

# Adult Learning in Aboriginal Community-Based Inner-City Organizations

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## **Executive Summary**

Winnipeg is home to a high proportion of individuals of Aboriginal identity. Like other prairie cities, the Aboriginal population of Winnipeg is relatively young and concentrated in the downtown core areas where educational attainment is lower and unemployment is higher. Adult education centres in inner city communities provide formal education services to local residents. However, some residents do not qualify for admission, or are not in a position to attend for family or financial reasons. Community-based organizations, such as Andrews Street Family Centre, hire volunteers and paid staff extensively from the local communities they serve. These organizations provide employment experience, personal and social support, as well as opportunities for training and links to formal education programs for residents who face multiple barriers to adult learning. A search of the literature turned up little on the practices of community-based human services organizations that provide informal adult education opportunities to their staff from the local community. Similarly, we were unable to find literature on the experiences of adult learners in these organizations. The study was a participatory research project on the nature and experience of informal adult learning within community-based inner-city human service organizations from the perspectives of Aboriginal volunteers and staff members who are residents of the local community.

### ***Method***

This study was guided by principles of participatory research. The research was developed and implemented under the direction of an advisory group consisting of an agency director, a university researcher, a graduate student, local residents and undergraduate university students. An interview schedule and participant recruitment plan was developed collaboratively within the advisory group.

The advisory group decided to select agencies that were: located in the North End, provided human services to North End residents, and had a commitment to hiring from the geographic and cultural community. Because of their experience and success in hiring from the local community, the three largest local employers were approached. The questions focused on

the benefits and challenges of adult learners, their connection to the agency, as well as past and current employment or educational opportunities. Senior staff members who had a unique experience of the needs and challenges of hiring locally were also interviewed to identify the key factors involved in informal adult learning.

### ***Interviews with Volunteers and Staff***

Individual interviews were conducted with 44 volunteers or staff members. Each participated in one individual interview that included six questions. The results were analyzed using a qualitative method called Concept Mapping. Participants were residents of the local community and employed by a local human services agency for less than 1 to 21 years. They ranged in age from 16 to 67, and the majority (31/44) were female. Positions ranged from casual to full-time, and included janitorial, secretarial, community development, teaching, casework, program coordination, as well as financial and managerial positions. They worked with the children, youth, adults and elders of the community.

#### ***Question 1: What are the benefits of working in your community?***

Participants reported that the benefits to working in their own community were: having a sense of belonging, helping each other out, having the trust of their neighbours, knowing local realities, being part of established networks, building from within the community, shared values and similar experiences, as well as contributing to supportive organizations in the area.

#### ***Question 2: What are the challenges of working in your community?***

Participants reported that the challenges of working in their own community were: the lack of privacy, the depth of need, how their work affects them personally, maintaining healthy boundaries, knowing how best to be helpful, addressing structural issues, meeting various needs, dealing with substance-related problems, gang activity, negative outside influences, working with government, and working with limited funding.

***Question 3: How did you get connected to the agency?***

Participants reported that they became connected to the agency they were employed through coming in for service, volunteering there, knowing people who worked there, applying for an advertised job opening, or following their own life path.

***Question 4: What were your employment and education experiences before you got this job?***

Participants reported that their employment and education experiences before getting their present positions included: formal education, life experience, helping others, gaining cultural knowledge, and training that they received on the job.

***Question 5: What employment and education opportunities have you had while in this job?***

Participants reported that the employment and education opportunities they had in their current positions included: planning for services, promotion within the agency, specific skill development, enhanced self-confidence, cultural awareness, teaching others, workshops as well as certified training.

***Question 6: What changes do you see in your future employment and education?***

Participants reported that the employment and education opportunities they saw in their futures included: advancement in their work, formal education, gaining new skills, teaching others, learning more about themselves, professional development, work experience, helping the youth, and working for their own community.

***Interviews with Directors and Managers***

We interviewed nine representatives of three community-based family services organizations doing community development work in Winnipeg's North End. The average age was 43 years. They had been involved in their present organizations for less than one year to over 11 years, and together had held over 17 different positions within the organizations.

