



Expo 06 WWestnet's Essential Skills Expo

March 6th and 7th saw WWestnet conduct another Essential Skills event in Vancouver, BC.

“Expo 06” was staged in an effort to engage business, labour and workplace practitioners from across western Canada in an essential skills event that would focus on best practices in the development, delivery and assessment of integrated workplace based training initiatives. The event showcased some of western Canada’s best integrated training programs and an array of supporting products and services.

Delegates were able to choose their own learning paths by selecting four of eight possible workshops to attend. These workshops were hands-on sessions that addressed some of the proven ways businesses, often in partnership with unions, approach essential skills training.

Workshop presentations featured programs from Boeing Technology Canada, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters BC, Loewen, Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council, Syncrude Ltd. / Keyano College, the Tataskweyak Cree and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nations, and Prescription for Learning. The format generated interest and excitement about training that incorporates essential skills.

The event was kicked-off by a keynote presentation by Dr. J. Myers, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME), BC.

Dr. Meyers began by outlining the importance of a skilled workforce to Canada’s future and the economic and social costs of skills shortages to the Canadian economy.

He reviewed the importance of manufacturing to the Canadian economy and described some of the challenges faced by Canadian manufacturers. He then described the



Dr. J. Meyers

Manufacturing 20/20 survey that was undertaken in 2005, and used the results of the survey to highlight the current and future issues and challenges particularly as they pertain to the labour force.

After the opening remarks, event participants attended their choice of the following sessions:

Boeing Canada Technology

- **Teaming in the Factory and Deaf Literacy** – Herman Hansen, Manager, Training and Development at Boeing Canada Technology (BCT) provided an

continued...

overview of essential skills initiatives at Boeing including the Deaf Literacy program and Teaming in the Factory.

- **Mature Student Diploma (MSD)** – Shannon MacFarlane and Peter Handford took participants on a journey from the beginning right through to sharing the successes of the first group of high school graduates in this workplace project. To date, 10 Boeing employees have graduated with their high school diploma (MSD) and another 10 are slated to celebrate their graduation in June 2006.

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters

- **TeamTime™** – This program was initiated as a response to teams without teamwork and ineffectual training. Workplace education specialist, Tracy Defoe, led participants through a TeamTime™ program session and demonstrated how the program works. TeamTime™ lessons and materials integrate adult learning and literacy best practices with lean and teams. TeamTime™ also includes a facilitator's manual and support.

Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council

- **Ready to Work** – Tim Ouellette described this program as a national project designed to introduce/reintroduce participants to the Tourism workplace. Participants spend 12 weeks developing soft and hard skills specific to an occupation as well as working on job search skills. He outlined how essential skills were integrated into this program, the challenges and successes of the integration, and made suggestions as to how delegates might integrate these skills into their own training programs.

Loewen

- Rhonda Brechter, Manager, Organizational Development for Loewen conducted a workshop to introduce Loewen's Leadership Development and Leadership Immersion Programs to session participants. These training programs integrate

essential skills and workplace content into leadership training. This workshop provided an overview of these programs and delegates were also challenged to get involved and undertake some hands on activities.

Syncrude/Keyano College

- **ERIC and SAM** – Keyano College's Hildy Hanson presented an overview of the college's partnership in training with Syncrude and introduced event participants to the Effective Reading in Context (ERIC) and Syncrude Applied Math (SAM) programs. ERIC is intended as an interactive workshop that presents participants with the opportunity to practice efficient workplace reading using proven and effective strategies. SAM focuses on the math most commonly used in the workplace using customized workplace examples and exercises.

Keyano College

- **Essential Skills in Aboriginal Pre-Apprenticeship Training** – Peg Carson of Keyano College discussed the integration of essential skills into Aboriginal pre-apprenticeship. Training, focusing particularly on the Keyano/Syncrude Safety and Workplace Reading Workshop and its integration into three Aboriginal pre-apprenticeship programs. Peg then gave participants the opportunity to work through several essential skills' activities that are used in the workshop.

Prescription for Learning

- **Communication Skills for the Practice of Pharmacy** – Angela Tessier delivered this workshop and provided insight into the research, development, and delivery of a program custom designed to enable internationally trained pharmacists to practice in Canada. The program uses the essential skills as a framework and focuses on the culture of the Canadian workplace, oral communication, problem solving, and written communication.

continued...

