



ABORIGINAL

EMPLOYMENT

DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAM



**Saskatchewan  
First Nations and  
Métis Relations**

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## WHY THE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (AEDP)?

Saskatchewan's workforce will look much different in ten years. Today's workforce is aging and expected mass retirements will significantly reduce Saskatchewan's labour supply. Meanwhile the Aboriginal population is growing. In 2001, 65% of 130,000 Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan were under the age of 25. By 2012, it is expected that one in three students in the K-12 system will be of Aboriginal descent and an additional 46,000 Aboriginal people will be of working force age.

To help address high unemployment rates in the Aboriginal community, and meet the human resource demands anticipated by labour shortages in the near future, the Government of Saskatchewan created the Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP).

The AEDP works with employers to identify employment needs and remove barriers to ensure a workplace that is grounded in fairness, respect and dignity, trust and open communication. These employers measure the success of non-discriminatory hiring practices of qualified applicants.

Partnerships seek to prepare the workplace for the current and future Aboriginal workforce. Partners review workplace policies, provide Aboriginal misconception training to staff, and communicate the employment and economic opportunities to Aboriginal communities and training institutions.

As part of the program, the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy was implemented with the goal of having Aboriginal workers represented at all occupational levels (entry, middle, and senior management) in the provincial workforce<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Statistics Canada

## THE OBJECTIVES OF AEDP:

- To foster
  - Employment Development
  - Economic Development
  - Workplace Cultural Development

## THE PRINCIPLES OF AEDP:

- Cooperation
- Fairness
- Consistency
- Mutual Respect
- Open Communication
- Committees are formed to:
  - Negotiate how the partnership will unfold.
  - Co-monitor progress, and to co-evaluate the results.

## BECOMING AN AEDP PARTNER

The current and future Aboriginal workforce is preparing to participate in Saskatchewan's labour market. If you want your workplace to become a fair and welcoming environment for Aboriginal people, consider becoming an AEDP partner and implementing the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy. Partnership agreements are in principle. How each agreement unfolds is unique and is negotiated between the parties.

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## 1. THE ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy is an employer focussed process that works to ensure the workplace is a fair and welcoming environment for Aboriginal people. This includes addressing possible barriers to Aboriginal employment, identifying employment and business opportunities, enhancements to collective bargaining agreements, and providing Aboriginal misconception training for employees at all levels of the organization.

Employers typically form a steering committee to ensure the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy moves forward. Membership on the committee consists of the employer and representatives from Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations. Membership may also include, but is not limited to, employee unions, education or training institutions, business organizations, and local Aboriginal communities. Every partnership is unique and is reflected by the membership of the steering committee.

In terms of process, steering committees may create implementation plans, operational goals, identify roles and responsibilities, or create monitoring and partnership evaluation criteria. Partnerships are based on a collective decision-making process. Where possible, steering committees may decide to hire an AEDP coordinator dedicated to the coordination and implementation of the strategy in the workplace and with partners. This person can become a role model to others, assist in breaking down workplace barriers, and perform outreach and networking to Aboriginal communities.

## 2. THE ROLES OF AEDP PARTNERS

The success of the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy depends on each partner implementing their role towards creating a workforce that includes Aboriginal people.

### **Employers**

- Identify and communicate employment and business opportunities in a generic way.
- Establish relationships with Aboriginal communities and organizations.
- Address workplace barriers with misconception training and acceptable dispute resolution processes.
- Hire qualified Aboriginal people.
- If applicable, work with union(s) in partnership to support Aboriginal employment development initiatives.

### **Aboriginal Community**

- Ensure education is a priority.
- Ensure education meets employer's educational requirements.
- Focus training efforts where opportunities exist.
- Pursue new training opportunities.
- Compete for jobs and business contracts on an equal footing.

### **Government**

- Facilitate partnerships.
- Ensure programs are relevant for Aboriginal people.
- Communicate opportunities to Aboriginal communities and organizations.
- Provide leadership on policy and programs relevant to the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy.
- Promote public policy that prepares for the changing demographics of Saskatchewan.