Their commitment to hiring from the geographical and cultural communities within which their organizations were situated was evident throughout the interviews. The reasons

are based on a strong sense of respect for local wisdom and expertise, and the utilization of those gifts for the benefit of each other. There were five themes. Participants talked about their own development as employees of their organizations, their organization's current policies and practices on hiring from the community, the ways they work as employers of others from the community, the benefits of hiring from the community and the challenges they face hiring from the community.

### ***Summary and Conclusion***

Community-based human services organizations like Andrews Street Family Centre (ASFC) are making a positive difference. ASFC is located in the heart of Winnipeg's North End. The Centre hires extensively from the local community. The majority of current volunteers, staff and board members are local residents. Many new volunteers and staff (who often have limited formal education and a great deal of life experience) are hired for secure jobs that pay a liveable wage and provide opportunities for educational upgrading leading to employment advancement. Andrews Street Family Centre - and other organizations like it in Winnipeg's North End - place great emphasis on supporting local residents in their work within the organization. The efforts of the organization go well beyond basic job training to include extra support for staff while they address personal issues, for example, striking a balance between the demands of work and family. The organization also helps staff plan for their futures and accomplish their educational goals.

A variety of formal educational opportunities, such as specific skills training through accredited workshops, and informal opportunities, such as the advice and guidance of an experienced staff member, are regularly made available. Our data indicate that the training and support offered both formally and informally to adult learners within community-based organizations is substantial and necessary in order to provide service that is relevant and accessible, as well as beneficial for the community over the longer term.



## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of adult learners within community-based inner-city organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Winnipeg's inner city, like the core areas of other Canadian prairie cities, experiences high rates of family poverty and unemployment, housing decay and overcrowding, yet maintains a strong sense of community identity through powerful social networks and the strengths of local residents. Although many residents possess a great deal of life experience and skills, experiences with the formal education system have not been positive, and the challenges associated with returning to school as an adult, with a variety of personal and family commitments, are formidable. Local agencies that have a commitment to hire locally provide learning opportunities to residents that they would otherwise not have. The purpose of the study was to identify the nature of these informal learning experiences and document their connection, from the perspective of participants, to employment and educational opportunities.

The project was a partnership between the University of Western Ontario and Andrews Street Family Centre (ASFC), with funding from the Canadian Council on Learning. Andrews Street Family Centre was incorporated in 1995. The intent of ASFC is to provide a focal point within the community where families can become involved in meaningful ways to achieve resolution of their own needs. The Board of ASFC is comprised of local residents.

The final report is divided into five parts. Part one is a review of the relevant literature. Part two is a description of the method employed in this study. Part three is made up of two sections including results of our interviews with front-line staff and senior-level administrators and managers within local agencies. Part four of the report is a summary of major findings. Part five is a conclusion. Part six is a series of recommendations.

## Literature Review

The Aboriginal population in Canada has been growing nearly three times faster than the Canadian population as a whole (Castellano, 2002). According to the 2001 Census, almost one million Canadians were of Aboriginal identity (Statistics Canada, 2003a). This Census data indicates that 150,045 Aboriginal people live in Manitoba, comprising 13.6 percent of the provincial population, a higher proportion than any other province (Mendelson, 2004). Within Manitoba approximately 35 percent of Aboriginal people live on-reserve and 30 percent live in either Métis communities, rural areas or Crown land, or in urban settings other than Winnipeg. The remaining 35 percent of Manitoba's Aboriginal population reside within the boundaries of the City of Winnipeg (Hallett, 2006). With a population of 55,755, Winnipeg has more Aboriginal residents than any other Canadian city (Mendelson, 2004).

The Aboriginal population in Canada is much younger than that of the general population, a factor contributing to higher fertility rates among Aboriginal women (Ward, 2006). Although it has declined in recent decades, the Aboriginal birth rate is still approximately 1.5 times that of the non-Aboriginal birth rate (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Consistent with the national age distribution, the Aboriginal population in Manitoba is younger than the general population (median age of 24.7 and 37.1 respectively) (Statistics Canada 2003b, 2003c). As well, a full one-quarter of Manitoba children aged 0 to 14 years in 2001 were Aboriginal (Hallett, 2006). As at the national level, birth rates among Aboriginal women in Manitoba are higher than for non-Aboriginal women. The large number of Aboriginal women entering their reproductive years, suggests that the Aboriginal birth rate in Manitoba will remain high in decades to come.