Tataskweyak Cree and Nisichawayasihk Cree Nations

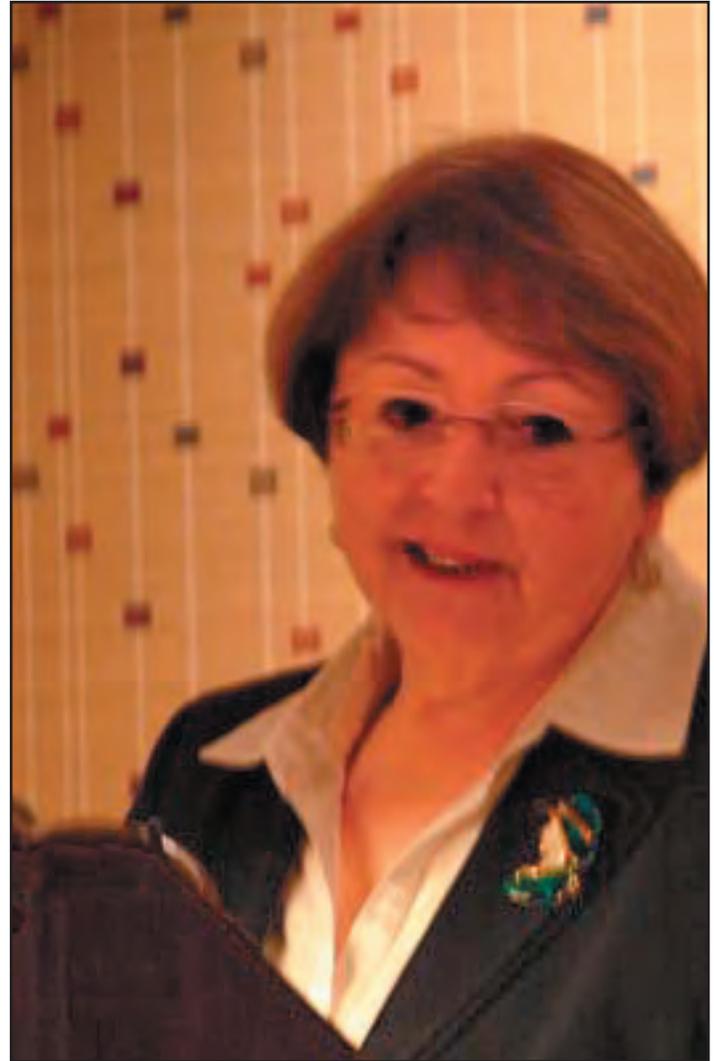
- **Essential Skills in Training for Cree Nation Apprentices** – Facilitators Ezra Bogle and E. Gordon McGillivray gave event participants an insight into how essential skills are used in the training provided to Aboriginal apprentices. The Tataskweyak Cree Nation employment and training initiative in Split Lake is part of one of the largest projects in northern Manitoba. Ezra Bogle described the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation’s development of Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre (ATEC) in Nelson House MB and the training offered at the Centre, including the essential skills focused training in the second part of the presentation.

Expo 06 included an array of display booths that featured products and information from the following exhibitors:

- Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC
- Centre for Education & Work
- Douglas College: The Training Group
- Electrical Industry Training Institute
- Human Resources Skills Development Canada
- Skills Canada BC
- Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB)
- SkillPlan: BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council
- WorkAble Solutions

Expo 06 was closed with an address by Yvette Souque, Program Manager at the National Literacy Secretariat.

She began by reflecting on the state of literacy and essential skills research and practice in Canada and then summarized what she had learned at the event and highlighted what she believed to be the key messages. Ms Souque said that Expo 06 confirmed that when it comes to essential skills training:



Yvette Souque

- There is no silver bullet. No one answer or program will work for all of the people – learners or industry – for all the time
- The needs of the workplace, industry, and learners change over time.
- Partnerships between business, labour, government and practitioners are critical to addressing issues
- Partnerships are ever changing and need time, investment, and commitment to work.
- Initiatives need ongoing commitment and investment to work
- Regardless who is providing the funding, program results, and impacts need to be evaluated. It is important to understand the return on investment for learners and employers.



Diversification Dilemma

Finding highly qualified front-line customer service representatives is often a challenge for any company but finding the right entry-level employee in an already tight labour market is quite another story. They just aren't available.

And, if your company has a policy of promoting from within, it means those jobs are frequently open as people move up their respective career ladders. If you add the issue of a recruitment and retention challenge to the challenge of managing high growth, you'll understand the dilemma faced by Cambrian Credit Union. Where are the potential employees? How do you find them?

