

**ADULT LEARNING KNOWLEDGE CENTRE**

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**CENTRE DU SAVOIR SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE CHEZ LES ADULTES**

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## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

### **ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

**2008**

REPORT  
ON  
**ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
SESSIONS**

*ABORIGINAL ADULT LEARNING ISSUES  
IN THE ATLANTIC REGION*

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) was established in 2005 by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) to advance adult learning across Canada. Working with government, educational institutes and community organizations, AdLKC seeks to improve the general public's understanding of the role of lifelong learning in creating economic productivity, social equity and civic engagement, and to foster adult learning systems that are coordinated, accessible and relevant to the needs and interests of all Canadians.

CCL is an independent, non-profit corporation that promotes and supports research to improve all aspects of learning—across the country and across all walks of life. Funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, CCL was created in 2004 following a series of nationwide consultations where Canadians agreed that lifelong learning is essential to make Canada a world leader in innovation, skills and learning.

Adult learning encompasses a broad spectrum of activities including formal and informal learning. It is usually understood to be purposeful and intentional learning undertaken by adults, either alone or in groups, resulting in distinct and measurable advances in their knowledge, skills and/or attitudes. Adult learning also includes community development initiatives which create opportunities for communities and for individuals within these communities.

In its commitment to developing equitable and accessible adult learning, AdLKC recognizes the importance of overcoming systemic barriers to learning, particularly related to language, race, class, ethnicity and accessibility.

In 2008, AdLKC initiated a community outreach project aimed at five identity-based communities within Atlantic Canada: Aboriginal, African-Canadian, Francophone, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Guided by the adult learning principle that communities are the experts on their issues, the outreach project sought advice from community representatives. During the first six months of 2008, consultations took place throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. These provided opportunities for dynamic dialogue about adult learning issues. Problems were identified and solutions articulated.

While each of the five communities is distinct in its history, character, and concerns, each shares a desire to increase adult learning opportunities available to their communities, to expand their knowledge, understanding and skills, and to improve the future for themselves and their children.

Each report offers wide-ranging recommendations for expanded programs, improved access and a better understanding of the barriers. Whether the systemic barriers are physical, financial or attitudinal, they impede both individual and community advancement. The reports of AdLKC's community outreach initiative offer insight into adult learning from the perspectives of five vital communities in Atlantic Canada.

## SUMMARY

The Aboriginal Community Outreach Initiative's objectives are to discuss Aboriginal adult learning needs and related issues within Atlantic Canada. Han Martin Associates, a private Aboriginal majority-owned consulting firm was awarded the contract to organize a series of five community-based knowledge exchange meetings to discuss adult learning needs and issues of Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada.

Although adult learning applies to all sectors such as citizenship, arts, culture, and natural resource management, the primary focus for these sessions was on literacy, post-secondary education and employment.

The Aboriginal Reference Group has identified a number of challenges and issues relating to adult learning. The overall and unifying theme underlying most of these issues is the importance of Aboriginal language and culture as it impacts adult learning for Aboriginal people and communities.

The major issues identified by the participants are as follows:

- Participants in all sessions noted that funding is an ongoing and critical issue. There were several major areas of concern expressed.
  - Funding levels for many programs have either been frozen for over a decade or they have been steadily decreasing since 2000.
  - Funding programs tend to focus on employment and economic development and not on adult learning issues.
  - Funding criteria are restrictive and do not allow for any accommodation in learning styles or programs.
  - There is a need to clarify criteria for INAC's Post-Secondary Education program as it is unclear which types of education and training programs would be supported.
  - Existing criteria made it easier for Aboriginal people on EI to receive financial support and services for adult learning than those on social assistance who may require this help more for transportation, tuition and child care.
  
- There is a trend to shift funding away from front-line service provision.
  
- The increase in student loans is a concern, especially in light of inadequate funding to communities who then cannot support their post-secondary education efforts.

- Literacy initiatives are not common within Aboriginal communities where the focus has been more on individuals receiving their GED.
- Although younger Aboriginal adults have more access to the outside world than previous generations, their motivation to learn is not as strong as older Aboriginal adults. Instilling the desire to learn among younger Aboriginal adult learners is a challenge and there is a need to find out why this lack of motivation exists. The leadership in First Nations communities or agencies should recognize that they are often doing youth a disservice by making the process of being accepted into adult learning programs too easy, as well as by providing financial rewards just to attend.
- Many Aboriginal students graduating from high school find they are behind their non-Aboriginal counterparts. They are graduating with a weakness in math and science, making it difficult to participate and succeed in regular college or university programs, especially to pursue studies in health, the sciences or technology. Poor self-esteem and identity affect their ability to participate effectively in learning.
- In a majority of the sessions participants identified lack of transportation as a major impediment for adult learners to access or continue training. In order to access services, individuals are forced to move away from their communities. The result is the loss of language and culture as individuals become assimilated into mainstream (mostly English Canadian) society.
- Access to child-care services is an issue for many Aboriginal adult learners. Day cares on reserve do not suit the schedules of Aboriginal adult learners going to training programs in or outside the community.
- Peer and family support is very important and the adult learner experiences a tremendous sense of isolation when that is lost.

## ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Aboriginal Peoples, as defined by the Canadian Constitution of 1982, include Métis, Inuit and North American Indians. They each have distinct issues and diverse cultures. Within Atlantic Canada there are six main groups: Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Passamaquoddy, Innu, Inuit and Métis. According to the 2006 Census<sup>1</sup>, the Aboriginal identity population accounted for 3.7% (1.7 million people) of the Canadian population. The Aboriginal population in Atlantic Canada (67,010 people) consists of 3.0% of the region’s population and 5.71% of the total Canadian Aboriginal identity population.

The Aboriginal population in Canada has increased 45% between 1996 and 2006. This is almost six times faster than the growth rate of 8% for the non-Aboriginal population in Canada. The greatest increases have been in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic region (Nova Scotia—95% increase; New Brunswick—67% increase; Newfoundland and Labrador –65% increase).

**Table 1: Size and growth of the population reporting Aboriginal ancestry and Aboriginal identity, Canada, 1996-2006**

	2006	2001	1996	Percentage growth 1996-2001	Percentage growth 1996-2006
<b>Total: Aboriginal ancestry<sup>(1)</sup></b>	1.7 million	1,319,890	1,101,960	19.8	54
<b>Total: Aboriginal identity</b>	1,172,790	976,305	799,010	22.2	45
North American Indian <sup>(2)</sup>	698,125	608,850	529,040	15.1	29
Métis <sup>(2)</sup>	389,785	292,310	204,115	43.2	91
Inuit <sup>(2)</sup>	50,485	45,070	40,220	12.1	26
Multiple and other Aboriginal responses <sup>(3)</sup>	34,500	30,080	25,640	17.3	34
(1) Also known as Aboriginal origin.					
(2) Includes persons who reported a North American Indian, Métis or Inuit identity only.					
(3) Includes persons who reported more than one Aboriginal identity group (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit) and those who reported being a Registered Indian and/or Band member without reporting an Aboriginal identity.					

The Aboriginal population is much younger than the general Canadian population with 48% of Aboriginal people 24 years or younger. This compares to 31% for the non-Aboriginal population. At 27 years, the median age of the Aboriginal population in Canada is 13 years younger than the non-Aboriginal population (40 years). Only 5% are seniors, compared to 13% of the general Canadian population. Aboriginal people and

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted the statistics referenced can be found in Statistics Canada: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census. Aboriginal Peoples, 2006 Census. Catalogue no. 97-558-XIE. Ottawa. January 2008.

communities are greatly concerned that there will be a grave loss of language, culture and traditional knowledge when these seniors pass on.

## LANGUAGE

Retention of language and culture is a major concern for Aboriginal people in Canada. In both 2001 and 2006, 29% of the First Nations population who responded to the Census could speak an Aboriginal language well enough to have a conversation. This figure was higher for First Nations people living on reserve (51%) than off reserve (12%). The increased likelihood for First Nations people to lose their Aboriginal language and culture rapidly is one deterrent to moving off reserve for education or employment opportunities.

In 2006, 8,540 individuals reported being able to converse in Mi'kmaq, the same number as in 2001. However, there was a 4% increase in the number reporting Mi'kmaq as their mother tongue, indicating that families are making efforts to speak the language at home and pass it down to their children. In contrast, the number of Maliseet speakers decreased by 30% between 2001 and 2006.

The Inuit language remains strong, but its use is also declining. The number of Inuit reporting Inuktitut as their mother tongue declined between the 2001 and 2006 Census from 68% to 64% and the proportion of Inuit who speak Inuktitut at home also decreased to 50% from 58%. The First Nations and Inuit populations are both learning their Aboriginal languages as a second language.

Only 4% of Métis spoke an Aboriginal language in 2006, declining from the 5% reported in the 2001 Census. Older Métis people were more likely to speak an Aboriginal language with 12% of Métis aged 75 years or older speaking an Aboriginal language compared to less than 3% aged 44 years.

## FIRST NATIONS LIVING ON/OFF RESERVE

Proportions vary of Aboriginal people on and off reserve in each Atlantic province.

**Table 2: Percentage of First Nations people living on and off reserve, 2006 Census**

	Total North American Indians	On Reserve	Off Reserve
Canada	698,025 (100.0%)	300,755 (43.1%)	397,265 (57%)
Newfoundland and Labrador	3,610 (100.0%)	750 (20.8%)	2,855 (79.1%)
Prince Edward Island	845 (100.0%)	370 (43.8%)	475 (56.2%)
Nova Scotia	10,875 (100.0%)	7,275 (66.9%)	3,600 (33.1%)
New Brunswick	12,385 (100.0%)	6,910 (55.8%)	5,470 (44.2%)

A larger percentage of Aboriginal people live off reserve in Newfoundland and Labrador because the Inuit do not live on reserve land.

According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), 61% of Status Indians<sup>2</sup> live on reserve in Atlantic Canada.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Family***

Aboriginal children are twice as likely to live in a lone-parent family, with 29% under the age of 14 years living with a single mother and 6% of this age group living with a single father. This compares to 14% and 3% of non-Aboriginal children respectively. First Nations children living off reserve are more likely to live with a lone parent than on reserve (35% off reserve compared to 26% on reserve).

### ***Education***

Levels of education for the Aboriginal population are lower than for the general Canadian population. However, Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada are better educated than their counterparts in the rest of the country.

<i>Table 3: Highest Level of Education (%) - Aboriginal Identity Population in Canada and the Atlantic Provinces 2006 Census<sup>4</sup></i>						
	<i>Canadian Population</i>	<i>Aboriginal Canada Population</i>	<i>PEI</i>	<i>NB</i>	<i>NS</i>	<i>NL</i>
<i>University</i>	22.6	8.6	12.8	9.1	12.7	8.7
<i>College</i>	17.3	14.5	19.9	16.1	16.1 17.	6
<i>Trades</i>	10.9	11.4	11.1	14.6 13.	5 12.	7
<i>High School</i>	25.5	21.8	24.3	21	21.3 18.	9
<i>Less than high school</i>	23.8	43.7	31.9	39.2 36.	4	42

The young and rapidly growing Aboriginal population is entering all fields of post-secondary education. Aboriginal mature students are returning to adult learning

<sup>2</sup> INAC keeps records for Status Indians in Canada. In contrast, the Census records statistics for Aboriginal people (First Nations or North American Indians – both Status and non-Status Indians; Inuit and Métis).

<sup>3</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Registered Indian Population by Sex and Residence 2007. Retrieved May 6, 2008 from: [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/sts/rip/rip07\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/sts/rip/rip07_e.html)

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada 2008. Aboriginal Identity (8), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (14), Major Field of Study – Classification of Instructional Programs, 2000 (14), Area of Residence (6), Age Groups (10A) and Sex (3) for the Population 15 Years and Over of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2006 Census – 20% Sample Data (table). Topic-based tabulation. 2006 Census of Population. Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-560-XCB2006028. Ottawa. Released March 4, 2008.

opportunities to further their education and improve their employment prospects after dropping out of high school at an early age.

These demographic trends have implications for the types of supports and programs being offered in adult learning to Aboriginal people.

Other factors that are relevant to Aboriginal adult learning in today's context include:

- The ongoing negative impacts of colonization and the residential schools on Aboriginal communities and people, including intergenerational and social challenges that they are still trying to overcome. For example, poor self-esteem which affects people's ability to succeed; high dropout rates; a lack of appreciation of formal education as a result of negative experiences in residential schools; secondary impacts and social challenges such as poverty, addictions and other related issues.
- The challenge facing Aboriginal communities and organizations in providing services that are offered through a myriad of programs, contracts and agreements with the federal and provincial governments. Each program has its own set of criteria, regulations and accountabilities that are sometimes restrictive, conflict with each other, and are not integrated with government departments.
- Progress towards self-government by Aboriginal Peoples which involves technical capacity and knowledge building in all sectors of the community, including economic development; natural resource and land management; health; social programs; community planning; research; and governance.

## **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

The Initiative's objectives are to discuss Aboriginal adult learning needs and related issues within Atlantic Canada. Han Martin Associates, a private Aboriginal majority owned consulting firm was awarded the contract to organize a series of five community-based knowledge exchange meetings to discuss adult learning needs and issues of Aboriginal people in Atlantic Canada. The community-based sessions sought to provide participants with the opportunity to:

- learn about the AdLKC;
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future;
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal adult learning; and
- network and establish a dialogue with each other.

Although adult learning applies to all sectors such as citizenship, arts, culture, and natural resource management, the primary focus for these sessions was on literacy, post-secondary education and employment.

## METHODOLOGY

As the field of adult learning is vast in scope, it was decided to focus the outreach initiative for Aboriginal people to agencies involved in literacy, employment and training, and post-secondary education; representing the needs and interests of Aboriginal people in the Atlantic region, and Aboriginal adult learners. Stakeholders and individuals were identified and a list developed of approximately 200 including:

- Aboriginal government related organizations such as Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs; Tribal Councils; Nunatsiavut Government;
- First Nations/Aboriginal Agencies; for example, Directors of Education in First Nations communities, Coordinators from the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holders that provide employment and training services to First Nations community members on and off reserve, etc.
- Individuals at universities and community colleges in the Atlantic Region delivering support services to Aboriginal students, or involved in delivering courses, programming and services to its Aboriginal student population;
- Aboriginal agencies providing services to Aboriginal Peoples living off reserve such as Friendship Centres;
- Aboriginal organizations providing professional development to Aboriginal Peoples, such as the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO);
- Agencies involved in literacy for Aboriginal Peoples.