The age distribution of the Aboriginal population as well as higher birth rates among Aboriginal women means that the Aboriginal population will provide large numbers of young new entrants into the labour market in coming years (Loewen, Silver, August, Bruning, Mackenzie, & Meyerson, 2005). The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics (1997) projects that by 2016 one out of five labour market participants will be Aboriginal. Indeed, "the increasing

importance of the Aboriginal workforce to Manitoba...cannot be exaggerated...there is likely no single more critical economic factor for the Prairie Provinces” (Mendelson, 2004, p. 38).

The potential contribution of the Aboriginal population to present and future labour markets is threatened by lower levels of educational attainment among Aboriginal peoples (Sheldrick, 2004). Despite slight improvements in recent decades, available data consistently indicates that levels of educational attainment are lower among the Aboriginal population than that of the Canadian population as a whole. Using 2001 Census data, Mendelson (2006) highlighted these disparities. While 31 percent of the total Canadian population aged 15 years and older has not completed high school, this figure is 48 percent among the Aboriginal population. In Manitoba these figures are 38 percent and 56 percent respectively. While 15 percent of the total Canadian population aged 15 years and older have completed university, only 4 percent of Aboriginal peoples in this age category have completed university. Within Manitoba these figures are similar, with 13 percent of the province’s population aged 15 years and older completing university and 4 percent of the province’s Aboriginal population aged 15 years and older completing university.

Within Winnipeg, Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately concentrated in the inner city (Silver, Mallett, Greene, & Simard, 2002) with nearly half of Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population (44%) living in the inner city area (Loewen, Silver, August, Bruning, Mackenzie, & Meyerson, 2005). Levels of educational attainment are, on average, lower in Winnipeg’s inner city than for the city as a whole (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [CCPA], 2005). The proportion of adults in the inner city who had not graduated from high school was 36% in 2001; the proportion of non-Aboriginal adults in Winnipeg who did not graduate from high school in 2001 was 28% (Levin, 2005). Residents of the inner city were less likely to have graduated from university. In 2001, only 14.3% of inner city adults aged 20 and older had a Bachelors degree or higher, compared to 19.3% across Winnipeg (CCPA, 2005). These inner city disparities are even more apparent within the Aboriginal population. Aboriginal peoples continue to have lower levels of educational attainment, on average, than non-Aboriginal peoples in the inner city (Hanselmann, 2001).

As Sheldrick (2004, pg. iv) notes "given these relatively low levels of educational attainment it is difficult to move these individuals into jobs...which generally require much higher levels of education...a much more targeted system of education and training for the inner city is needed to overcome these obstacles". Clearly, strategies that improve education and job training among Aboriginal peoples need to be implemented. This is not only true for Aboriginal youth, but also for adults.

Aboriginal adults are more likely to return to school than non-Aboriginal adults (Hallet, 2006; O'Donnell & Ballard, 2006). For example, while 5.4 percent of non-Aboriginal Canadian adults 25 to 44 years of age were attending school full-time, nearly double or 10.4 percent of Aboriginal adults in this age group were attending school full-time (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). However, Aboriginal adult learners, and particularly those in the inner city, face multiple barriers to their learning.

### ***Barriers Experienced by Aboriginal Adult Learners***

There are several barriers to pursuing education and job training among Aboriginal adults. These include barriers created by colonization and the residential school system, socio-economic inequities, barriers from within neighbourhoods, inadequate childcare, and barriers created by formal education systems.

### ***Colonization and the Residential School System***

Many of the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples today are the lingering effects of colonization by European settlers and the desire to assimilate the Aboriginal people to the "civilized" lifestyle and worldview of the new settlers (Connors & Maidman, 1999). A lengthy colonial history in Canada has resulted in many documented tragedies of Canada's Aboriginal peoples (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000). This began with acts of genocide including warfare, starvation, and disease and was followed by segregation of Aboriginal peoples through the reserve system. The process of colonization also included the establishment of the residential school system that was based on aggressive assimilation policies.