At the same time the organization was experiencing a shortage of entry-level workers, Cambrian recognized the importance of cultural diversity and was in the preliminary stages of diversifying its workforce to better reflect its expanding customer base. It knew that representation from a wide range of ethnic cultures was good for business today also for tomorrow's world.

But the question was, "How should the credit union go about recruiting skilled immigrants into its team, especially when at least 25 new entry-level workers were required each year?" The answer lay in the development of an innovative recruitment and initiative strategy developed in collaboration with the Department of Labour and Immigration's settlement and labour market services branch.

The credit union had experienced only limited success in diversifying its workforce with skilled immigrants. Recruitment was typically accomplished on an individual referral basis and without the clear knowledge or understanding of how differences with respect to cultural origin, education, and work experience would impact success. For instance, newcomers often had difficulty with the pace, complexity and the vocabulary used in company training programs and that no one knew how to overcome this. The credit union recognized it needed help in learning how to manage cultural differences so that people could be integrated into the workforce.

Diversification Dilemma Credit unions hire/train immigrants

*Sat. Apr 15, 2006
Winnipeg Free Press
(Reprinted with permission)*

BARBARA BOWES - WORKING WORLD

Working with the Department of Labour and Immigration, the credit union undertook a number of steps to develop a special new employee orientation program designed to provide

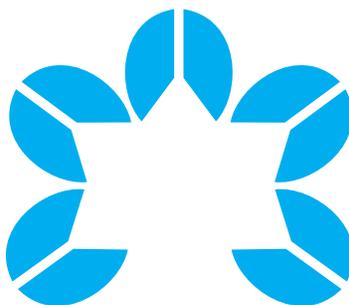
that much-needed Canadian work experience for immigrant applicants. These included:

- Identifying the current challenges with immigrant recruitment and retention.
- Conducting a needs assessment to determine program feasibility and costs.
- Identifying job competencies including English language proficiency, technical and soft skill requirements.
- Developing an essential skills profile.
- Custom designing and developing a special training program.
- Determining organizational readiness requirements.

A 17-week program was developed to provide training to qualified immigrants in the skills needed for a career in the Canadian financial services industry. First, program participants attended a five-week, non-paid orientation program that addressed the identified skills gaps that had initially created those difficult integration challenges for newcomers. The second element included a three-month paid work experience to train participants in the technical elements of being a member services representative. Thirdly, each candidate was assigned to work with an experienced employee who acted as a trainer and mentor on technical skills. The participants then could apply for any available job.

The program also identified additional training needs, such as the need for incumbent employee cultural awareness and diversity training. As a result, all supervisors were required to attend a customized in-house training program. Internally, all of the senior executives and managers were supportive and involved and front line managers and trainers also contributed to the development of program content. Finally, Cambrian reached out beyond its borders to partner with the Assiniboine, Astra and Steinbach credit unions so job

continued...



Diversification Dilemma *continued from page 4*

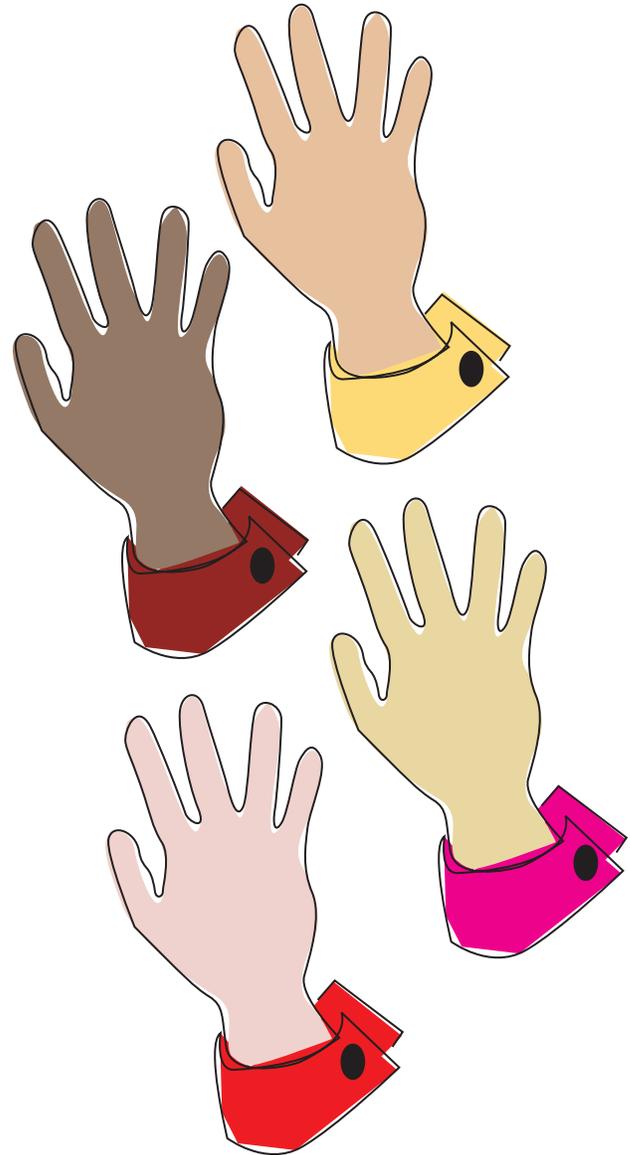
opportunities for program graduates were broadened. The four credit unions have implemented several recruitment and training programs in the last 13-month period.