For budget considerations, as well as to provide and facilitate more meaningful discussion, it was determined that approximately 15 participants would be invited to each of the five community outreach sessions. Participants representing a cross section of these agencies were invited, with a particular focus on those assisting Aboriginal Peoples in literacy; assisting high school drop-outs wanting to qualify for post-secondary education; involved with training and professional development; post-secondary education; and adult learning. Within each province, consideration was also given to the diversity within the Aboriginal communities—large and small communities; on and off reserve agencies; Inuit, Métis and First Nations communities.

Each agency was contacted by telephone and a letter of invitation was sent via fax or e-mail explaining the purpose, date and location of the session (see Appendix A). A registration form accompanied these letters. Potential participants were contacted by telephone again to provide additional information and to determine their participation. If invitees were not able to attend but were interested in participating in the process, the information package on AdLKC distributed at the sessions was mailed to them and a telephone appointment was arranged.

Five sessions were scheduled:

- May 20: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island;

- May 22: Fredericton, New Brunswick;
- May 28: Truro, Nova Scotia;
- June 9: St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador;
- June 12: Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Each session ran from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and organized with a maximum of 15 and a minimum of six participants. A total of 51 individuals and agencies participated in the sessions and telephone interviews.

Participants were provided with a kit containing:

- Information about the purpose and work of AdLKC, including their brochure and their Aboriginal Reference Group Summary Report, March 2007;
- Information about the Community Connections Working Group;
- A list of consortium members and the brochure with information for new consortium members;
- A list of Aboriginal Knowledge Exchange Projects funded by the AdLKC since February 2006;
- Information about the June 2008 AdLKC Symposium in St. John's, Newfoundland.
- The Winter 2008 issue of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre's Newsletter.

Participants were informed of the initiative and its purpose, and the session objectives. They were told they would receive a summary of the local sessions as well as an Atlantic summary report of the discussions. These reports would be shared with participants; used by AdLKC to assist with their planning for the current fiscal year and to foster a culture of adult learning; and may be posted on the AdLKC's website. A list with contact information for participants was distributed, with their permission, to facilitate follow-up and networking. As well, in some sessions participants offered to share their organizations' reports on Aboriginal adult learning in the Atlantic region.

Notes were taken during the discussions using a laptop. These discussions were summarized into a draft report for each session that was distributed to the participants for review, together with a draft of the Atlantic Region summary report. The results of the telephone interviews have been incorporated into the summary report.

The final report is a summary and synthesis of the information discussed at the five sessions and the telephone interviews. Comments received about the draft report have been incorporated into the final version.

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The participants identified a number of issues relating to Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada. The following is a summary of issues and concerns. More details on the issues can be found in the report appendices containing summary reports of each local session (Appendices B-F). The following issues are not in order of priority.

## **FUNDING**

Participants in all sessions noted that funding is an ongoing and critical issue. There were several major areas of concern expressed.

### ***Funding Levels***

Funding levels for many programs have either been frozen for over a decade or they have been steadily decreasing since 2000. For example, INAC's Post-Secondary Education program and funding from Service Canada have both been capped. In some cases, funding levels have been capped since 1992 and there has been no adjustment for the rapid increase in the population. As a result, approximately 600 individuals in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have not been able to access post-secondary training.

### ***Funding Criteria***

Many participants said that the funding programs tend to focus on employment and economic development and not on adult learning issues. The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) programs do not support programs that Aboriginal adult learners may require, such as literacy. Their programs depend on maintaining concrete employment and training outcomes and statistics to continue to receive funding from Service Canada. Literacy programs will not meet that statistical criteria and consequently cannot be funded. Literacy programs may be perceived as a waste of AHRDA resources because these programs may require several years, whereas training programs are shorter and more concretely linked to employment.

Within the programs that do support education, many participants found that the funding criteria are restrictive and do not allow for accommodation in learning styles or programs. For example, Health Canada will not provide funding for training in the health field, even though the impacts would be felt in that sector. Other participants explained that although the college program can accommodate a student taking one or two credits in a semester, the funding regime would not allow for this.

There was also a need to clarify criteria for INAC's Post-Secondary Education program as it is unclear which types of education and training programs would be supported.

Existing criteria made it easier for Aboriginal people on EI to receive financial support and services for adult learning than those on social assistance who may require this help more for transportation, tuition and child care.

Provincial and federal funding programs are also riddled with jurisdictional complexities and inconsistencies so that Aboriginal adult learners sometimes "fall between the cracks."

### ***AHRDAs***

AHRDA funding to Aboriginal communities and agencies is being threatened as a result of the proposed pan-Canadian policy to provide these services to Aboriginal people using a business model. A company in Western Ontario could provide services to Labrador and because of their ability to write proposals, these non-Aboriginal firms will stand a better chance of being awarded the contract than the Aboriginal agencies who had been delivering the services and are familiar with local culture and contacts. Often, the AHRDAs work collaboratively with post-secondary institutions to overcome students' challenges. The proposed approach will have a detrimental impact on the quality and effectiveness of services to Aboriginal people in the Atlantic region.

### ***Federal Funding Policy***

There is a trend to shift funding away from front-line service provision. Some of the funds for community-based work are being diverted to universities; funding is not going to where it is needed the most. There is a need to look at the big picture but to focus resources at the local level.

### ***Student Loans***

The increase in student loans is a concern, especially in light of inadequate funding to communities who then cannot support their post-secondary education efforts. Students often do not receive the required pre-assessments to determine whether they meet the academic readiness criteria, especially for some private sector institutions primarily concerned with revenue generation. Consequently, students are set up to fail and incur debt in the process. Some participants stated that provincial departments administering and approving student loans had some responsibility to ensure that adult learners accepted in programs meet the pre-requisites and are likely to succeed.

## **CLIENT READINESS**

Literacy initiatives are not common within Aboriginal communities where the focus has been more on individuals receiving their GED. Aboriginal people are not generally aware of literacy programs and the available supports, such as bursaries and scholarships. It has been a positive experience for the few who have accessed these.

There are also few resources to put libraries in communities.

Although younger Aboriginal adults have more access to the outside world than previous generations, their motivation to learn is not as strong as older Aboriginal adults. Older learners often make sacrifices to succeed in post-secondary programs while younger Aboriginal adults are influenced by a number of other factors including:

- the financial benefits of attending a program;
- the desire to socialize with others; and
- family support and how they perceive learning as a result of their upbringing.

Instilling the desire to learn among younger Aboriginal adult learners is a challenge and there is a need to find out why this lack of motivation exists. The leadership in First Nations communities or agencies should recognize that they are often doing youth a disservice by making the process of being accepted into adult learning programs too easy, as well as by providing financial rewards just to attend. There should be a more compelling reason to learn, such as making a commitment to oneself and to one's community to improve, learn and succeed.

Many Aboriginal students graduating from high school find they are behind their non-Aboriginal counterparts. They are graduating with a weakness in math and science, making it difficult to participate and succeed in regular college or university programs, especially to pursue studies in health, the sciences or technology. Poor self-esteem and identity affect their ability to participate effectively in learning. Entering into mainstream formal education systems often makes it even more difficult. Many Aboriginal students are also dealing with social issues such as addictions and lack of coping skills. All these factors affect the motivation and readiness of Aboriginal adult learners to complete their training and attain their goals.

Many require more upgrading programs to further their learning goals but they may lack access to these programs on reserve, or the programs are not adequately meeting their needs.

Career counseling for Aboriginal adult learners is frequently absent, especially if they have dropped out of school. Often such counseling does not take into consideration the aspirations of the Aboriginal adult learner. Some AHRDAs are addressing this issue to increase the chances of success for their client. There is a growing emphasis for a more client-centred and case-management approach for individual clients as opposed to contract training in the communities. Good career counseling is important to contributing to their success as adult learners.

Some Aboriginal students are also "program jumpers" or "program deserters." They return repeatedly to request additional support for other training programs, or are still not employed after repeating several programs. In some cases, clients "work the system" by receiving a stipend from one course and welfare from another program. Clients have to take greater responsibility for their learning. Service delivery agencies also need to increase their accountability and collaboration processes. There appear to be many incentives for Aboriginal adult learners to enter the system and remain in it, but few to encourage them to leave and complete their training.

A group may receive funding and child care support to learn how to make crafts as a means for future employment. However, at the end of the training, there are no jobs and the level of financial assistance they receive is less than in the training program. Resources spent on "program jumpers and deserters" might be better spent on clients who already have clear career goals and are likely to finish programs.

It was noted that there might be legitimate reasons why some clients enter training programs more than once, switch programs, or seek assistance from different agencies

and that they are entitled to access the services if they are eligible. Building supports to ensure clients can deal with the various challenges such as child care, transportation, etc. is also important to ensuring their success.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

In a majority of the sessions participants identified lack of transportation as a major impediment for adult learners to access or continue training. Many Aboriginal adult learners are on limited incomes and simply cannot afford the cost of gasoline to get to the institutions. Also, lack of a car, public transit, or community bus makes it impossible to attend institutions off reserve. Various participants expressed concern that some of their communities had a shuttle bus or transportation system for medical appointments or other trips into town; however, many of these services run on a schedule that does not allow for attendance at night classes or to get to class on time in the morning. Increased programming, such as Level 4 Basic Adult Education, is required in communities

In order to access services, individuals are forced to move away from their communities. The result is the loss of language and culture as individuals become assimilated into mainstream (mostly English Canadian) society.

Additional comments about transportation include:

- The distance to universities, colleges or other institutions of higher learning is often an issue;
- There is insufficient funding to travel to training or courses outside the community, particularly as there is no public transportation system in remote or rural communities;
- For some First Nations communities, members are distributed on more than one reserve<sup>5</sup>, making it difficult for some to access training provided on one reserve location. In some cases, there are considerable distances between reserves, up to a 45-minute drive.
- First Nations community members may not have a driver's license or sufficient financial resources to purchase their own vehicles for transportation.

## **CHILD CARE**

Access to child-care services is an issue for many Aboriginal adult learners. Day cares on reserve do not suit the schedules of Aboriginal adult learners going to training programs

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<sup>5</sup> A band is a body of Indians for whose common use and benefit, lands have been set apart and money is held by Her Majesty, or declared by the Governor in Council to be such an entity for the purposes of the Indian Act. Band is the legal term but the term "First Nations" is increasingly used. A reserve is land owned by the Government of Canada, and held in trust for the use and benefit of an Indian Band, for which they were set apart from other public land. First Nations bands may have more than one reserve.

in or outside the community. For example, day cares in some First Nations communities seem to be intended for those who can pay for the service such as band staff. There is no subsidized day care available for Aboriginal learners in many of the communities. Some child-care support initiatives are for employed people. The facilities are closed during funerals in the community so that the day-care staff can attend. However, adult learners are still required to attend their education or training sessions, making it difficult for them to make alternate child-care arrangements.

Depending on program criteria, some Aboriginal adult learners can access child care through programs, whereas others are not able to do so. As well, funding levels for child-care support have not increased and do not factor the increased demand for this need with the growing Aboriginal population.

In many cases the lack of child care becomes an absolute bar to their participation in education. Students may be willing and able to attend classes but soon drop out if child care becomes a burden. Many younger Aboriginal students in university have families or become parents while in school and the range of supports for them is inadequate.

As one participant observed:

“The population [in our community] is booming and there were over 100 children at the most recent first communion ceremony. However, there is no child-care facility in the community. A pre-school program exists but it is a “pay-as-you-go” service and is not readily available to adult learners and trainees who are taking programs in that community. Day cares in other parts of the province are subsidized and are available for people on welfare or limited income but this is not the case in our community.”

## **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS**

The importance of family and community support for the success of adult learning initiatives was discussed in all sessions. The discussion ranged from the effects of lack of immediate family support, of community encouragement generally and community programs specifically. The recurring theme is that adult learning success is not achieved in a vacuum; but rather it is often the result of individuals having access to supportive families and communities.

Many Aboriginal people dropped out of the formal education system early on as their parents were unable or did not help them overcome the challenges they were facing. Some are residential school survivors or had parents who had horrific experiences at residential schools. As a result of their own limited education, they create a cycle by not being able to support their children through school. It is important to improve literacy levels of parents as this will have an impact for future generations and create role models for adult learning. Older Aboriginal learners also need support and mentors to overcome their insecurities about technology and learning.

One participant shared that there is a danger for Aboriginal adult learners to be ostracized by their families and communities. Once a person successfully completes his education or is too successful, some community members perceive that the individual thinks he is better than the rest. One person said that once he graduated from high school he lost his friends, but upon graduation from university he lost his family. Success in the mainstream may be perceived as “selling out.” This lack of family and community support will present a challenge for Aboriginal people to further their education. Peer and family support is very important and the adult learner experiences a tremendous sense of isolation when that is lost.

At a community level, leadership is often unclear as to whether the focus on adult learning should be on literacy, training or education, etc. As there is often no coherent approach, leadership and service agencies cannot prioritize the assignment of adult education resources. In some areas, providing community members with programs to receive their basic adult education or high school diploma is not a priority as the demand has dropped since the mid-1990s. However, adult basic education continues to be a priority with government. Agencies continue to work in “silos” and there is insufficient communication, coordination and collaboration among themselves and with Aboriginal leadership. Efforts in some Atlantic provinces are underway to rectify this.

There is also a need for Aboriginal people and communities to reframe adult learning to include lifelong learning in areas such as arts and culture.

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**

There are growing numbers of Aboriginal adult learners and high school graduates interested in pursuing post-secondary education, with an increase in the number of women wishing to undertake training to increase their employability. However, many Aboriginal learners are not aware of the programs available and how to access them. Also, there are often waiting lists for programs.

Some bands prefer to focus their efforts and resources on training that is delivered on reserve. At the same time, many communities emphasize a university education rather than trades training. Enrolling in university, however, may seem daunting to an Aboriginal learner with limited secondary education. These individuals often opt for training offered in the community. Opportunities both on and off reserve should be available to clients so they can benefit from the optimum learning environment for their individual needs. Partnerships between on and off reserve agencies working with Aboriginal adult learners are important to provide options.

Many Aboriginal students need to be better prepared both academically and socially to succeed in their programs. The adjustment process can be very difficult for Aboriginal students entering post-secondary institutions, with many of them experiencing culture shock or other challenges, such as financial problems, lack of transportation, child care, etc. The provision of services through an Aboriginal education worker at post-secondary institutions can help increase the chances of retaining Aboriginal students.

## **POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**

Many participants agreed that most programs do not meet the needs of the Aboriginal adult learner. However, there is hope that some innovative programming and a willingness to undertake further research and dialogue with Aboriginal agencies, associations and organizations will improve this situation. Supports built into the programs are needed to ensure that the Aboriginal adult learner can succeed in that institution. Aboriginal learning styles are diverse and institutions of higher learning need to be aware of and incorporate Aboriginal ways of learning.

