban Youth Needs Assessment

#### **1. Barriers to employment and training**

##### 1.1 Lack of financial resources

- 1.1.1. Provide cost of living expenses in addition to having enough resources to participate in recreational pursuits, buy lunches and access counseling services.
- 1.1.2. Provide accessible information on career opportunities, services and resources specific to youth, low-cost housing, and educational tools and resources.
- 1.1.3. Provide culturally appropriate and affordable childcare services to allow lone parents to focus on their training and employment goals.
- 1.1.4. Provide additional resources and incentives to assist with motivation and alleviate cost of living expenses. These incentives may include:
  - bus tickets for good attendance
  - recreational outings for reaching personal and/or academic goals
  - Friday night sports for group cooperation
  - lunch program
  - low cost youth housing similar to campus housing or information on where to access affordable housing
  - day trips to various organizations
  - access to computers and fax machines for job searches

##### 1.2 Limited knowledge of information resources

- 1.2.1 Respondents recommend that both educational and employment initiatives be posted through the following:
  - Internet website for Aboriginal youth services
  - billboards in places that youth frequent
  - newspaper
  - youth director in book form and also accessible via internet
  - career counsellors, youth workers and youth organizations that will have been provided with information on all programs, resources and services available to assist youth
- 1.2.2 Provide resources to develop a youth directory which would be accessible through the Internet or in book form
- 1.2.3 Provide a youth liaison person with access to information and support services after training

## **2. Retention and Attrition**

1. Programs should be flexible enough to accommodate absences for valid reasons such as workforce participation or family obligations.
2. Programs should offer positive and motivating environments to encourage attendance and deal with procrastination.
3. Programs should offer participants the flexibility and opportunity to earn wages while training to encourage program retention.
4. Programs should offer upgrading courses.
5. Provide resources and services to youth while they are attending training programs to encourage them to complete their programs.
6. Programs should offer “bridging” type programs to assist participants make the transition back into the learning environment.
7. Programs should incorporate a peer support program for youth to help them remain motivated and focused with their learning.

### 2.1 Educational goals versus actual achievements

- 2.1.1. Programs should offer goal setting as part of curriculum to assist participants with effective career planning.
- 2.1.2. Programs should offer field trips to the business community and cultural centres to assist participants with goal setting.

## **3. Program Structure**

### 3.1 Program criteria, recruitment and assessment

- 3.1.1 Program criteria should take the goals of applicants into consideration rather than focusing on whether or not they are receiving SFI or EI benefits.
- 3.1.2 Programs should provide orientation sessions for potential participants to gather information and decide whether or not the program is suitable for them.
- 3.1.3 Programs should include personalized assessments and evaluations to enable youth to monitor their own development.
- 3.1.4. Programs should base criteria on individual assessments relative suitability, interests and abilities as this would help to ensure that only those who are committed to the training would attend.

### 3.2 Class size, hour, attendance and location

- 3.2.1 Programs should allow for larger class sizes to make the learning environment more interesting with an increased variety of participants.
- 3.2.2 Program hours should adhere to the conventional times of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.
- 3.2.3 Programs should allow for a “three strikes” policy with regard to attendance.
- 3.2.4 Program locations should be in central locations for easy access.

## **4. Program Content**

### 4.1 Program content and format

- 4.1.1 Participants recommend that training programs incorporate the following components into the curriculum:
- skills training relevant to today's labour market
  - academic education such as high school certification
  - job shadowing, volunteer opportunities
  - urban life skills
  - communication skills (reading and writing classes)
  - parenting, family and relationship skills
  - health and healing (counseling)
- 4.1.2 Respondents advised incorporating various activities throughout the day rather than focusing on one learning component as preferable to sitting all day in one classroom.
- 4.1.3 More group involvement was recommended to allow for greater participation and variety.
- 4.1.4 Modules should be incorporated so as to offer participants flexibility in program options and to allow for part-time workforce participation.
- 4.1.5 Programs should provide certification upon completion.
- 4.1.6 Youth recommend that future programming take into consideration the holistic approach, whereby they may access various components of a program in addition to other services through a one-stop service mechanism.

### 4.2 Work experience/placement component

- 4.2.1 Programs should balance classroom daily study with on-the-job work experience, either on an alternating basis, or provide a practicum at the end of the theoretical segment.
- 4.2.2 Programs should provide job opportunities to participants upon program completion.

### 4.3 Inter-personal and communication skills development

- 4.3.1 Programs should teach inter-personal skills including communication and leadership development.
- 4.3.2 Programs should make use of talking circles to assist in the teaching of communication and skill development.

### 4.4. Cultural component

- 4.4.1 Participants recommend that programs be based in an Aboriginal setting and that they address the need for an authentic cultural component with training programs so that youth can attain or retain their identities as First Nations people.
- 4.4.2 Participants recommend that cultural teachings include history from the Native perspective.
- 4.4.3 Participants recommend that all teachings be delivered in a manner respectful of the culture and include spiritual awareness.
- 4.4.4. Participants recommend that Native Elders be involved with the teachings.



#### 4.5 Cultural values, self-esteem and identity

4.5.1 Programs should incorporate the teaching of values from a First Nations perspective.

4.5.3 Programs should invite Elders from various First Nations to provide an opportunity for participants to learn about other cultural traditions and values.

4.5.3 Programs should provide an atmosphere of respect toward the participants in return for respect shown by the youth.

4.5.4 Culture should be taught so as to raise levels of self-esteem, self-identity and instill cultural pride within individuals.

4.5.5 Programs should encourage community participation to allow for the development of mutual respect and understanding between individuals and groups.

4.5.6 Programs should incorporate a youth ambassador component whereby youth would have the opportunity to teach others about their First Nations culture.

4.5.7 Youth should be able to complete the work experience component of a program within their own communities so as to have the opportunity to “give something back.”

#### 4.6 Cultural participation

4.6.1 Traditional cultural practices and events should be made available with programming but participation should not be a mandatory component.

### **5. Program Staff Credentials**

- Staff must possess a positive attitude and be approachable and trustworthy.
- Staff must be appropriately qualified.
- Staff must sign confidentiality agreements and have criminal record clearance prior to their hiring.

#### 5.1 First Nations staff as role models and mentors

5.1.1 First Nations staff and instructors should be recruited to programs for youth to serve as cultural role models and mentors.

5.1.2 Staff working with youth must have an understanding of youth issues and awareness of First Nations culture.

### **6. Post-Program Support Services**

6.1 Programs should strive to build partnerships with business and industry so that participants have guaranteed employment once they complete their training programs.

6.2 Programs must ensure youth are receiving meaningful employment when they are finished their programs.

6.3 Programs should provide post-program support services to assist participants make the transition to independence.

## **7. Future planning for youth**

7.1 Youth recommend the implementation of a youth council through which they could be directly involved in the planning of programs.

7.2 Youth recommend that service providers utilize the information from this study in their future design and development of programs specific to youth employment and training.