Children were separated from their families and communities from the age of 5 or 6 years for up to 9 years and were taught in unfamiliar settings where they were separated from the holistic world view of their families. Within these schools children were prohibited from speaking their language or practicing their spiritual and cultural customs (Connors & Maidman, 1999; York, 1999). The physical, emotional, and sexual abuse that occurred in these settings is documented (Ing, 1991; Morrisette, 1994). Although the last residential school closed in 1979, several generations of children had been raised without the benefit of learning the values, beliefs, customs, and languages of their nations, and with little or no experience with nurturing families. This has resulted in separation and loss that led to the development of multi-generational trauma, grief and loss (Connors & Maidman, 1999). The National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC, 2002) summarized the intergenerational effects of the residential school system in terms of factors that negatively impact learning. These factors include denial of First Nations identity, racism, shame, poor self-esteem, communication difficulties, expectations of being judged negatively, violence and abuse in the family, and alcoholism. The mistrust and opposition of the imposition of the European-based educational system, as well as the lingering devastation to individuals and families caused by this system, continue to serve as barriers to educational attainment among Aboriginal peoples.

### ***Socio-economic***

Aboriginal peoples are still living the legacy of colonization. Evidence of this fact can be seen in the continued existence of pronounced socio-economic disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. As noted by the NADC (2002), “Aboriginal peoples are among the most disadvantaged groups in Canada. The 2001 post-censal Aboriginal Peoples Survey indicates that (we) experience poorer health, lower levels of education, lower average incomes, and higher rates of unemployment, compared with the non-Aboriginal population”.

As previously discussed, at national, provincial and municipal levels, educational attainment is lower among Aboriginal people than in the general population. The same disadvantage is true for employment and income levels. While the unemployment rate among the total Canadian population was 7.4 percent in 2001, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was

19.1 percent (Mendelson, 2004). These figures are similar in the province of Manitoba. Within Winnipeg the 2001 unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal people was 5 percent while the unemployment rate among Aboriginal people was 14.3 percent (Mendelson, 2004; Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). In 2001 the average total income of the Aboriginal population was 64 percent of the average total income of Canadians (Mendelson, 2006). Within Winnipeg, this figure was 66 percent.

Many Aboriginal families live in poverty. Although there is no standard definition of poverty, Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs (LICOs), are often used as poverty indicators. Within Canada's Census Metropolitan Areas in 2001, 37 percent of the total population lived in low-income households (Hallet, 2006). Among Aboriginal households within Winnipeg, this figure was 47.7 percent. In Winnipeg's inner city, with its high concentration of Aboriginal female-headed single-parent families, 71.3 percent of Aboriginal households were receiving less than the LICO (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004).

These disparities in socio-economic status are a significant barrier for Aboriginal peoples. There is a documented link between better education, better jobs, and better income. Higher educational attainment greatly improves employment and income prospects (Hull, 2001, 2005). However, poverty is correlated with lower levels of educational attainment. "In short, a vicious circle is created: low socio-economic status correlates with low educational attainment, and low educational attainment correlates with lower levels of employment and incomes" (CCPA, 2005).

### ***Health***

Related to the disparities in socio-economic circumstances are disparities in health. Despite the fact that the Aboriginal population is younger than the general population, Aboriginal peoples have poorer health and lower life expectancy (Statistics Canada, 2003a; 2003d). Information on self-rated health status indicates that for individuals between the ages of 25 and 64 years, the proportion of Aboriginal people who rated their health as poor was approximately double than that of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2003d). As in the country as a whole, the incidence of osteoporosis, diabetes, AIDS/HIV, respiratory

diseases, tuberculosis, cardiovascular disease, fetal alcohol syndrome, substance abuse, smoking, and suicide is higher among the Aboriginal population in Manitoba than the non-Aboriginal population in this province (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004; Hallett, 2006).

Educational attainment has been identified as a determinant of health with higher levels of education being associated with better health (Levin, 2005; Turnkey Management Consulting, 2006). Poor health, however, serves as a barrier to education. For example, research indicates that poor health impacts children's ability to attend school and to concentrate on learning (Tipper & Avard, 1999). Poor health would similarly impact adult learners. In addition, adult learners with children may be unable to attend school or may have difficulty concentrating when their own children are sick.