### ***Universities***

- Many universities in Atlantic Canada do not have curriculum designs that are culturally appropriate and sensitive to Aboriginal adult learners. Aboriginal Peoples usually do not have the opportunity to provide input into the curriculum. Universities are also not able to meet the needs presented Aboriginal people's different learning styles as the education is based on academic and European models. Aboriginal people traditionally learn by watching and then doing.
- Although several universities have established programs or employ Aboriginal education support workers, more could be done to help students overcome social and cultural isolation. As well, they need to do a better job of preparing all their students to be part of a diverse community so that Aboriginal students are not subjected to racism by their peers.
- In Labrador, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) has not been as active as it once was because of severe budget cuts that have affected service delivery. MUN is exploring ways to deliver lifelong learning to Aboriginal people, but this initiative is still in its early stages. However, offerings in Inuktitut and aboriginal literature at the Labrador Institute have increased participation over the last three years.
- Universities need to consider succession planning, as many people who are retiring are those with experience with Aboriginal adult learning initiatives.

### ***Community Colleges***

- Aboriginal communities need to look beyond the universities as the only option for further education or training and examine other alternatives such as community colleges.
- Community colleges may not have responded as effectively as they could have to the needs of Aboriginal adult learners in the past. Reasons for this include a lack of understanding Aboriginal culture and entering into the working relationship with a paternalistic attitude. As well, community colleges sometimes hire instructors without formal training in instruction or cultural sensitivity to work with Aboriginal students.
- There are programs offered through community colleges whose graduates will interface with Aboriginal people, such as corrections because of the

disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal Peoples in correctional institutions. Training in these programs should include cultural sensitivity components.

- Contract training is expensive for communities and sometimes this training fails to provide concrete connections for jobs for Aboriginal students.
- Successes are generated when there is a partnership that looks “outside of the box” and reaches out to community. Agencies such as transition houses, literacy councils, or the Miramichi Community College in New Brunswick where services for persons with disabilities has allowed for greater inclusiveness and a supportive and welcoming environment. Also, innovative ventures and partnerships are being developed between Aboriginal communities and agencies such as The First Nations Education Initiative undertaken by the Kingsclear First Nations, and the New Brunswick Community College.

### *Other*

- Financial and other supports for post-secondary training tend to be concentrated where the majority of First Nations are located, but supports should be available wherever Aboriginal students are—even in isolated or rural locations.
- To increase the success rate of completion, community colleges and universities need to have bridging programs, or at least a better process for adult learners to adjust to post-secondary requirements and environments.
- Having supportive teachers who are culturally competent is critical to the success of a program and for the success of the Aboriginal learner. The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia are putting together a proposal to deliver cultural sensitivity training for staff in the health sector. The APCFNC is also working with universities in the Atlantic region on culturally sensitive curriculum.
- Instructors must be conscious of the testing methods. Testing is currently done in English and teachers must be aware of the adult learner’s ability in what may very well be a second language.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

There is a need for partnerships at all levels between governments, institutions, Aboriginal agencies, and communities both on and off reserve to address policy as well as individual adult learner needs. Flexibility with criteria is a key to successful and creative solutions.

There is also a real need to develop better partnerships with industry. Although industry should not be the drivers regarding client goals or career options, their involvement is critical to ensuring that Aboriginal graduates receive employment and the rewards of investing their funds and effort into their education. Employers usually want to hire experienced people, but Aboriginal people will be unable to get this experience without industry “taking a chance on Aboriginal people.” As an example, there is a demand for journeymen in the trades, but Aboriginal people are not able to obtain the experience or

apprenticeship positions to attain this qualification. Consequently, Aboriginal trades people end up returning to training to pursue another field, leaving a shortage in the labour market. As well, employers are willing to provide employment for Aboriginal graduates if they are provided with a wage subsidy, but the employment is discontinued once the wage subsidy expires.

Partnerships also need to be established between departments in Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal agencies serving the on and off reserve populations to address the “silo” effect of agencies and departments working independently of each other.

## **CULTURE**

Aboriginal people living off reserve are more accustomed to being in a different cultural environment and “the way things work off reserve.” There are fewer adjustments for them to make when entering into training or other programs. As a result, their success in training is sometimes higher than for people living on reserve.

The issues of culturally appropriate curriculum, cultural competence of institutions and instructors to deal with Aboriginal adult learners and the retention of language and culture in Aboriginal communities were important to participants in all the sessions. However, these issues were discussed most thoroughly in the sessions in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Many Mi’kmaq adult learners in Newfoundland have lost much of their culture and language. There is a need for initiatives that will lead to a revival of Mi’kmaq culture, language and traditional knowledge, but there are few funding programs available to support this.

The College of the North Atlantic (CONA) developed an Aboriginal curriculum delivered primarily through tailor-made programs for communities. However, there has been a decrease in group-based or contract training in Newfoundland with the result that Aboriginal curriculum development is no longer a priority.

For Aboriginal people in Labrador, there have been many dramatic changes more recently with economic development and entry into the waged economy, and formal education systems. Inuit students that succeed in high school go away for further education, but experience culture shock in a non-Inuit environment. Often, they cannot relate to course content and material in their studies because of their different cultural experience.

The Innu community of Sheshatshiu has been experiencing dramatic change in recent times and has only come under the Indian Act as recently as two years ago. The impact of entering into the world of school and work outside of their traditional lifestyle “in the country” has resulted in a loss of ceremonies, culture and language. This has had a more pronounced impact on youth, some of whom have little experience with their culture, resulting in a struggle with identity and self-esteem. The community has been bringing youth back “to the country” where they can regain a sense of pride, peace of mind,

traditional practices and have fun in the process. This foundation is important for them to succeed in future endeavours.

In Sheshatshiu, success rates with training and education programs have been higher when they have been delivered in the community since participants are functioning in an Innu-speaking environment. As well, some adults are residential school survivors who have a negative perception of the formal education system.

Most Aboriginal adult learners in Labrador speak Inuktitut or Innu-aimun. They feel it is important to function well in English, but not at the expense of their own languages. There is also great concern that the younger generation will lose the language and consequently an important part of their culture and identity.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

### **SUCCESS OF PROGRAMS ON RESERVE**

Some adult learners may benefit from distance education or on-line programs to address the issues around transportation, child care and funding. However, they need to be disciplined to succeed using this approach. Others prefer a classroom environment and interactions with their teachers and classmates.

The approach of taking programs to First Nations communities to address transportation, attendance and other issues has only worked in part. Other factors affecting the success of these programs include:

- The status and nature of the industry for which training was geared, such as forestry which is primarily seasonal and is in flux;
- Practicums and employment opportunities available after the training;
- The willingness of trainees to complete their courses and to relocate for further training or employment.

Additionally, many communities have not established standards for programs delivered on reserve.

### **STANDARD OF LIVING**

There are many reports that illustrate the extent of the problems with adult education including those dealing with institutions of higher learning. Chapter 3 of the Gathering Strength Report, the federal government response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, identified adult learning issues. The problems still exist. According to the United Nations, the standard of living for Aboriginal people in Canada is 49<sup>th</sup> in the world, equivalent to Haiti. There are other issues that impact Aboriginal adult learning including health, housing and water.

## **POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND HOMELESS ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

The Labrador Friendship Centre project on homelessness found that many of the homeless in Happy Valley-Goose Bay are Inuit from the north coast of Labrador. Many have come in search of better opportunities and work. There needs to be a variety of approaches to serve Aboriginal people “at their level,” such as informal approaches in workplace settings; “just-in-time” learning; integration and support; and formal training through colleges and universities. More programming and interventions are required prior to bridging programs and formal education. A further analysis needs to be undertaken regarding the costs of investing in upfront support for individuals, versus the costs of other services such as putting them in a boarding house or incarceration if they end up in trouble.

## **RACISM**

Stereotyping and racism are factors affecting finding employment within the private sector, or in finding housing once a job is found. However, there are some improvements in this area as more people succeed and continue to stay on in positions.

## **LABRADOR SPECIFIC CONCERNS**

The Inuit population in Labrador is small and tends to “get lost in the feathers.” The Inuit should be involved in forums to ensure that their needs are included. They are involved in research about education from K to 12 through the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre. The concerns of Aboriginal people in Labrador are not always well incorporated into work being undertaken in the region, even by other Aboriginal organizations.

## **BEST PRACTICES AND SUCCESSES**

Participants, who worked with Aboriginal clients to address their learning needs, found that success increased when the focus was on the individual client as opposed to contract training for groups on reserve. Other participants discussed the success of on-reserve training and education programs and the need for more advanced training on reserve. It was noted that one success story among Aboriginal adult learners tends to serve as a role model for others. In several provinces, partnerships and innovation have created high degrees of success and program completion.

The following section outlines some of the best practices and successes in Aboriginal adult learning in each province, as well as some initiatives in other parts of the country or the world. Further details on these successes can be found in the report appendices.

### **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

The Prince Edward Island session participants commented that the focus on the individual was most successful when coupled with working in concert with training institutions, such as Holland College. The group discussed the following successes:

- Literacy initiatives that focus on the family can be very successful. This was the experience of one of the service providers who worked with non-Aboriginal clients in the past and may be relevant to Aboriginal communities and families.
- The Mi'kmaq Confederacy has provided the support of a tutor to three clients who live on reserve and who were attending university. This support provided part-time employment for the tutor.
- The Native Council of PEI funded a student to attend Spell Read, leading to improved reading comprehension.
- The Workplace Learning initiative in PEI provides Laubach tutors with courses. Workshops for essential skills are provided to people who have been out of school for a while or are participating in government-sponsored projects. Adult learners can continue to collect Employment Insurance and still learn literacy without penalty.

### **NEW BRUNSWICK**

- The First Nations Education Initiative and the community college system have designed a more client-centred model that recruits individuals already interested in a particular field of training, such as Licensed Practical Nurses. Participants' allowances/wages, tuition, child care, books and other costs are provided through a cost-sharing arrangement between the First Nations and the province. The wage subsidy enables participants to be EI eligible and to receive an allowance that is higher than the \$675 provided through the Post-Secondary Education program. This model has resulted in very high success rates.

- In Miramichi, a proactive approach by the community college and First Nations in the region is laying the groundwork for success.

## **NOVA SCOTIA**

- Mi'kmaw Kinamatneway, the umbrella organization responsible for education in Nova Scotia, is working with the leadership in the 13 First Nations in Nova Scotia to develop a clearer and more coherent approach to adult learning and funding implications in these communities.
- The Adult Learning Program (ALP) is a foundation program, from Levels 1-4, for students who have left school. Level 4 is the equivalent to grades 11 and 12 through which the adult learner obtains a high school reading certificate and can move on to core programming in different fields. The ALP is willing to develop a curriculum including Mi'kmaq history and language.
- The funding agency cannot afford to pay the entire cost for some programs, such as pilot training. The option was to structure a shared arrangement where the funding agency ensured that the client was on Employment Insurance. The band paid for some of the costs and the student accessed student loans to pay for the rest. Not one student failed the program with this arrangement.

## **ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

- Keyin College undertook a strategic planning process combined with research to address the situation where adult learners from small communities were not qualified academically or socially to succeed in their college environment. They developed a six-week transitional program to help adult learners, regardless of their program (trades, technician, etc.). This involved developing training that was 90% hands-on in the trades, as well as programs such as quilting, sewing and art. This was successful for most students, based on looking at both the academic aspects of the training and the culture of adult learners.
- Keyin College also has a continuous in-take Adult Basic Education program, focusing on math and science. The funding approvals require only four to six weeks and they bring in students for orientation. In other institutions, adult learners become frustrated and lose the motivation if they have to wait for funding approval. In Keyin College, they can just walk in and start the program.
- The ABE program has been successful in providing an opportunity for adult learners to adjust. Some adult learners have been away from school for most of their lives and this program provides them with a chance to get used to this environment while obtaining their pre-requisites, such as science courses in May to prepare for an environmental technician program in the fall. Through the ABE program, older adults can also access computer training to provide them with

confidence and familiarity with technology. Service Canada is flexible in working with Keyin College and the adult learner by providing access to ABE.

- There was an 87-year-old man from the Miawpukek First Nations who wrote memoirs with the editing assistance of a university student. He had a grade 12 education and was the first one from his community to write a book. This demonstrates the importance of continuous and lifelong learning, as well as the value of role models.
- An education counselor employed by the Nunatsiavut government goes into each community to provide information about education opportunities. There is an application process, worksheets, and an opportunity to inform parents about how their children can handle challenges. These workers are also available to adult learners. It is important to have them available because they understand the culture and the community.
- Over 30 Aboriginal women from different communities in Newfoundland are undertaking an empowering yearlong program. There is a different relevant topic each month. For example, they are training four Aboriginal women from each community to speak on date rape.
- The Labrador School Board has hired a program development specialist to develop and implement a curriculum that incorporates culture for Adult Basic Education Levels 1 and 2 within the secondary school system in Nain, Hopedale and Sheshatshiu. This is to prepare Inuit and Innu students to go into ABE Level 3. This is a vast improvement from previous initiatives as the program is individualized and if students miss a couple of days they will not be behind. It takes into account the 16 to 18-year-olds who are often overlooked.
- CONA has had a number of successes using the following approaches:
  - Recognizing that adult learners are at different levels, they move them through customized training to where they need to be. Community Health Workers in Aboriginal communities designed a successful certificate program using this approach, delivered in modules where adult learners came in for three weeks and went back to communities for six weeks over a two-year period.
  - They held monthly meetings with Inuit and Innu students to discuss their social issues and build in interaction by gathering them into one room. Initially, only about 10 students gathered. Now, the numbers have grown to the point where they cannot fit in that one room.
  - A bridging program assists Aboriginal high school students make the transition between the community and college or university. This also assists them with math, science, career exploration, comprehension, writing, etc. Empowerment has been a factor in their success.

- The numbers and successes of Aboriginal students have increased due to a combination of having on site support for students and support from the AHRDAs and role models, etc.
  - Work terms connected to training, provides a “foot in the door” for Aboriginal adult learners with the private sector or other employers.
- Customized training was also used for a Diploma of Social Work program in Nunatsiavut where seven out of ten students graduated after four years of courses in communities including the north coast of Labrador. This model is being considered for a social work program at McGill University for Aboriginal people who already have social work training, delivered for two or three weeks at a time.
- The Inuit Integrated Nursing Access Program offered in Labrador by MUN uses a slightly different approach by integrating nursing with upgrading. Participants did two years of upgrading plus half a year of nursing, allowing them to gain upgrading as well as 10 university credits in Nursing. Enrollment in the program is not yet as high as anticipated and this may need to be evaluated. However, the program has generally been regarded as quite a successful model.