In fact, at least two candidates have already been promoted. As can be expected, each credit union is more than pleased with such significantly positive results and they are more than eager for new trainees to come aboard.

And, not only are new entry-level employees now more available, the time gap to fill positions has substantially narrowed from several months to two or three weeks. So what are the benefits of such a collaborative immigrant training/orientation project? The following will apply to any workplace:

- A company will have developed a competency (skills) profile for various jobs that can be utilized both for recruitment and training.
- Candidate sourcing assistance through the circulation of job ads through the various immigrant settlement agencies will increase the candidate pool.
- A company workforce will more effectively represent the diversity seen in our local population. This serves not only as an employee recruitment and retention tool but also as a customer attraction and retention tool.
- Company employees will better understand cultural diversity and the challenges newcomers face as they integrate into our culture.
- Company employees will gain a better understanding and respect for the skills and abilities of all their team mates.
- Company managers will gain new skills in how to manage a diverse workforce. * Entry-level jobs can be filled in a more timely manner with employees staying longer and being very loyal.

As Christina Semaniuk, vice-president of human resources for Cambrian Credit Union, the founding designer of this unique program, Michelle Manary, director of human resources for Assiniboine Credit Union, Sharon McMahon, director of human resources for Steinbach Credit Union and Mary Goodmanson, director of human resources for Astra all say, this custom designed and unique program has not only helped them to more effectively recruit new entry level employees but it has also helped the



organizations meet their secondary strategic goal, that of having a diverse workforce that more reflects their growing diverse customer base.

Today the program is so successful that managers go directly to the candidate pool of graduates rather than the time absorbing tactic of going to the market to fill an entry-level position. And finally, after two years of challenge and hard work, Cambrian Credit Union's Immigrant Integration Program was recently recognized as an industry model through the awarding of a gold award of excellence by the Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba. Great going folks!

Source: Cambrian Credit Union Award Submission, interviews with Christina Semaniuk, Michelle Manary, Sharon McMahon and Mary Goodmanson. ◆

Education Indicators in Canada

Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program, 2005 was released in late April of this year. The document is co-published by Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

This is the third edition of “Indicators”, the first having been published in 1996. While the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators are not the only indicators on Canadian education systems, they do incorporate extensive work aimed at harmonizing data across jurisdictions to provide consistent and high-quality information on education for all of Canada to support informed decision-making, policy formulation and program development. The indicators in this report were selected based on two criteria: relevance for policy development and availability of data. They are based on the most recent available data.

This report is divided into five major chapters:

- A. A Portrait of the School-age Population
- B. Financing Education Systems
- C. Elementary-Secondary Education
- D. Post Secondary Education
- E. Transitions and Outcomes

Chapter A, “A Portrait of the School-age Population”, examines the state of the school-age population in the 1990’s and highlights some of the challenges faced by Canadian educational systems. Facts of interest include:

- Since 1990, an average of 225,000 new immigrants of all ages arrive in Canada every year. This influx is having a profound impact on the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of Canadian schools.
- The home environment of school-age children is changing. School-age children in 2001 were less likely than those in 1991 to have parents who were married.

In Chapter B, “Financing Education Systems”, readers are given an overview of how Canadian education is funded. The report describes expenditures on a per-student and per-capita basis as well as in relation to the gross domestic product (GDP), and distinguishes public and private as well as capital and current expenditures.