### ***Neighbourhood-Related***

Within Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods, residents face a number of social challenges, most of which are rooted in poverty. In addition to posing barriers to learning, these challenges threaten the personal safety and well-being of the residents.

Aboriginal residents of the inner city identify the challenges in their neighbourhoods posed by drugs, the sex trade, gangs, and violence (CCPA, 2005; Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). The large incomes that can be earned through the drug trade are appealing to youth who feel that opportunities for their futures are lacking. Young women, most of who become involved in the sex trade during their youth, are lured into sexual exploitation because of poverty and the threat of homelessness (Seshia, 2005). The drug trade and the sex trade are associated with high levels of gang activity and gang violence. Children are actively recruited in these gangs. Gang violence creates much fear among residents for themselves and for their children (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). The need of residents to focus on basic safety and survival challenges the ability to focus on learning and future gains that could be realized through educational attainment.

Housing is also a challenging issue for Aboriginal people in Winnipeg's inner city. Most Aboriginal families live in rented housing and have incomes so low that they are not likely to become homeowners (Hallett, 2006). Reporting on housing conditions in Winnipeg's inner city,

the CCPA (2005) reported that much of the available housing is aging and in need of repair and that there is a lack of good quality low-income housing. Crowding is also prevalent (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004) and impacts the availability of space in which to study (Jones, et al., 2002). Poor housing conditions erode self-esteem and self-confidence and residents in the inner city frequently move to search for better housing (CCPA, 2005). This contributes to neighborhood instability and impacts educational opportunities for both children and adults.

Finally, transportation within the inner city can be difficult. Travelling to and from school, particularly if stops for childcare need to be arranged, can be cumbersome. In many cases private vehicle ownership is beyond the financial reach of inner city residents and even the cost of public transportation may be prohibitive. Sheldrick (2004) noted that transportation systems need to be improved to permit inner city residents to access educational resources.

### ***Childcare***

Childcare also poses a barrier to Aboriginal adult learners, particularly for Aboriginal women (Hardes, 2006). Within Winnipeg, single-parent households accounted for 14.9 percent of non-Aboriginal family households but for 43.5 percent of Aboriginal family households (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). Women head most of these households. Teen pregnancy rates within Winnipeg's Aboriginal population are up to five times that of the general population (Hallett, 2006). Within Winnipeg, 13.2 percent of Aboriginal youth aged 15 to 24 are single parents and 90 percent of these are female. Twenty five percent of female Aboriginal youth leave school because they are pregnant or need to look after children (Hallett, 2006) and many try to pursue their education as adults (CCPA, 2005).

Within the City of Winnipeg, there is a shortage of licensed childcare spaces, with only enough spaces to accommodate one in six children (Childcare Coalition of Manitoba, 2004). The Childcare Coalition of Manitoba also notes that the spaces that are available are unequally distributed across the city. There are more childcare spaces available in higher-income neighbourhoods than in the inner city. While there may be people in the inner city who will care for children in their homes, financial assistance is not provided to pay for such private childcare arrangements. There is also no monitoring of the quality of private childcare



arrangements. Families in the inner-city have inadequate access to childcare, thus limiting mother's ability to participate in education and employment training programs.

### ***Formal Education System***

Clearly early experiences with formal education in the residential school system were not positive. Unfortunately, even those Aboriginal peoples who escaped attendance in the residential school system have not had positive educational experiences. In many instances they have participated in lower quality education and are not exposed to a curriculum that acknowledges the contribution of Aboriginal culture to society or that creates positive images of Aboriginal people (Battiste, 2000; Hards, 2006). Public education systems have continued to attempt to assimilate Aboriginal learners. Little Aboriginal representation within the school system exists. There are few Aboriginal teachers and even fewer Aboriginal school board members (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). Children have been educated without regard or respect for their cultures, languages, or life experiences. Aboriginal students continue to experience overt forms of racism (Minister's National Working Group on Education, 2002; Silver, Mallett, Greene, & Simard; 2002). Mainstream Canadian educational institutions focus almost exclusively on Eurocentric curriculums and ignore Aboriginal knowledge and pedagogy (Curwen Doige, 2003). As Battiste (2000) notes, "this education system is a form of cognitive imperialism" (p. 193).