Best practices and successes in other locations include:

- One participant shared his experience in Northern Quebec prior to coming to Newfoundland. The Makkovic Corporation did an assessment of traditional skills for Aboriginal men and women and created a company for the mass production of traditional clothing. They funded child care. Aboriginal women had sewing centres and would then teach the knowledge to younger women. Seasoned hunters taught hunting to younger men out in the land and then built slaughterhouses to carve the caribou. They learned a number of lessons through that venture, including that it is one thing to capture Aboriginal traditional knowledge and another to make it commercially viable.
- An Inuit program in Ottawa assists young Inuit students from the North to adjust to Ottawa, providing an opportunity for these students to learn about themselves. It is a very successful program because it allows them to go outside their environment and develop sound coping skills.
- Study Circles in Sweden were cited as a potential best practice to examine in the context of Aboriginal communities in PEI. Everyone is regarded as an adult learner and takes part in discussing matters that engage them.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The participants discussed many options for achieving success within Aboriginal adult education. Ideas included the suggestions that secondary schools change the curriculum to emphasize fundamentals such as math and science to prepare students for university, and that bridging programs, with counselors and support structures, be established in universities to assist in the transition. The more innovative suggestions revolved around a fundamental reassessment of the structure of learning itself. To some degree it is necessary to consider other options beyond the traditional European learning model. Aboriginal adult learners may benefit far more from a “learning-by-doing” approach and from educators who can understand the cultural background of their students. Teleconference services are available in many communities and expanding distance education should be explored.

New and innovative funding arrangements should be pursued in light of ever diminishing budgets. A shift from employment programs in favour of educational programs should be addressed. Many participants acknowledged that for many years people were trained with little or no concern for their career or work interests. Recent initiatives aimed at matching abilities and interests with training have proven successful.

### **FUNDING:**

- As much as possible, flexibility should be exercised by the various programs and agencies, including community colleges and funders.
- Funding should be available through the AHRDAs for literacy initiatives and ABE programming for Aboriginal clients.
- Programs need to be re-instituted to address adult learning needs.
- AdLKC may be able to assist in funding projects related to arts and crafts for interested Aboriginal adult learners.

### **CLIENT READINESS:**

- Secondary schools need to do a better job of preparing Aboriginal students for post-secondary institutions and to increase reading, math and science levels to meet the pre-requisites. School guidance and career counselors should be culturally competent so that they can provide better services to students and can help them to make better choices for higher education.
- There is a need to assist young Aboriginal adult learners with coping skills and to empower them. They do not always have the social skills to be able to address community and educational issues.

- An extra year could be provided for high school graduates in the community to prepare for college courses.
- A bridging program between on-site training in the community and community college is needed for Aboriginal students. There is also a need for Aboriginal learners to work within a group where everyone can speak either Inuit or Innu to further their comfort level within the college.
- Orientation to the training site, career counseling and programs offered during pre-assessments should be available for adult learners.
- There is a need for an education counselor to work with Aboriginal adult learners who wish to pursue post-secondary education or training. These workers can provide assessment, career counseling and long-term goals counseling.
- Aboriginal adult learners should complete their Grade 12 education and then be provided with career counseling.
- Pre-GED programs, followed by GED and other programs to provide students with high school equivalency or diplomas need to be brought onto the reserve for those with transportation issues.
- Lists of Aboriginal people who are motivated to further their adult learning needs could be generated through the pre-assessment process. Some people may not complete GED programs but may still be involved in learning or changing jobs.
- Job shadowing in positions that interest adult learners, such as the RCMP, nursing, etc.
- Programs and services should focus on the client as opposed to the program's needs and should look at addressing these needs in a more holistic way. This includes developing a good plan of action that will take into account transportation issues, child-care needs, and whether the clients are on Employment Insurance or social assistance, etc.
- Communities need to address program and retention issues and prevent the situation of program “jumpers and deserters.” Aboriginal agencies providing programs and services to Aboriginal adult learners need to communicate on a regular basis so that they can provide more efficient and effective services. While respecting privacy issues, these communities and agencies should provide necessary supports but also make program “jumpers or deserters” accountable.

**TRANSPORTATION:**

- First Nations communities could consider providing bus transportation for their adult learners and community members who need to go to nearby urban centres for other services. Many individuals do not have a driver's license or cannot afford the cost of operating a car, especially with current high gas prices.

**CHILD CARE:**

- Affordable or subsidized day-care programs for Aboriginal adult learners undertaking training or other learning initiatives should be available and accessible. There needs to be effective access to child-care services for those who have to travel outside the community to take courses.

**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:**

- Career Days should be organized, with individuals who work in specific areas and positions providing information to Aboriginal people and communities. The individuals who undertake recruitment for community colleges, universities and other training institutions should be the same ones who provide student services so that communities and individuals connect with them, allowing for a better transition when Aboriginal students enter a post-secondary institution.
- There needs to be more effective promotion and opportunities to inform Aboriginal adult learners and other adult learners of post-secondary programs available and the potential rewards of completing these.
- Technology such as video and teleconferencing could be used to promote the post-secondary institutions to adult learners. Student testimonials and information about prospective employment opportunities could also be provided. Orientation visits to a campus could be arranged to familiarize students with the environment.
- Recruitment of more Aboriginal students into universities and colleges should also be accompanied by the development of support programs, especially for Aboriginal adult learners in isolated locations, including orientation, social supports, adjustment from reserve to post-secondary environment, cultural issues, and funding, etc.
- Determine how a campus could be made friendlier to First Nations students by modifying curriculum, establishing a resource centre, etc.

**PROGRAMS*****Literacy:***

- There should be recognition from the First Nations level that adult learning can also include literacy programming or other types of learning.
- Talking Circles relating to literacy may apply to Aboriginal communities and culture.

***Using Technology:***

- Videoconferencing, now available through First Nations Help Desk, may be an option for community adult education initiatives as it offers both human contact

and technology. Where videoconferencing in First Nations schools is not available, an alternative facility could be at the Health Centre.

***Cultural Competence of Instructors:***

- Cultural sensitivity courses are needed for instructors in post-secondary institutions who will be teaching Aboriginal adult learners. Different modalities, including the Aboriginal holistic lifelong learning models developed by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, would be useful to examine.

***Post-Secondary Institutions:***

- Research is needed to define issues and concerns such as the openness of the on-campus environment to Aboriginal learners; transportation concerns; the need for Aboriginal instructors, etc.
- Community colleges and universities need to have bridging programs or at least a better process for adult learners to adjust to post-secondary requirements and environments to increase success rates for completion.
- They need to modify existing testing systems for entry so that they are flexible and meet the needs of the clients from different cultures and with different learning styles.
- Curriculum in post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal people should be Aboriginal based using existing resources such as Mi'kmaq arts and culture.
- Distance education could be used so that Aboriginal students can participate in online courses with a few other adult students, rather than attending classes with 300 other students. This could help to minimize culture shock. CONA and MUN could cooperate to put on these courses for Aboriginal adult learners.
- Aboriginal students often do not have extracurricular activities in their schools and become bored. There is a need to add elements, such as career exploration, and engage students in a more holistic manner.
- It would be helpful to develop a co-op model for Aboriginal students where half the time is spent doing practical things and the other half on academics. This would lead to better workers and higher success rates.
- AdLKC should start working with top administrators at post-secondary institutions to ensure policies and environments are inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal students. It is important to reach senior decision-makers who are in a position to make concrete changes.

***Innovative Programming:***

- There needs to be a variety of programs for adult learners so that their needs are progressively met at a range of levels such as informal workplace learning

situations, “just in time” learning, integration and support, formal community college or university training.

- There needs to be an overlap between program delivery in adult learning and the traditional ways of Aboriginal people and communities. Funding would be required to research, develop and implement a properly structured program. Experienced people from the community and the institutions are required.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

- Partnerships to address issues including curriculum design, employment and program jumping or desertion, need to be developed at all levels:
  - Between First Nations communities;
  - Community Colleges;
  - Universities;
  - Private Sector employers such as Michelin;
  - Aboriginal adult learners.

Partnerships between stakeholders at the policy, service delivery and learner levels will lead to useful needs assessments and creative solutions. Further investigation is needed to discover which successful programs and private sector partnerships in the community are transferable.

- Both the federal and the provincial governments need to build better connections with the private sector to provide meaningful employment for Aboriginal trainees. Programs such as wage subsidy programs could be used with participation from employers. Employers want experienced workers but they need to take a chance on Aboriginal people so that they can gain experience.
- “Cultural orientation swings both ways.” Cultural orientation is required for participants and trainers working off reserve. Employers may also require cultural orientation while employees should be provided with orientation regarding the corporate culture and expectations of the workplace.
- Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch and the provinces need to work in partnership regarding funding and jurisdictional issues around adult learning programs in the health sector.

## **MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS**

- Mentorship is important to promote adult learners in science and health.
- Role models are important so that Aboriginal people can see that it is possible to succeed. An example was provided of a client who graduated from a GED course. Her entire family cheered her on during the graduation ceremony demonstrating a great deal of family support for her success as the first in the family to complete a GED program.

## **NURTURING A CULTURE OF ADULT LEARNING**

- Create a culture of learning where curiosity is encouraged. Inquisitiveness should be seen as positive—learning for learning’s sake, rather than just for certificates. Adults learn to gain more knowledge, skills, feed a need, bolster confidence, etc. Nurturing the desire to learn is needed within families as what children see influences them later. But if people are poor, opportunities are limited.
- A culture of individual and collective success in Aboriginal communities needs to be nurtured to honour the traditional values of collectivity, as well as celebrate individual successes. The tendency to ostracize adult learners must be reversed.
- Many Aboriginal adults in their twenties have not finished high school, but are ready to pursue further education because they now have families of their own. It is important to support them and for them to create their own social network. Groups of parents could undertake training together in book keeping and accounting. Another strategy is to post graduation pictures in the community in elementary schools to send messages of success. Additional strategies include:
  - Having learners associate with like-minded people who value learning;
  - Using the tools available to ignite the learning spirit or that “sparkle in people,” as well as continuing to identify the catalysts that will tap into a person’s learning desire;
  - Providing rewards to encourage learning;
  - Valuing informal experience.

## **CONCLUSION**

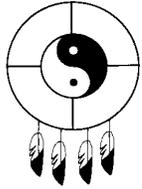
This outreach initiative was a first step to establishing a potential working relationship between Aboriginal stakeholders and the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre. As well, it provided a forum for discussing Aboriginal adult learning issues in the Atlantic region. Through the sessions and the report, stakeholders can continue to extend their networking and knowledge about Aboriginal adult learning.

Participants represented a cross-section of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professionals involved in Aboriginal adult learning. They came from large and small communities and a wide variety of agencies but they were all very passionate, knowledgeable and committed about their work.

Participants identified many barriers and challenges that still exist to promoting and succeeding in Aboriginal adult learning. However, several best practices and successes are also starting to come forward. Further work needs to be undertaken to determine their applicability in other provinces and contexts given the diversity and jurisdictional issues that Aboriginal people have to contend with. However, there are many concrete and practical suggestions for improvements that can help to increase success in Aboriginal adult learning.

## APPENDIX A

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ON *ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE*



#### Invitation

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) is inviting you to participate in a community outreach session with Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners to:

- Learn about the AdLKC;
- Participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- Explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal Adult learning in the future;
- Hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult Learning and network with each other.

There are five sessions being held in Atlantic Canada. We anticipate there will be approximately 10 – 15 people in each session. Participants at these sessions will receive a copy of the report from the session they attended and the Regional Atlantic Report of the five sessions.

The session will commence at 1:00 p.m. and conclude by 4:30p.m., with coffee and refreshments being provided. There are some travel assistance subsidies available for those who have to travel to attend a session and need this support. If you are interested in contributing to the discussion but cannot attend, we would be pleased to contact you by telephone to conduct an interview so that your ideas can be included and to provide you with information about the AdLKC. Or, you could register an alternate or suggest another individual to attend.

Adult learning is important for personal development, economic opportunity, community participation and can have a positive impact on individuals, communities and the nation.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre was established by the Canadian Council on Learning, a national, independent, not-for-profit organization, to address these gaps and to foster a culture of lifelong learning that is available and relevant to all peoples living in Canada. More information about the AdLKC can be found at [www.ccl-cca.ca/adultlearning](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/adultlearning).

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The AdLKC has a Community Connections Working Group which includes community organizations. This Group is overseeing the Community Outreach initiative to ensure that various groups in Atlantic Canada, including Aboriginal Peoples, are informed about the AdLKC and to include their voices in the organization's work.

Please confirm your participation by **faxing back your registration to Monique Myshrall** at Han Martin Associates **at 506-363-1022** no later than (DATE). Han Martin Associates is a majority Aboriginal owned company based in New Brunswick that has been retained to carry out these sessions on behalf of the AdLKC.

I look forward to being in touch with you,

E-mail:

[hanmartin@nb.aibn.com](mailto:hanmartin@nb.aibn.com)

Monique Myshrall

Assistant Project Coordinator

Han Martin Associates Tel: 506-363-4641 Fax: 506-363-1022

**Community Outreach**  
Adult Learning Knowledge Centre  
c/o Han Martin Associates

***1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.***

**Please fax the completed form by \_\_\_\_\_ to Monique Myshrall at 506-363-1022.**

There is no registration charge for this session. Coffee and refreshments will be provided.

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First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title and Community/Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Prov.: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail:

**Please select all the appropriate box(es) below that apply:**

**YES, I PLAN TO PARTICIPATE**

There are a limited number of travel subsidies available. I am requesting travel expense assistance to attend the outreach session.

Or

**NO, I AM UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE**

Or

**NO, I AM UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE BUT AGREE TO BEING CONTACTED BY TELEPHONE AT A LATER DATE.**

I prefer to be contacted by:  Phone  E-mail

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SUMMARY REPORT CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND MAY 20, 2008**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the summary report of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) Community Outreach session held at the Holiday Inn, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island on May 20, 2008. The purpose of this session was for Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners involved in Aboriginal adult learning to:

- learn about the AdLKC;
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future; and
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult learning and network with each other.

The focus was on outreach to those agencies and individuals involved in Aboriginal adult learning and to foster discussion and knowledge exchange among participants that would be useful, not just for the AdLKC but for the participants as well.

Six individuals from communities and agencies in Prince Edward Island participated in this outreach session. They agreed that they would allow their names to be compiled in a contact list that would be sent out to one another to further facilitate networking.