### **Unions**

- Identify and seek resolution to workplace practices that limit or discourage Aboriginal participation.
- Enhance collective agreements with language supporting the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy.
- Engage Aboriginal union members to assume leadership roles within their respective unions.
- Build commitment to the Aboriginal Representative Workforce Strategy within union membership.

### **Education and Training Institutes**

- Support a K-12 education that makes Aboriginal youth competitive in the labour market.
- Assist Aboriginal communities and people in acquiring education and skills training.
- Ensure education and training programs will meet the skill requirements of the employer demand.
- Become a workplace of choice for Aboriginal people.

## **3. PREPARING THE WORKPLACE**

There are several ways that partnerships can work towards preparing the workplace for the inclusion of Aboriginal people.

- Identifying employment and economic opportunities in a generic way and

communicating the information to Aboriginal communities and organizations.

- Working toward becoming the employer of first choice for Aboriginal people, and lead by example.
- Adopting acceptable practices to deal with personal, sexual, and racial harassment.
- Providing Aboriginal misconception training to all staff.
- Ensuring there are retention strategies in place for Aboriginal employees.
- Ensuring that Aboriginal employees are educated on collective agreement rights, and can participate in the business of unions.

#### 4. WORKPLACE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are two aspects to identifying workplace employment opportunities.

##### **Generic Menu of Opportunities**

Successful partnerships depend on the employer identifying the full range of employment opportunities in the workplace. This means providing a generic list of all positions of employment in the workplace, including training and experience requirements, job duties and responsibilities. This will provide information about the employer's education, training and employment needs to Aboriginal communities and people who can acquire the skills to compete in Saskatchewan and Canada's labour market.

##### **Review Current Hiring Practices**

Partners are encouraged to examine hiring practices and communication efforts to ensure that fair access to employment is available to all people.

#### 5. ABORIGINAL PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There are two aspects to identifying economic opportunities in the purchasing of goods and services.

##### **Identifying Economic Opportunities**

Successful partnerships depend on the employer identifying the full range of goods and services purchased in order to do business. This might include contracts for construction or renovations, office supplies, cleaning services, food services, purchase of retail merchandise, courier services, etc. This means providing a list of all goods and services purchased by the employer, and sharing this information with Aboriginal communities and business people.



An economic audit determines all the goods and services required by the employer. The audit provides information about current and future business opportunities with employers.

### **Fair Access to Contracts**

Partners are encouraged to review how goods and services contracts are awarded to ensure that fair access is available to all Saskatchewan businesses.

Aboriginal entrepreneurs and business organizations are then empowered to compete fairly and equally for business opportunities.

Communicating business opportunities to Aboriginal people will reduce dependency on government, and will enable Aboriginal people to become employers.

## **AEDP LEADING CHANGE**

### **Policy Development**

As part of the Government of Saskatchewan, in the Department of First Nations and Métis Relations, the Aboriginal Employment Development Program is working to create a representative workforce that includes Aboriginal people. The AEDP is a leading policy development model which seeks to create fair access to employment and economic opportunities.

### **Youth Awareness**

The dominant demographic characteristic of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal populations is the large number of youth under the age of 25. The AEDP focuses on communicating future opportunities to Aboriginal businesses, organizations, and communities to ensure Aboriginal youth get the necessary education and training to compete for the opportunities of their choice.

### **Workshops**

AEDP representatives provide workshops on implementing the Representative Workforce Strategy. Workshops have been conducted throughout Saskatchewan and across Canada.



## THE PROVINCIAL ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE COUNCIL

AEDP partners are invited to join the Provincial Aboriginal Representative Workforce Council (PARWC). The Council brings partners and participating stakeholders together to share and develop strategies for developing and delivering training, facilitating change, developing succession planning, and linking training and job opportunities to potential Aboriginal employees. Aboriginal people can then better prepare for current or future jobs by obtaining the education and skills required.

The Council shares best practices and creates synergy for the program by working together on development projects. This combination of knowledge, experience and resources optimizes our efforts to achieve a representative workforce in Saskatchewan. To find out more about the Council visit [www.parwc.usask.ca](http://www.parwc.usask.ca)