Mainstream education systems fail to consider traditional Aboriginal values and holistic worldviews (Curwen Doige, 2003; Lambe, 2003; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). For example, mainstream educational systems are based on competition, individualism and futurism, all of which conflict with traditional Aboriginal values of cooperation, sharing, group identity, and an orientation to the present and past (Hards, 2006). Curwen Doige (2003) contrasts mainstream approaches to learning which are secular, fragmented, neutral/objective, and which seek to discover definitive truth to Aboriginal approaches to learning which are spiritual, holistic, experiential/subjective, and transformative. Within mainstream education systems, primary attention is paid to learning as a cognitive process, involving the ability to recite a common body of factual, objective knowledge (Lambe, 2003). Little (if any) attention is paid to the

incorporation of more holistic perspectives of learning within which learning is not viewed as consisting of only cognitive mechanisms. From an Aboriginal perspective, learning is a process based on the interconnectedness of the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of human beings as well as the relationship between the individual, the Creator and the environment (Antone, 2003; Curwen Doige, 2003; NADC, 2002). The lack of consideration paid to Aboriginal values and worldviews within formal mainstream education systems is an impediment to Aboriginal student success.

Mainstream educational institutions also fail to take sufficient account of the needs of adult learners with family responsibilities. As previously mentioned, many Aboriginal households in the inner city are single-parent households headed by women. Hayes and Flannery (2000) describe “the demands of greedy institutions” (p. 47) and explain that deadlines for tests, exams, and papers pose obstacles for women who need to balance school responsibilities with family responsibilities. Both the family and the educational institution impose demanding and conflicting commitments of time and energy of women.

### ***Alternatives***

There are no simple solutions for addressing the barriers to education among Aboriginal adults described in the previous section. Changes to formal education systems are needed so that existing socio-economic disparities can be reduced in the future. There is also a need to explore alternatives that can empower Aboriginal adults to overcome barriers to their education and employment. Informal learning opportunities are one such alternative strategy.

Although the concept was not new, the term “informal learning” was introduced by Malcolm Knowles in the 1950s to describe learning that occurs outside of formal education programs offered through established educational institutions (Smith, 2002). Although informal learning takes place in a variety of settings, it is frequently discussed in terms of learning that occurs in workplace or community organization settings. It is learning that is integrated with work and daily routines. Informal learning can be described as “learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and non-institutionalized” (Marsick & Volpe, 1999, p. 4) and learning that accounts for as much as 80 percent of all learning efforts (Tough, 2002). While within

formal educational settings, control is with the educator, informal learning is self-directed, emerging from specific learner needs (Leslie, Kosmahl Aring, & Brand, 1997).

Leslie, Kosmahl Aring, and Brand (1997) describe the benefits of informal learning. In addition to learning specific workplace knowledge and skills, informal workplace learning provides workers with an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in other areas. These include intrapersonal skills such as problem-solving, creativity and coping with stress; interpersonal skills such as communication and cooperation; and skills and knowledge related to the workplace culture such as acceptable behaviour, and behaviour and ideas that may lead to workplace advancement. Informal learning provides a means for organizations to meet the goals of task accomplishment. Equally important, individuals within the workplace are able to meet the needs for personal achievement and development, recognition, belonging and acceptance, and increased financial security via the opportunity to advance in terms of income earning potential.

Within Winnipeg's inner-city, a number of community-based agencies are involved in neighbourhood and employment development activities (Loewen, 2003). Some of these agencies focus on the Aboriginal community within Winnipeg's inner-city and work to address existing barriers to education and employment. Culturally relevant services and programs with attention paid to Aboriginal customs, languages, and holistic worldviews are provided (Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). In addition to providing a variety of supports and services for residents of the communities in which they are located, community-based agencies provide residents with work and volunteer experience (CCPA, 2005) and are therefore an important avenue for informal learning.

Community-based agencies and organizations have distinctive strengths (Loewen, 2003). Because they are community-based, they are geographically accessible to neighbourhood residents. Because these agencies provide informal, supportive environments they are also socially accessible. Community based-agencies and organizations also provide a holistic and flexible approach to addressing the needs of community members and offer a wide array of programs and services either within each specific agency or in partnership with other local agencies. In addition, the philosophy of these agencies is to build capacity and empower

the people who use their services. Employees and volunteers are recruited directly from the specific community served by the agency.