The session was from 1:00 to 4:30 P.M. and was loosely structured to facilitate discussion. The first half of the session focused on providing information about the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the AdLKC, which was followed by a facilitated discussion on the issues and concerns around Aboriginal adult learning in PEI. This was followed after the break with a discussion on successful strategies and best practices.

#### **ISSUES/CONCERNS**

The following is a summary of the issues themed in areas that emerged. They are not presented in order of priority.

### ***Funding***

- There is a limited budget in the communities to support the learning needs of all Aboriginal adult learners or to provide them with employment after training. There is a need to reframe the concept of adult and lifelong learning to include areas other than just economic and employment needs.
- Aboriginal adult learners who are EI eligible are more likely to receive services, such as transportation, tuition waivers and child care, in community colleges through programs such as Skills Development, than those on social assistance who are more likely to need them.
- Clarification is required from Indian and Northern Affairs regarding the types of post-secondary education—universities, community colleges, private institutions, etc.—eligible for funding. Very limited funding is available through their programs.
- Some private training institutions only focus on the business side of increasing enrollment by accepting Aboriginal adult learners into expensive programs without adequate pre-assessments. This often sets up these learners for failure due to lack of readiness or supports for challenges such as learning disabilities.
- The band may not be in a financial position to pay for tuition to attend private training institutions so Aboriginal adult learners often take out loans and may not only fail to complete the program due to lack of readiness, but also incur debt.
- Provincial departments administering and approving student loans had some responsibility to ensure that adult learners accepted in programs meet the pre-requisites and are likely to succeed. As it stands now, the province is basically funding businesses.

### ***Client Readiness***

- Many Aboriginal adult learners require upgrading programs to further their learning goals but access to GED or pre-GED programs on reserve is needed.
- Previous GED programs that were offered on reserve were not meeting the needs of the clients. Even if participants were paid to take part in the program, the success or completion rates were very low.
- GED programs may have repeat clients who still are not completing the program.
- The screening process is important, not just for assessing their readiness academically but also in helping them to understand the goals of the program and their responsibilities as learners. This will lead to greater chances of success.

### ***Transportation***

- Some First Nations (Bands) are divided up into more than one reserve (tracts of land) and members of one First Nations may actually be located in different reserves. Adult learners may actually live some distance to their band and administration offices. They may not drive and as there is no public transportation, this poses difficulties for them.

### ***Family and Community Supports***

- Many Aboriginal adult learners would prefer one-on-one counseling related to their learning or training needs from other Aboriginal adults and elders within the community setting.
- The community uses contract training programs as “make work” projects and, as a result, some Aboriginal learners see training and other learning initiatives as a “job” as opposed to an initiative leading to a job or career.
- The leadership from the community needs to be more supportive of Aboriginal adult learning and even of the value of education itself. There is also peer pressure exerted on Aboriginal adult learners within the community not to succeed. Some community members perceive success in the mainstream system as “selling out.”
- Many Aboriginal adult learners started to disengage from the school system around grades three and four, resulting in limited education and low literacy levels. It is important to instill family and community support and value for education early, but if Aboriginal adults cannot help their children with their schoolwork then this cycle of lack of support and value of education may continue to the next generation. Improving the literacy levels of parents is key.

### ***Recruitment and Retention in Post-Secondary Institutions***

- Options should exist for on-reserve clients to take training off reserve as they could receive great benefit from these programs. However, some bands discourage clients from leaving the reserve for training. It is important to build partnerships with off reserve agencies that deal with adult learning as well as assisting these clients to undertake training initiatives off reserve.
- University may seem insurmountable to many Aboriginal adult learners with limited education. They tend to opt for training that is offered in the community as opposed to leaving the community to pursue education or training.

### ***Partnerships***

- Partnership with Holland College has been very successful because of its flexibility to adapt its criteria to fit the needs of Aboriginal clients. Usually Aboriginal clients on social assistance are not eligible for a tuition waiver that

non-Aboriginals appear to be eligible for. Holland College has been able to waive tuition for some Aboriginal clients on social assistance. A clarification on this policy would be useful. Participants indicated that this situation affects those who need the assistance the most, i.e. single mothers.

### ***Culture***

- There are differences between on and off reserve realities of Aboriginal people that need to be considered when looking at Aboriginal adult learning. Many Aboriginal adult learners experience a major culture shock when leaving the reserve community for post-secondary education or other training programs. Many of them often have to adjust to a different reality of paying for rent, transportation, and other items.
- Aboriginal people who have lived off reserve tend to be more accustomed to the different cultural environment and “the way things work” and therefore have a higher chance of success in training and other programs.

### ***Other***

- Aboriginal communities and people need to reframe the concept of lifelong learning to include arts and culture. It does not include just GED completion or college certification. It can also be as simple as teaching a parent how to use a computer. This needs to be valued as this knowledge is another way to participate in and benefit the community.
- Supportive instructors who are aware of some of the issues that Aboriginal adult learners face, including low self-esteem, are an important element in the adult learners’ successful completion of programs.

## **BEST PRACTICES/SUCCESSSES**

Some participants said that success increased when the focus was on the individual client as opposed to contract training for groups on reserve. When this is coupled with working with training institutions such as Holland College, these successes will increase.

Other successful practices cited by participants included the following:

- Literacy initiatives that focus on the family.
- Tutors for individual university students have worked well in one of the off reserve agencies. In some cases, there was a summer job for one tutor who worked with three students.
- The Mi’kmaq Confederacy has provided the support of a tutor to three university students who live on reserve. This support was very successful and it also provided part-time employment for the tutor.

- The Native Council funded a student to attend Spell Read; comprehension increased.
- A workplace learning initiative in PEI where courses are provided to Laubach tutors. Workshops for essential skills are provided to people who have been out of school for a while. Adult learners can continue to collect Employment Insurance and still learn literacy without penalty.

### ***Champions***

- Champions and roles models have demonstrated success where there is no family or community support for adult learning. There were two seniors (65 and 67 years of age) from a community who attended a Seniors College and learned how to use computers. They loved it and are now champions for others.
- Monthly newsletters and newspapers can identify and celebrate these champions.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### ***Client Readiness:***

- Pre-GED programs, followed by GED programs, need to be brought onto the reserve for those Aboriginal people with transportation issues.
- Generate lists of Aboriginal people through the pre-assessment process who are motivated to further their adult learning needs. Some people may not complete GED programs but may still be involved in learning or getting another type of job that they would enjoy.
- Orientation to the training site, career counseling and programs offered during pre-assessments for youth should also be available for adult learners.
- Focus on the client as opposed to the program's needs and look at addressing these needs in a more holistic way including developing an effective plan taking into account transportation issues, child-care needs, social assistance, etc.

### ***Programs:***

- Study Circles in Sweden have been successful. This may be a practice that can be applied to Aboriginal communities in PEI. Everyone is regarded as an adult learner and takes part in discussing matters that engage them.
- Talking Circles relating to literacy was one suggestion that may apply to Aboriginal communities and culture.
- Ensure that there is flexibility within the various programs and agencies that address adult learning needs, including community colleges and funders.
- There should be recognition from the First Nations level that adult learning can also include literacy programming or other types of learning,

***Role Models:***

- Role models are important so that Aboriginal people can see that it is possible to succeed. An example was provided of a client who graduated from a GED course. Her entire family cheered her on during the graduation ceremony demonstrating a great deal of family support for her success as the first in the family to complete a GED program.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Jinny Greaves  
PEI Literacy Alliance

Betty Gordon  
Employment Councilor  
Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI

Joanne Lajeunesse  
Workplace Learning PEI, Inc.

Faye Maclean  
Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI

Curtis Reilly  
Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI Employment Services

Stephanie Stanger  
Native Council of PEI

## **APPENDIX C**

### **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SUMMARY REPORT FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK MAY 22, 2008**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This summary report outlines the results of the discussions held in Fredericton, New Brunswick regarding adult learning issues among Aboriginal communities and agencies within Atlantic Canada. The purpose of this session was for Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners involved in Aboriginal adult learning to:

- learn about the AdLKC;
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future; and
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult learning and network with each other.

The focus was on outreach to those agencies and individuals involved in Aboriginal adult learning and to foster discussion and knowledge exchange among participants that would be useful, not just for the AdLKC but for the participants as well.

Six individuals from communities and agencies in New Brunswick participated in this outreach session. These included participants from:

- Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) Agency from Metepeniagiag First Nations;
- Kingsclear First Nations;
- First Nations Education Initiative;
- Frontier College;
- NBCC Miramichi.

The session was from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. and was loosely structured to facilitate discussion among the participants as well as networking. The first half focused on providing information about the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the AdLKC which was followed by a facilitated discussion on the issues and concerns around Aboriginal adult learning in New Brunswick. This was followed after the break with a discussion on successful strategies and best practices.

## **ISSUES/CONCERNS**

The following is a summary of the issues that emerged. They are not in order of priority.

### ***Funding:***

- Band funds for post-secondary education and AHRDAs have been capped. This is a serious issue because about 11,500 Aboriginal people across Canada have not been funded to attend post-secondary institutions. In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia alone, about 600 people have not been able to access post-secondary training due to lack of resources.
- AHRDA budgets have steadily decreased since 2000. They were used primarily for job creation but this has been changing in the past two or three years to look at a more client-driven approach.

### ***Client Readiness:***

- Aboriginal career counseling is lacking in secondary schools so Aboriginal students are not prepared to make appropriate career choices. Further, diagnostics and career planning with Aboriginal clients often does not take into consideration the aspirations of the young Aboriginal adult learner.

### ***Literacy***

- Literacy initiatives within Aboriginal communities have not been very present as the focus has been more on GED. There are few resources to establish libraries.
- There are major literacy issues in prisons among the many Aboriginal inmates.

### ***Transportation***

- Aboriginal adult learners cannot get to the community colleges or other training institutions due to lack of transportation.

### ***Community Colleges***

- NBCC has 11 campuses divided along linguistic lines (six Anglophone, five Francophone). The Department of Post-secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL) oversees the system. Historically, community colleges have not responded adequately to Aboriginal training. There have been some successes but, in most cases, the goals were not met.
- A paternalistic attitude still exists among the community colleges where they believe they know what is good for Aboriginal people. There has been some movement towards a more mature approach based on partnerships with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations.

- There has not been a welcoming environment for Aboriginal adult learners in the community college.
- Community colleges often recruit instructors without formal training in instruction. There is some work currently at the University of New Brunswick to develop instructor programs. There is also a need for meaningful cultural education. All instructors should take an Aboriginal studies course including how to teach Aboriginal students, evaluation of Aboriginal education, etc.
- There are many programs in community colleges whose graduates will interface with Aboriginal people. For instance, because of the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in correctional institutions, the training for guards should include cultural sensitivity. This training would lead graduates to being better able to deal with their clients.
- Contract training is expensive for the First Nations and often these adult learners are trained “until they are blue in the face” without any employment at the end.
- GED training has been offered in Kingsclear for the past six years but was dropped because most people who needed it had already received upgrading. However, the community still supports individuals who want to continue on to community college or university.
- The latest promising initiatives have been coming from First Nations communities who have approached the community colleges to look at alternative approaches.

### ***Partnerships***

- There is a real need to develop a better connection between industry and the workforce. The ASEP-NB initiative is not working because there is a “disconnect” with industry. Industry should not be the drivers regarding client goals or options for careers.
- Partnerships at all levels are essential for any best practices or strategies to succeed in terms of Aboriginal adult learning.

### ***Family and Community Support***

- There is a danger for Aboriginal adult learners to be ostracized by their families and communities if they are perceived to be too successful. When an individual succeeds in education, some community members perceive that the person now thinks he or she is “better than the other members of the community.” Peer and family support is very important in Aboriginal communities and once lost, there is a tremendous sense of isolation experienced by the adult learner.

### ***Other***

- Taking particular programs to the First Nations to address transportation and attendance issues have only worked in part depending upon:

- Status and nature of the industry for which training was geared, for example forestry which is primarily seasonal and is in flux.
- Whether practicums and employment opportunities were available after the training.
- Willingness of trainees to relocate for further training or employment.

## **BEST PRACTICES/SUCCESESSES**

Initial meetings have occurred between an AHRDA in Metepeniagiag and the NBCC Miramichi and between the First Nations Education Initiative and the NBCC in New Brunswick to look at how to work together to improve adult training with Aboriginal people in the community college system. Factors that play a role are:

- The dropout rate among Aboriginal secondary students is around 45% and often the only option to pursue post-secondary education is the Mi'kmaq Maliseet Institute (MMI) at the University of New Brunswick through their Bridging Program. Not all of these students are “university material,” but may best be served by community college in the trades or administration courses.
- 16.5% of Aboriginal youth in New Brunswick are attending schools in District 16 boundaries where the Miramichi community college is located.
- 70% of Aboriginal students in secondary school in New Brunswick do not have the pre-requisites for post-secondary education. Many of those who are graduating are at a Level 3 or lower as they have gone through the Enterprise or TAP Alternative Education programs.

The First Nations Education Initiative (FNEI) and NBCC have outlined a model dealing with Aboriginal training in the community colleges, which is further described in the Best Practices section below. The FNEI developed an employability program for adult learners who wish to undertake post-secondary education. One impetus for this was that the AHRDAs do not fund upgrading. This program offers a wage subsidy program at minimum wage resulting in Employment Insurance eligibility.

Through the FNEI, Kingsclear First Nations and the NBCC designed a model with a more client-centered approach based on Kingsclear’s adult care facility initiative. They saw the need for human resources to staff this facility and rather than advertising widely for these positions, they began to promote the initiative to potential trainees in the community who were prepared to go through a diagnostic and pre-screening process. They ended up with eight people for a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) Program to be delivered on reserve.

It was determined that training would cost \$22,000 per person. The pre-screening established that 70% did not have the pre-requisite biology and English courses, so Kingsclear negotiated a contract with the NBCC and the LPN association for four months of accelerated learning in these subjects.

The Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL), through the Training Skills Development program, provided 26 weeks of subsidy resulting in EI eligibility for the client. This enabled employers to provide a wage top-up to trainees allowing them greater EI contributions. The EI allowances were better than the post-secondary education allowances that have been capped at \$675/month. Clients received \$250/week, and through EI they also received assistance with transportation, child care, books and related training costs. The tuition was paid through the band's Post-Secondary Education Program as well as by PETL. Through this model, the band could train three people instead of one under the post-secondary program. All eight individuals passed the provincial examinations.

A similar process was implemented in St. Mary's First Nations with the addition of a Coordinator to provide support and act as a liaison between the students and the program. Of the twelve students who began the program eleven were finishing.