The third chapter, “Elementary-Secondary Education”, is concerned with the indicators regarding pre-elementary, elementary, and secondary education. Some of the findings may be surprising to essential skills and

literacy professionals. For example:

- In 1998-1999, about 15% of both 4 and 5-year-olds performed relatively poorly on a test of cognitive development that is generally regarded as a good predictor of school readiness. Twice as many boys as girls of those ages had some speech difficulty.
- The percentage of secondary school principals who reported that the instructional and material resources of their school were adequate was higher in Canada than in most other countries.

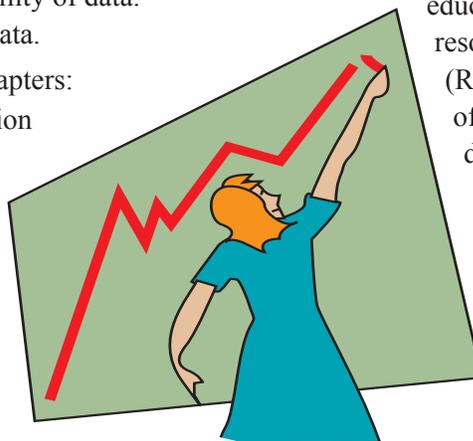
Chapter D, “Post Secondary Education”, examines a number of aspects of post secondary education in Canada. Enrolment and graduation in trade/vocational, apprenticeship, college and university programs, adult education and training, human resources, research and development (R&D) and the educational attainment of the working age population are discussed

The final chapter, “Transitions and Outcomes”, looks at Canadians as they make the transition to higher education and to the labour market. While it is not surprising to learn that those with post secondary education usually earn more than those

without, it is surprising to learn that while Canadians spent more time in school in 2001 compared to 1991, the proportion of college and university students over the age of 20 was greater for the same period.

This in-depth report will prove to be a valuable resource to anyone involved in education in Canada, especially those who write proposals and seek funding for new programs. The data contained in the report will be of equal value to those who are seeking to improve or expand existing programs

The report is available in print through Client Services, Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0T6 (telephone: (613) 951-7608) at a cost of \$70.00 plus shipping. It can also be downloaded for free from Statistics Canada at: <http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/downpub/studiesfree.cgi> (click on “Education”) or from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, at <http://www.cesc.ca>.



Video Review

The Essential Investment

“The Essential Investment” is a DVD developed and distributed by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE). This 18-minute video is designed as an introduction to workplace essential skills and explains why developing and sustaining these skills is critical to the Canadian labour force.

Throughout the video, the audience follows a Corrections Officer as he moves through a typical day at work and then at home. He explains what he does in the course of his duties and how his essential skills may need a “workout”. As his work day progresses, we see that much of the work he does involves reading, writing, oral communication and computer skills

Bow Valley College’s Nancy Steel provides commentary and puts his comments into context by explaining what is meant by essential skills. Her statement about the increased importance of essential skills in today’s “knowledge-based” economy provide an excellent rationale for investment, by employers and employees, in programs that promote the development and improvement of essential skills across the board.



AUPE’s Education representative, Greg Maruca describes a workforce that has access to essential skills programming as one that is “more confident and higher skilled” and that is “equipped to participate more fully in their union”. Union president, Dan MacLennan, says that “labour issues are people issues” and describes how essential skills provide us with the reasoning and communication skills essential for life on and off the job.

T. Scott Murray (Director – Education Outcomes, UNESCO Institute for Statistics) describes essential skills as “tools that people use to meet the demands of daily life”. He goes on to describe the societal impacts of a workforce with essential skills in place. His insight on how the effects of essential skills training reach beyond the workplace into the home and community makes a powerful statement.

The video is a remarkable tool for those essential skills practitioners who seek an engaging way to answer the perennial questions of “What are essential skills?” and “Why are they so important?”

AUPE has made 80 copies of the video available to readers of *The Bottom Line* at no cost. For a copy of the DVD, contact Greg Maruca at g.maruca@aupe.org. ◆

List of Articles

Expo 06	1 to 3
Diversification Dilemma	4 & 5
Education Indicators in Canada	6
The Essential Investment	7

WWestnet acknowledges the financial support of the National Literacy Secretariat. Submissions and queries regarding submissions can be e-mailed to the editor, Peter Exner at pexner@shaw.ca or to the **Bottom Line** at wwestnet@shaw.ca