NBCC may allocate 150 seats to Aboriginal adult learners to be managed by the First Nations by September 2009. Participants will have to meet all the academic prerequisites. Only 60-80 seats will be reserved through a pilot initiative to ensure that certain sectors are not flooded with trainees. The possibility of involving a private sector company by September 2009 is being discussed.

The critical factors in the success of the initiatives were:

- Participants had to be interested and committed to work in the field.
- Financial support was there to support them through the process and address any weaknesses.
- Cooperation and assistance was available through Child and Family Services, Alcohol and Drug Program, AHRDA, etc.
- Clients tried to resolve issues before they began the training.
- There was flexibility among the funding partners and training institutions such as PETL and NBCC.
- A coordinator was available for support.
- All job placements were off reserve.
- Career counseling was available for participants.

In the Miramichi, several factors are coming together to create the potential for success as preliminary talks take place between the AHRDA at Metepenagiag and the Community College:

- The principal at the Community College understands the value of inclusiveness and has made these strategies a priority. Transition House, Literacy Inc., and an association dealing with physical disabilities are housed within the community college and provide a welcoming atmosphere as well as sense of inclusiveness for at-risk clients.
- Vision and leadership have been shown by Esgenoôpetij (Burnt Church), Elsipogtog, and Eel Ground. Efforts on a larger scale will be taken one step at a time so as not to create expectations that cannot be met.
- Cultural awareness training is mandatory for teachers and senior staff in District 16 school system.

Frontier College provides literacy programs through trained volunteers who are mainly university students and seniors. Their area of concentration is with youth through such initiatives as homework clubs in Moncton and Fredericton. They help children who may not receive help at home, such as those from multicultural communities whose parents may not have strong English language skills. Their philosophy is student centered individual tutoring. They have worked with one Aboriginal student whose teachers encouraged him to drop out. The Frontier College tutor discovered he was interested in math and provided support. He succeeded and is now in Fort McMurray.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- “Cultural orientation swings both ways.” Cultural orientation is required for participants and trainers working off reserve. Employers may require cultural orientation while employees should be provided with orientation regarding the corporate culture and expectations of the workplace.
- An educational forum is needed among educational leaders to discuss a respectful workplace / school environment and understanding between different cultures.
- Child-care needs, etc. should be dealt with before placement. Ensure that there are people working with individuals all through the training process.
- Students should monitor one another as well as provide support. Develop a buddy system for those students who are not accustomed to working independently and arrange to travel in groups. Have students set the standards.
- Mentorships need to be closer to the Aboriginal adult learners’ home communities.
- There needs to be a better connection with industry so that there is a match between the career aspirations and goals of the Aboriginal adult learner and the needs of the industry.

- Secondary schools need to provide better career counseling for Aboriginal students so that these students are adequately prepared to continue their training or education in post-secondary institutions.
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity training for teachers or instructors should be instituted to learn about Aboriginal culture and learning styles.
- There is a need to create a culture of learning where curiosity is encouraged. Inquisitiveness should be seen as something positive—learning for learning’s sake rather than just for certificates. Adult learners learn to gain more knowledge, skills, feeding their need to learn, bolster confidence, etc. Nurturing the desire to learn is needed within families as what children see around them influences them in later life. However, if people are poor, there are limited opportunities.
- A culture of success in Aboriginal communities also needs to be nurtured. There is a need to reverse the tendency to ostracize adult learners who have successfully completed post-secondary education or who want to continue in their lifelong learning initiatives. Many young Aboriginal adults in their twenties often have not finished high school, but are ready because many of them now have families. They want to make an impact and want to move on. It is important to support them and for them to create their own social network. One strategy is for groups of mothers or fathers to undertake training together such as book keeping and accounting. Another strategy is to post graduation pictures in elementary schools to send messages of success among the youth and the community. Additional strategies include:
  - Engage AHRDAs in post-secondary education;
  - Adult learners could associate with like minded people;
  - Use the tools available to ignite the learning spirit or that “sparkle in people;”
  - Provide rewards to encourage learning;
  - Value informal experience.

Some initial strategies for the future were identified including:

- Recognizing the need to undertake research to define the issues and concerns, such as the openness of the on-campus environment to Aboriginal learners; transportation concerns; the need for Aboriginal instructors;
- Determine how a campus could be made friendlier to First Nations students, by modifying curriculum; establishing a resource center for Aboriginal students, etc.
- Reaching out to agencies, associations and organizations in ways that have not been done before.

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Bob Atwin  
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Anita Boyle  
Metapenagiag First Nations

Deborah Campbell  
Frontier College

Doug Dolan  
New Brunswick Community College Miramichi

Pat Sark  
First Nations Education Initiative, Inc.

Mark Standring  
New Brunswick Community College Miramichi

## **APPENDIX D**

### **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SUMMARY REPORT TRURO, NOVA SCOTIA**

*May 28, 2008*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This summary report outlines the results of the discussions held in Truro, Nova Scotia regarding adult learning issues among Aboriginal communities and agencies within Atlantic Canada. The purpose of this session was for Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners involved in Aboriginal adult learning to:

- learn about the AdLKC
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult learning and network with each other.

The focus was on outreach to those agencies and individuals involved in Aboriginal adult learning and to foster discussion and knowledge exchange among participants that would be useful, not just for the AdLKC but for the participants.

Fifteen individuals from communities and agencies in Nova Scotia participated in this outreach session from:

- Unamaki Training and Education Centre
- Eskasoni School Board
- Mi'kmaw Kinamatneway
- Pictou Landing First Nations
- Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)
- Millbrook First Nations
- Marconi Community College
- Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC)
- Frontier College

An adult learner also participated who had been a former student of the Marconi Campus. The participants agreed that they would allow their names to be compiled in a contact list to be sent out to further facilitate networking as well as be included in an overall list.

The session was from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.. and was loosely structured to facilitate discussion among the participants as well as networking. The first half focused on providing information about the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the AdLKC which was followed by a facilitated discussion on the issues and concerns around Aboriginal adult learning in Nova Scotia. This was followed after the break by a discussion on successful strategies and best practices.

## **ISSUES/CONCERNS**

The following is a summary of the issues themed in topic areas that emerged. They are presented in no order of priority.

### ***Funding***

#### ***Student Loans***

- One participant suggested that to instill some responsibility, if learners complete their program the band or agency could reimburse them for the student loan, and if unsuccessful, then the student would repay the loan. Another participant cautioned that this strategy could also be abused. One private training institution graduated students without the proper skills and therefore the students were left with a large debt and no skills.
- Another participant noted that student loans have become an option because the level of financial support received by adult learners from Aboriginal agencies is insufficient.

#### ***Government Funding and Criteria***

- There are initiatives undertaken by agencies such as the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APCFNC) and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) to provide training to staff from the health sector so that they are more culturally competent. Funding is sought from federal government departments such as Health Canada that does not fund initiatives in adult learning, even though impacts would be felt in the health field.

#### ***Client Readiness***

- Aboriginal students are coming out of secondary schools with a weak background in math and science. Post-secondary institutions are not able to address this issue within the traditional curriculum. The weakness in math and science is particularly problematic with respect to health career programs.
- There is a need to address client readiness to undertake training and education programs among Aboriginal clients who are accessing resources through programs such as the AHRDAs. A number have failed or deserted their programs and then requested additional support for other training programs. Some clients

- are still not employed. Rather than funding agencies using financial incentives, these learners need to take greater responsibility for their learning.
- Outdated policies around employment and training programs may help individual students taking adult education programs move into the training system, but there is no incentive to become independent. For example, some clients receive financial support for each child while in training to make crafts. At the end of the training, there are no jobs so the clients want to stay in the training program.
  - Different agencies providing programs for Aboriginal adult learners are sometimes unaware that they are providing services to the same individual simultaneously. There is no communication or cooperation so they are not aware of individuals who are jumping from one program to another and “working the system” by receiving a stipend from one program and also receiving welfare in another program.
  - Service providers may be good at supporting clients who enter the education and training system but they may not be good at making them accountable for abusing the system. They need to work with clients so that there is a job at the end of the training, and prevent program jumpers from continuing their cycle. Both service providers and learners need to make appropriate choices.
  - There are a great deal of resources that are spent on “program jumpers” or “deserters” which could be used for a larger number of clients who are most likely to finish programs and already have clear career goals.
  - While most agencies want to avoid “professional students,” some clients may require more than one service, have legitimate needs for continuing with different programs and are entitled to access services. For example:
    - Some clients who have undertaken a training program may find that they want to pursue another career choice;
    - One funding agency may not offer funding for ABE Level 4 while another will;
    - Politics may be a factor as to why some clients do not receive assistance in one agency so they will try and find another agency that will assist them.
    - In other situations, clients may “get lost in the system.”
    - One participant indicated that the best approach to assisting clients with transportation and child-care problems is to train people at the local level. If the client needs to take training off reserve then build supports into those programs.

### ***Transportation***

- There is insufficient funding for travel. Some funding programs only offer \$10 per day and this does not cover the price of gas to travel to training institutions.

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) Levels 2 and 3 are offered in some communities and in one case, the students did very well and were placed in Level 4. However, Level 4 was not offered in the community and as a result of lack of transportation, the students could not complete their program.

### *Child care*

- The population in First Nations communities is booming. For example, in Eskasoni there were over 100 children taking part in the most recent First Communion ceremony. A pre-school program exists in Eskasoni but it is a “pay as you go” service for working individuals and it is not readily available to adult learners and trainees. Day cares in other parts of the province are subsidized and are available for people on welfare or limited incomes, but this is not the case in First Nations communities.
- Day cares in First Nations communities often do not meet the needs and schedules of community members who travel outside their communities to attend post-secondary institutions. Many of these Aboriginal adult learners are gone from 7 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. but the day cares’ hours are limited. The day cares on reserve also tend to close for funerals so that day-care staff can attend. However, this leaves adult learners taking programs off reserve without child care. Often learners cannot afford the time away from class or the cost of paying for alternative child-care arrangements when the day care is closed. These day-care facilities tend to serve the needs and schedules of individuals employed by the band.
- High School students have basic allowances that are not available for adult learners taking training programs. School boards and the leadership need to be aware of this discrepancy.
- There are programs like the Canada Career Information Partnership (CCIP) that may also provide resources for child care, but it is an employment support program and is not aimed at adult learners.
- In some communities, day-care subsidies are provided but the learner has to find the day care themselves.
- Services and funding available through communities or agencies that have the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDAs) include subsidies for day care. The allocation for funding is about 18% of the AHRDA’s budget. Factoring in subsidized seats in day cares, this allocation should be enough. However, over time, there has been an increase in the numbers of adult learners who need these programs without an accompanying increase in funding. The AHRDAs consequently have to identify those individuals who are most likely to succeed and allocate resources to them.

### ***Family and Community Supports***

- Family supports within a community are an important factor when programs such as literacy are being considered.
- It is often during the first two weeks of training or education in post-secondary institutions that the supports fall apart for Aboriginal adult learners. Problems begin to arise such as transportation, readiness and child care. There are support systems available in colleges in Truro and at the Nova Scotia Community College - Marconi Campus, but not in other areas.
- There is no clear policy at the band leadership level as to whether the adult learning focus should be on training, education, literacy, etc. As there is often no coherent approach, the leadership and service agencies cannot prioritize. Agencies continue to work in silos and there is insufficient communication, coordination and collaboration. The focus of the AHRDAs continues to remain on employment and training initiatives using limited resources rather than finding the best use of resources at the community level. Currently, the process is student driven but there is no consideration for whether students' aspirations are aligned with community aspirations. Recently, Mi'kmaw Kinamatneway, a First Nations umbrella organization in Nova Scotia dealing with education, has been mandated to arrive at a more coherent approach.

### ***Post-Secondary Institutions***

- Some adult learners may benefit from distance education or on-line programs, but they have to be very disciplined to learn on their own. Others need to be part of a classroom environment to have interaction with teachers and classmates, draw from ideas and gain self-esteem.
- Support for Aboriginal adult learners when they enter post-secondary institutions is a major issue. There is lack of support around funding, day care, and career programs. There are over 200 Aboriginal students at Cape Breton University but it is uncertain how many of them will have jobs when they graduate.
- Financial and other supports for post-secondary training and education tend to be concentrated where the majority of First Nations are, rather than where the Aboriginal students are. There are student advisors in some of the institutions, but they are not always available for students studying in isolated situations.
- Many Aboriginal adult learners encounter difficulties in adapting to post-secondary institutions because the curriculum designs are not culturally relevant. Many Mi'kmaq do not see themselves in the curriculum of these institutions. The post-secondary institutions are not able to address these issues effectively or to adapt their curriculum to Aboriginal learners with different learning styles.
- The APCFNC and CMM are putting together a proposal to deliver cultural sensitivity training for staff in the health sector. The APCFNC is also working

with universities in the Atlantic region on curriculum design that is culturally sensitive for Aboriginal learners. The APCFNC undertook an Environmental Scan for the health sector which is available on their website ([www.apcfnc.ca](http://www.apcfnc.ca)) and addresses educational concerns.

### ***Partnerships***

- The Nova Scotia Community College - Marconi Campus is trying to partner with the 13 First Nations in Nova Scotia to recruit more students into the campus. The First Nations leadership has informed the Campus that they need a Mi'kmaq language and history component in their curriculum because the language is still strong and history is important to the Mi'kmaq.

### ***Other***

- There is a need to identify an adult learner. Is an adult learner a seventeen-year-old who drops out and then returns later?
- Many of the issues and potential solutions have been raised in the five-volume report published by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and in *Gathering Strength*, the federal government's response to it. Chapter 3 highlights the importance of supporting lifelong learning and potential solutions for access, retention, child care, transportation, etc. Efforts have been made, but the problems are still present. If the government is serious about supporting lifelong learning, it also must recognize that First Nations communities need the infrastructure to support it. Otherwise, there can only be "one-off" training initiatives. Other issues affect Aboriginal adult learning such as housing, clean water, health. According to the United Nations, the standard of living for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada is 49<sup>th</sup> in the world, the same as for Haiti.

## **BEST PRACTICES/SUCCESSSES**

- Mi'kmaw Kinamatneway is working with the leadership in the 13 First Nations in Nova Scotia to develop a coherent funding approach for adult learning.
- Adult Learning Program (ALP) is a foundation program for students who have left school and goes from Levels 1 - 4. Level 4 is equivalent to grades 11 and 12 where the adult learner obtains a high school reading certificate and can then move on to core programming in different fields. The ALP is willing to develop a curriculum including Mi'kmaq history and language.
- There are programs where the funding agency cannot afford to pay for the entire cost such as pilot training. The option was to structure a shared funding arrangement where the funding agency ensured that the client was on Employment Insurance. The band paid for some of the costs while the student

accessed student loans to pay for the remainder. In those situations, not one student failed the program.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### ***Client Readiness***

- Ensure that Adult Basic Education Level 4 is available in First Nations communities that need this to complete their programs.
- Communities need to address program and retention issues and prevent the situation of program “jumpers and deserters.” Aboriginal agencies providing programs and services to Aboriginal adult learners need to be aware of one another’s services and communicate on a regular basis so that they can provide more efficient and effective services. This may also prevent situations where some clients are jumping from one program to another. While respecting privacy issues, these communities and agencies should provide the necessary supports to their clients but also make program “jumpers or deserters” more accountable.

### ***Transportation***

- First Nations communities could consider providing bus transportation for their adult learners and community members who need to go to nearby urban centres for other services. Many individuals do not have a driver’s license or cannot afford the cost of operating a car, especially with current high gas prices.

### ***Child care***

- Affordable or subsidized day-care programs for Aboriginal adult learners undertaking training or other adult learning initiatives should be available and accessible. These facilities should try to meet the schedules of adult learners with children. There needs to be effective access to child-care services for those who travel outside the community to take courses.

### ***Recruitment and Retention***

- Recruitment of more Aboriginal students into universities and colleges should also be accompanied by the development of support programs, especially for Aboriginal adult learners in isolated locations. These supports could include orientation, social supports, adjustment from reserve to post-secondary environment, cultural issues and funding. This would ensure that the students have what they need to succeed.

### ***Programs***

- Explore the possibility of videoconferencing as an option for adult education initiatives in the communities as it offers both human contact and technology. First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada now have the capacity for videoconferencing through the First Nations Help Desk. When not available in First Nations schools, an alternative facility could be the Health Centre.
- Cultural sensitivity courses for instructors in post-secondary institutions are needed for instructors teaching Aboriginal adult learners. Different modalities, including the Aboriginal holistic lifelong learning models developed by the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, would be useful to examine.

### ***Partnerships***

- Partnerships to address the many issues around curriculum design, employment at the end of training, and program jumping or desertion, need to be developed at all levels:
  - Between First Nations communities;
  - Community Colleges;
  - Universities;
  - Private Sector employers, such as Michelin;
  - Aboriginal adult learners.

Partnerships between stakeholders at the policy, service delivery and learner levels will lead to useful needs assessments and creative solutions at the individual and community levels. Further investigation is needed to find which successful programs and private sector partnerships in the community are transferable to other communities.

- Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch and the provinces need to work in partnership on funding and jurisdictional issues around adult learning programs in the health sector.

### ***Mentors***

- Mentorship is important to promote adult learning in science and health programs. This needs to be further developed.

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## **APPENDIX E**

### **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SUMMARY REPORT ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR JUNE 5, 2008**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This summary report outlines the results of the discussions held at the Comfort Inn, St. John's, Newfoundland on June 5, 2008 regarding adult learning issues among Aboriginal communities and agencies within Atlantic Canada. The purpose of this session was for Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners involved in Aboriginal adult learning to:

- learn about the AdLKC;
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future; and
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult learning and network with each other.

The focus was on outreach to those agencies and individuals involved in Aboriginal adult learning and to foster discussion and knowledge exchange among participants that would be useful, not just for the AdLKC but for the participants as well.

Nine individuals from communities and agencies in Newfoundland participated in this outreach session: from Miawpukek (Conne River) First Nations; Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network; St. John's Native Friendship Centre; an Education Officer from the Nunatsiavut Government working at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN); the College of the North Atlantic (CONA); and Keyin College. The participants agreed that they would allow their names to be compiled in a contact list that would be sent out to one another to further facilitate networking as well as be included in an overall list of individuals who participated in this Atlantic outreach initiative.

The session was from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. and was loosely structured to facilitate discussion among the participants as well as networking. The first half of the session focused on providing information about the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the AdLKC which was followed by a facilitated discussion about Aboriginal adult learning issues and concerns. This was followed after the break by a discussion on successful strategies and best practices.

## ISSUES/CONCERNS

The following is a summary of the issues that emerged. These are not prioritized:

### *Funding*

- Funding levels for Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement Program (AHRDAs) are still at 1992 funding levels even though the population has increased from 3,700 in 1992 to over 10,000. There is not enough funding assistance to pay for equipment for some programs and barely enough for books and tuition.
- The AHRDAs do not support other programs that Aboriginal adult learners may require, such as literacy. The AHRDA programs are required to maintain certain levels of employment and training statistics to continue receiving funding from Service Canada. Service Canada does not want to include literacy programs because these are not part of the statistics. Literacy programs may be perceived as a waste of AHRDA resources because these programs may take several years as opposed to programs that takes less time and would be linked to employment.
- CONA can be flexible with programs but the funding criteria that the AHRDAs follow are not always accommodating to Aboriginal learners' needs. These programs tend to take a chance with only five or ten percent of their client caseloads.

### *Client Readiness*

- There is insufficient data available on Aboriginal people and their efforts to continue their education or adult learning once they leave school.
- Although younger Aboriginal adults have more access to the outside world than previous generations, their motivation to learn is not as strong as older Aboriginal adults. Older Aboriginal adult learners often make sacrifices to succeed in post-secondary programs while younger adults are influenced by a number of other factors including:
  - the financial benefits of attending a program;
  - the desire to socialize with others;
  - family support and how they perceive learning as a result of their upbringing.

Instilling the desire to learn among younger Aboriginal adult learners is a challenge. The leadership in First Nations communities or agencies needs to recognize that they are often doing youth a disservice by making the process of being accepted into adult learning programs too easy, as well as by providing financial rewards just to attend. There has to be a more compelling reason to learn, such as making a commitment to oneself and to the community.

- Secondary schools are not preparing Aboriginal students adequately in math, science and English so many of these students are ill equipped for post-secondary

education. Many high school guidance counselors do not understand the Aboriginal culture or issues that these students deal with and as a result are not providing adequate services. Many students are being discouraged from pursuing their goals.

- Older Aboriginal learners are afraid of going to school. They are afraid of technology and computers.

### ***Recruitment and Retention in Post-Secondary Institutions***

Some institutions have conducted contract training with Aboriginal communities; others have a number of Aboriginal students who are attending or have attended their institutions; while others have had only a few individual students who attended their programs in university or college. For example, MUN has had a great deal of experience, and more Inuit than First Nations students attend their programs. A dedicated Aboriginal worker employed through the Nunatsiavut Government assists these Inuit students, as well as the First Nations students attending the university.

### **INSTITUTIONS SHARED THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES:**

- Many Aboriginal students entering into the post-secondary institutions either at MUN, CONA or Keyin College are not adequately prepared academically or socially and, as a result, many students often do not successfully complete the program. These students were not properly informed prior to acceptance. Some have only a grade six or seven education. Others with secondary education still have not been adequately prepared in reading and math (this is not just unique to Aboriginal learners).
- Financial needs as well as the lack of counseling to help students to adjust to new environments are additional issues that Aboriginal adult learners are struggling with. Many social adjustments are required of Aboriginal adult learners when relocating to a city from their home community for work or education.
- Even with adequate financing, the adjustment process is difficult because of the lack of community or institutional support. These students are leaving small communities with a different culture and entering into a large university or college in an urban environment with class sizes that are often larger than the population of their entire community.
- It is important that connections are made between these institutions and the right contact people in the communities. Despite the fact that there may be an orientation program such as MUN Aboriginal Orientation Program, there may not be many First Nations students using these services. It was pointed out that in the case of some communities such as the Miawpukek First Nations, the information about the program may not be reaching the right people. As well, the Aboriginal education worker has information only on the Inuit students from

Labrador because she is an employee of the Nunatsiavut government and has access to these records. However, she does not have access to the names of First Nations students because of privacy legislation.

- Aboriginal adult learners often do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent so this poses a barrier to get into the workforce or post-secondary education. In addition, some participants indicated that Aboriginal learners may be concerned with only getting their grade 12 through programs such as Adult Basic Education (ABE).
- There are often long waiting lists for some programs at CONA and some students are looking outside Newfoundland to pursue training if they cannot get it at CONA.
- Even though Adult Basic Education (ABE) programming is a priority with the federal government, it is not a priority for the communities as they may not see as much demand as in the mid 1990s. There is a 3-4% drop-out rate among students and the communities have had to extend the three-week ABE program to five weeks. Even then, they often do not complete the program.

### ***Family and Community Supports***

- Directors and managers of programs on reserve need to actively encourage community members to become informed of educational options. They should also have resources available to help identify those community members who are ready and able to continue on to further adult learning.
- In addition to family and community supports, it is important to have instructors in the colleges who are also supportive and prepared to assist the Aboriginal adult learner especially in coaching them about what is required to succeed.

### ***Culture***

- Many Aboriginal adult learners in Newfoundland have become assimilated into the mainstream culture and have expressed a need to understand their own culture. There is a real need for initiatives leading to a revival of Aboriginal culture but few funding programs will support programs such as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge. In Miawpukek, there is project funding for arts and culture but many of the elders who have this knowledge are dying. Youth would prefer to focus more on accessing post-secondary education.
- The curricula of many of the training programs in post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal adult learners are not Aboriginal-based. Archives of beautiful Mi'kmaq poetry and arts and culture could be used to develop the curriculum for Aboriginal adult learning.
- CONA has tailor-made programs for adult learning and has incorporated some cultural materials in their curriculum, but it has since moved away from group-based training. As a result, Aboriginal curriculum development is not a priority.

## BEST PRACTICES/SUCCESSSES

- One participant shared his experience in Northern Quebec prior to coming to Newfoundland where he did not have to lobby the federal government for enhanced program funding for AHRDA through the Makkovik Corporation after the James Bay Agreement. Makkovik undertook an assessment of traditional skills for Aboriginal men and women and created a company for the mass production of traditional clothing. A day care was funded and Aboriginal women had sewing centres where younger women would learn this knowledge from them. Seasoned hunters taught hunting to younger men out on the land and then built slaughterhouses to carve caribou. They learned a number of lessons through that venture, one of which was that it is one thing to capture Aboriginal traditional knowledge and another to make it commercially viable.
- Keyin College undertook a strategic planning process combined with research to address the situation where adult learners from small communities were not qualified academically or socially to succeed in their college environment. They developed a six-week transitional program to help individuals entering into the programs offered (trades, technician, etc.). This involved developing training for individuals that was 90% hands-on. The College also created programming at school such as quilting, sewing, art classes, etc. The intent was to bring students back to traditional culture to gain a sense of who they are as a people and a culture. This was successful for some with the success based on both the academic aspects of the training as well as the culture of adult learners.

Keyin College also has a continuous intake Adult Basic Education (ABE) program compared to intake only at certain times as with CONA. The funding approvals require only four to six weeks and the ABE focuses on math and science. They also bring in the students prior to the beginning of the courses for orientation. In other institutions, adult learners become frustrated and lose the motivation to undertake training if they have to wait for funding approval.

- The ABE program in Newfoundland has been successful in providing an opportunity for adult learners to adjust to continued education and the school environment. Some adult learners have been away from school for most of their lives and this program provides them with a chance to get used to this environment while obtaining pre-requisites such as science courses in May to prepare for an environmental technician program in the fall. Computer training for older adult learners can also be obtained through the ABE program to provide them with the confidence and familiarity with technology so that their employability is enhanced. Service Canada is flexible in working with Keyin College and the adult learner, in providing access to ABE.

- There was an 87-year-old man from the Miawpukek First Nations who was writing his memoirs with the editing assistance of a university student. He had a Grade 12 education and was the first one from his community to write a book. This demonstrates the importance of continuous and lifelong learning as well as the value of role models for others in the family and community.
- An Education Counselor who is employed by the Nunatsiavut government goes into each community to provide information about educational opportunities. There is an application process, worksheets, and an opportunity to inform parents about how their children handle challenges and successes while in university or college. These workers are also available to adult learners. It is important to have them because they understand the culture and the community. They are better able to relate to the experiences of the Aboriginal adult learner and the adult learner can relate and identify with them.
- Over 30 Aboriginal women from different communities in Newfoundland are undertaking an empowering yearlong program. There is a different relevant topic each month. For example, they are training four Aboriginal women from each community to speak on date rape.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### ***Client Readiness***

- Secondary schools need to do a better job of preparing Aboriginal students for post-secondary institutions and to increase reading, math and science levels to meet the pre-requisites. At the same time, the guidance and career counselors in these secondary schools should be culturally competent so that they can help students to make better choices for higher education.
- Aboriginal adult learners should complete their Grade 12 education first and then be provided with career counseling so that they can look at different training and learning options, including post-secondary institutions.
- Job shadowing needs to be instituted where the adult learner wishes to pursue training. This should ensure that individuals are more knowledgeable about what they are getting themselves into and what is required in a given job. This would be useful in a number of different positions such as for the RCMP and nursing.
- There is a need for an education counselor who can work with Aboriginal adult learners who wish to pursue post-secondary education or training. These workers can provide assessment and career counseling to the adult learners so that students are not entering programs for which they do not have pre-requisites. They can also provide counseling in assessing long-term goals and what to expect in an off reserve and post-secondary environment.

### ***Recruitment and Retention***

- Career Days should be organized, with individuals who work in specific areas and positions providing information to Aboriginal people and communities. The individuals who undertake recruitment for community colleges, universities and other training institutions should be the same ones who provide student services so that communities and individuals connect with them, allowing for a better transition when Aboriginal students enter a post-secondary institution.

### ***Programs***

- In order to increase completion success rates, community colleges and universities need to have bridging programs or at least a better process for adult learners to adjust to post-secondary requirements and environments.
- Post-secondary institutions need to modify existing testing systems for entry so that they are flexible and meet the needs of the clients from different cultures and with learning styles.
- Curriculum of training and education programs in post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal people should be Aboriginal based. Existing resources including Mi'kmaq arts and culture could be used to develop the program curriculum.
- ADLKC may be able to assist in funding projects related to arts and crafts for Aboriginal adult learners who are interested in their culture.
- Funding should be available through the AHRDAs for literacy initiatives and ABE programming for Aboriginal clients.
- There needs to be more effective promotion and opportunities to inform Aboriginal adult learners and other adult learners of post-secondary programs.
- Technology such as video and teleconferencing should be used in adult education and literacy initiatives. This technology could also be used to show prospective adult learners the post-secondary institutions before they move away from their communities. Student testimonials and industry representatives' information about prospective employment opportunities could also be available.
- Distance education could be used to provide education options for students so that Aboriginal students could participate in on-line courses with a few other adult students rather than attending classes with 300 students. This would help to minimize the culture shock of moving into another cultural environment. CONA and MUN could cooperate to put on these courses.
- AdLKC needs to start working with top administrators at post-secondary institutions to ensure policies and environments are inclusive and welcoming for Aboriginal students. It is important to reach senior decision-makers who are in a position to influence and make concrete changes in institutions.
- About twenty years ago, funding was being allocated to ABE community learning. Programs need to be reinstated to address adult learning needs.

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## **APPENDIX F**

# **ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH SESSION ADULT LEARNING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE SUMMARY REPORT HAPPY VALLEY/GOOSE BAY, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR JUNE 9, 2008**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This summary report outlines the results of the discussions held at the Hotel North in Happy Valley/Goose Bay Labrador on June 9, 2008 regarding adult learning issues among Aboriginal communities and agencies within Atlantic Canada. The purpose of this session was for Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal adult learners involved in Aboriginal adult learning to:

- learn about the AdLKC;
- participate in a discussion on Aboriginal adult learning in Atlantic Canada;
- explore barriers, successful practices and what could be done to improve Aboriginal adult learning in the future; and
- hear from others involved in Aboriginal Adult learning and network with each other.

The focus was on outreach to those agencies and individuals involved in Aboriginal adult learning and to foster discussion and knowledge exchange among participants that would be useful, not just for the AdLKC but for the participants as well.

Ten individuals from communities and agencies in Happy Valley and Goose Bay Labrador participated in this outreach session including participants from the Labrador School Board; the Labrador Literacy Council; the College of the North Atlantic (CONA); the Labrador Friendship Centre; the Labrador Institute with Memorial University; Sheshatshiu First Nations; and the Nunatsiavut Government. The participants agreed that they would allow their names to be compiled in a contact list that would be shared to further facilitate networking, as well as included in an overall list of individuals who participated in this Atlantic outreach initiative.

The session was from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. and was loosely structured to facilitate discussion among the participants as well as networking. The first half of the session focused on providing information about Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and the AdLKC which was followed by a facilitated discussion on the issues and concerns around Aboriginal adult learning in Labrador. This was followed after the break with a discussion on successful strategies and best practices.

## **ISSUES/CONCERNS**

The following is a summary of the issues. They are not presented in order of priority.

### ***Funding***

The biggest issue for Aboriginal people is funding and this involves the following areas:

#### ***AHRDAs***

ARHDA funding to Aboriginal communities and agencies is being threatened as a result of the proposed pan-Canadian policy and approach. The federal government is proposing a new business case approach where a company in western Ontario can now apply to deliver services to Aboriginal people in Labrador. As a result of their ability to write proposals, these non-Aboriginal companies will stand a better chance of winning the contract compared to Aboriginal agencies that have been delivering the services in the past. This will have a detrimental impact on the cultural appropriateness, the quality and the effectiveness of the services to the Inuit, Innu and Métis in Labrador.

The AHRDAs are able to build capacity with Aboriginal people as counselors, and with funds administered by Aboriginal people for other Aboriginal people. Post-secondary institutions can call on the AHRDAs when they are experiencing problems with Aboriginal students. Community colleges such as CONA would find this new approach detrimental as they work closely with Aboriginal people in Labrador developing a framework for Aboriginal education at the College. The new president at CONA initiated a process for a draft policy and framework and met with Aboriginal groups over the summer to gather input. CONA is on the right track with efforts being made at senior decision-making levels.

#### ***Federal Funding Policy***

The federal government is doing “a lousy job in supporting adult learning” and service providers are stressed in trying to meet the need. There is a trend to shift funding away from frontline service delivery agencies and this is having an impact on service delivery. In some cases, funding for community-based work is being diverted to universities. Aboriginal literacy funding is provided through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). There is a need to look at the big picture but to focus resources at a local level.

#### ***Client Readiness***

- Many of the Aboriginal students graduating from high school are finding that they are two years behind other high school graduates. This makes it difficult for them to participate in regular college or university programs.

- One of the biggest issues and challenges to adult learning initiatives with Aboriginal adult learners are social issues such as lack of coping skills, addictions, poverty, etc. These factors affect how motivated and ready Aboriginal adult learners are to complete their training and attain their goals.

### ***Transportation and Child care***

- Many young Aboriginal adult learners are parents already and do not have vehicles or access to child care, making it difficult for them to access adult learning and post-secondary education.

### ***Recruitment and Retention in Post-Secondary Institutions***

- Many Aboriginal adult learners do not have high school education and there are very few high school graduates. They are interested in finishing high school, as they know that they will need training in certified programs to improve their employability. They often do not have the information they need, such as available programs and how to access them.
- In the past, there tended to be more males than females who wished to take training programs but there are growing numbers of Aboriginal females who are now taking training.

### ***Post-Secondary Institutions***

- Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) could extend its collaboration and service delivery to Aboriginal people in Labrador. In the past, MUN had a stronger presence in Labrador, including its Extension Service that was very active in assisting Aboriginal communities in community development initiatives such as the establishment and operation of fish plants. However, more recently, MUN's presence in Labrador has been primarily through researchers' projects.

Currently, Aboriginal people have little opportunity to provide input into curriculum development at MUN, with the exception of the Integrated Nursing Access Program offered to Inuit from the North Coast. MUN's Labrador Institute has not been as active as before because of severe budget cuts affecting service delivery. For example, the Labrador Institute had a staff of 18 people but there are currently only six. MUN is exploring ways to deliver lifelong learning to Aboriginal people but this initiative is still in its early stages. Offerings in Inuktitut and aboriginal literature at the Labrador Institute have increased participation over the last three years.

- Training and education in secondary and post-secondary institutions are often too academic and based on European models. The traditional Inuit and Innu way of learning is by watching. After watching long enough, they could do what they were observing. Aboriginal societies are based on an oral tradition. In today's

- academic institutions, there are nine months of academic training using pens, paper and books, but little time to actually do what it is you are learning.
- Post-secondary institutions need to look at succession planning as many people are retiring who have experience with adult learning initiatives.

### ***Partnerships***

- The Government of Canada and the provinces must find a new way to work with the private sector as it relates to meaningful employment, education and training Aboriginal people. A better connection needs to be established between the private sector and Aboriginal adult training programs, especially as it relates to providing jobs at the end of the program. If the trainees do not find meaningful employment the only option they have is a low paying position or going on welfare. They need to see the benefit for their investment. The employers often insist on experience, which prevents many of the Aboriginal trainees from getting “their foot in the door,” and everyone loses out on an opportunity for a good match. Also when some employers hire Aboriginal graduates with the assistance of wage subsidies, they are not kept on for a longer employment term once the subsidy ends. More could be done between the private sector, governments and educational institutions to ensure Aboriginal graduates have the opportunities they deserve.
- There is a demand for journeymen but Aboriginal people cannot obtain this level of qualification without experience and apprenticeship. Securing apprenticeship positions is an issue so Aboriginal people end up retraining in a different field. The AHRDA has to reassess whether they can provide financial assistance in the new field of training.
- Agencies that deliver services to Aboriginal adult learners have not had a history of understanding or appreciating each other’s efforts and services. There has been a lot of competition but now they are cooperating better with one another.

### ***Community and Culture***

#### ***Inuit***

Inuit adult learners grew up with parents who did not, or were not able to assist them with overcoming the issues they were dealing with. Similarly, as adults, they are now facing similar difficulties with keeping their children in school, beginning another generational cycle of challenges with the formal education system.

Inuit students that succeed in finishing high school do very well but do not stay in the community. They go away to study or work in a non-Inuit environment and often experience culture shock. They also have to operate in English and take classes on topics that they cannot relate to because of their different cultural experience.

### *Innu*

The community of Sheshatshiu came under the Indian Act in the past couple of years. There have been a lot of changes as a result and many issues that the community is dealing with are impacting adult learning. These include:

- Language and cultural differences with education systems;
- Pressures that Innu students have to deal with in a non-Innu environment.

Self-esteem and identity are issues among Aboriginal youth. The changes in Sheshatshiu forced the community to ask themselves what their role was as a community. The Elders helped to ground things in that process of self-reflection. The community also asked themselves what this meant in terms of learning and identity as Innu. The Innu have gone “into the country” for as long as they can remember. The children and youth learn pride, peace of mind, traditional practices, and also have fun. Ceremonies and cultural practices are part of living with the land. As Innu become older, going into the country becomes a matter of identity and a source of cultural pride as a people. With Innu entering into the modern world of work and school, these cultural practices and ceremonies are starting to wane. Participants said that these ways of maintaining culture and identity need to be revived because they are important to youth to have a healthy sense of self-esteem and identity, and will help to fuel future success as adults.

Success rates with training and adult education programs have been higher when these are brought into the community for the following reasons:

- There is an Innu language speaking environment and fewer adjustments required than with an English-based training system.
- Some adult learners are residential school survivors and as a result may have a negative perception of educational institutions outside of their community because they were forced into these institutions without their consent.

### *General*

There is a language barrier as many Aboriginal adult learners in Labrador communities speak Inuktitut and Innu-aimun but the programs are delivered in English. There is a concern that many younger Aboriginal people are beginning to lose their language and consequently they are losing an important part of their culture and identity. However, Aboriginal communities feel it is important for their members to have a facility with English, but not at the expense of their Aboriginal languages.

### *Other*

- The Labrador Friendship Centre is undertaking a project on homelessness and found that that many of the homeless are Inuit from the north coast of Labrador. Many of these individuals have come to Happy Valley-Goose Bay in search of

better opportunities and work. There needs to be a variety of approaches serve them “at their level.” These could include informal approaches with workplace settings; “just-in-time” learning, integration and support; and formal training through colleges and universities. More programming and interventions are required prior to bridging programs and formal education. This could prevent a situation where they end up being homeless. A further cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken of upfront support for individuals, versus the costs of other services such as a boarding house or incarceration if they get into trouble.

- There are school boards in other provinces that do deliver literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE) initiatives without having to take the learners out of school for a year.
- Stereotyping and racism are a factor with finding employment within the private sector or in finding housing. However, there are some improvements in this area as more people succeed and stay on in positions.
- Most Aboriginal communities do not have standards for community-based training programs.
- The Inuit population is small and tends to “get lost in the feathers.” The Inuit need to be involved in forums such as these to ensure that their needs are included. The Inuit are interested in research involving education from K to 12 through the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre.
- The concerns of Aboriginal people in Labrador are not always well incorporated into work in the region, even by other Aboriginal organizations.

### **BEST PRACTICES/SUCCESSSES**

- The Labrador School Board has hired a program development specialist to develop and implement a curriculum which would incorporate culture for ABE Levels 1 and 2 within the secondary school system in Nain, Hopedale and Sheshatshiu and will prepare Inuit and Innu students to go into ABE Level 3. This is a great improvement from previous initiatives. The program is individualized and if a student misses a few days, they are not behind. It will be offered to 16 to 18-year-olds.
- CONA has had a number of successes using the following approaches:
  - A bridging program assists Aboriginal high school students make the transition between community and college or university. This also assists them with math, science, career exploration, comprehension, writing, etc. Empowerment has been a factor in their success.
  - The college works with a person at their level and moves them to where they need to be through customized training. Community Health Workers in Aboriginal communities designed a successful certificate program using this

approach, delivered in modules where adult learners came in for three weeks and returned to communities for six weeks over a two- year period.

- Monthly meetings with Inuit and Innu students to discuss social issues and to build in lots of interaction with the students by gathering them into one room. This initiative began with only about 10 students in one small room but now the numbers have grown so that they can no longer fit into that room.
- The numbers of Aboriginal students have grown and successes have increased due to a combination of having on-site support for students, support from the AHRDAs, role models, etc.
- CONA arranges for work terms for students in the field in which they are undertaking training. This provides a “foot in the door” for Aboriginal adult learners with the private sector or other employers.
- The use of translators at CONA has helped many Aboriginal learners because it provided resources in their language.
- Customized training was also used for a Diploma of Social Work in Nunatsiavut, including the north coast of Labrador, where seven out of ten students graduated after four years of courses in communities. This approach is being used in McGill University for a social work program and is being considered for Aboriginal people who already have some social work training. This program will be delivered for two or three weeks at a time.
- An Inuit program in Ottawa assists young Inuit students from the North and provides an opportunity for them to learn about themselves. It is a very successful program because it allows them to go outside their environments and develop sound coping skills.
- The Inuit Integrated Nursing Access Program offered by MUN used a slightly different approach by integrating nursing with upgrading. Students did two years of upgrading plus half a year of nursing. The program allowed them to earn ten university credits in Nursing. Enrollment in the program is not yet as high as anticipated and there may need to be an evaluation to determine why. However, the program has generally been regarded as quite a successful model.
- The Labrador Institute has had an increased level of activity. Such offerings as the intersession program have had greatly increased participation over the past three years with the availability of culturally relevant courses such as Inuktitut and aboriginal literature.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### ***Client Readiness***

- Prospective students could be taken to St. John’s to visit the community college and university to learn what they are like. This would help to reduce some of the culture shock they may experience when they finally come to these institutions.

- There is a need to assist young Aboriginal adult learners with coping skills and to empower them to deal with whatever comes at them, either in the community or the post-secondary institution.
- An extra year could be provided for high school graduates in the community to prepare for college courses so they are better prepared to enter into programs.
- A bridging program between on-site training within the community and community college is needed to establish a comfort level when the Aboriginal adult learner first encounters the college environment. Aboriginal learners need to work within a group where everyone can speak either Inuit or Innu.

### ***Recruitment and Retention***

- Aboriginal students need exposure to the potential rewards of completing their education so that they know what options exist.

### ***Programs***

- Aboriginal students often do not have extracurricular activities in their schools and become bored with being in the same room every day doing the same things. There is a need to add elements to engage the students in a more holistic manner as well as addressing their social and other needs, for example career exploration.
- It would be helpful to develop a co-op model within the post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal students where half the time is spent doing practical things and the other half on the academic program. This would lead to better workers and higher success rates.
- A variety of programs could be available to adult learners so that their needs are progressively met at a range of levels, for example informal workplace learning situations, “just in time” learning, integration and support, and formal community college or university training.
- An overlap between program delivery in adult learning and the traditional ways of Aboriginal people and communities would be effective. Funding and experienced and trained people would be required to research, develop, and implement a properly structured program.

### ***Partnerships***

- Both the federal and provincial governments need to build better connections with the private sector to provide meaningful employment for Aboriginal trainees at the end of their programs. Wage subsidy programs could be used but there has to be uptake from the employers as well. Employers want experienced workers but they need to take a chance on Aboriginal people so that they can gain experience.

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