There are multiple benefits associated with the practice of hiring local people. As well as opportunities for training and promotion, local residents employed by inner-city community-based organizations gain experience with a workplace setting, specialized knowledge related to a particular position, income, recognition and validation of their strengths, and mentoring relationships. The effect on high-poverty neighbourhoods over time is significant. Solutions to the problems within Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods are best derived from those within those neighbourhoods (CCPA, 2005). Solutions are most effective when people in the community are involved, participate in decision making, and when they are hired for jobs that are available. Instead of relying on "experts" from outside of the community, experienced and trained local people who know the history, realities and future direction of their community are making the important decisions.

It would seem that community-based agencies have the potential to play an important role in helping Aboriginal adult learners to overcome some of the barriers to education and employment that they face. Analyzing the literature on a variety of employment development strategies, Loewen, Silver, August, Bruning, Mackenzie, and Meyerson (2005) found that the most effective strategies are those that are comprehensive, networked, and that work to alter features of the labour market system that do not serve disadvantaged workers. Prospective employees need to be provided with a variety of services including basic education, job-skill training, job-readiness training, and support services. The best employment development strategies include formal networks of community-based organizations, educational institutions, government, unions, and employers. Hiring practices and policies can be changed so that qualifications that are not actually required to perform a job are not prerequisites for being hired. The opportunities for adult learners provided in community-based agencies are consistent with these strategies.

It must also be recognized that while community-based agencies have the potential to fill important education and employment development functions, the agencies themselves may face challenges in their efforts to provide these things. Many community based agencies and

organizations do not have predictable funding (CCPA, 2005) and the lack of long-term, core funding threatens existing programs as well as the ability of agencies to develop opportunities for community members. The high needs of the communities may also challenge these agencies.

Aboriginal adults face a number of barriers to learning within mainstream formal education systems, and, as a result, experience difficulty securing adequate employment. Despite the important contributions being made by community-based agencies, research that actually examines these agencies is scant. There is a lack of data on adult learning initiatives for Aboriginal adults in high-poverty urban neighbourhoods. Local agency data on adult learning centres (formal high school upgrading) indicates that they do have substantial personal and employment effects on participants (personal communication with E. Thompson, Co-Director, Urban Circle Training Centre, Winnipeg, MB, October 12, 2005; Aboriginal Task Group, 2004). Documented outcomes of formal adult learning opportunities include confidence and self-esteem as well as a more secure financial future (CCPA, 2005; Silver, Klyne, & Simard, 2003). Research on community-based adult education programs in other countries has found that these programs benefit not only individual learners, but also contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the entire community within which they are located (Balatti & Falk, 2002). However, we could find no published literature on informal adult learning practices within Aboriginal community-based human service organizations. There is a lack of information on the experiences of Aboriginal adult learners who are employed in community-based organizations. There is also a lack of information on the benefits of such arrangements to individuals, agencies, and communities as well as the challenges that community-based agencies may face in providing informal learning opportunities.

## Method

This research project was guided by the principles of participatory research. “Participatory research attempts to generate knowledge about social relations and social change more democratically by fostering dialogue and equality between researcher and researched” (Petras & Porpora, 1993, p. 109). Participatory research has two main goals: 1) to include people within a population or community as experts in the area; and 2) to give them a voice through which to convey their experiences (Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992). Specifically, we used a modified version of an approach, called the mutual engagement model, in which researchers collaborate with residents to carry out social research that generates results that can be used to improve the condition of the community (Petras & Porpora, 1993).

The research was developed and implemented under the direction of an advisory group consisting of an agency director, a university researcher, a graduate student, local residents and undergraduate university students. An interview schedule and participant recruitment plan was developed collaboratively within the advisory group. The purpose of the research was to identify the benefits and challenges of adult learners involved either as volunteers or paid staff within community- and culturally-based human services organizations in Winnipeg’s inner city. In addition, their connection to the agency as well as past and current employment or educational opportunities were explored. Senior staff members who have a unique experience of the needs and challenges of hiring locally were also interviewed to identify the key factors involved in informal adult education. (All interview questions are included in an appendix). It was decided that members of the research team would approach local agencies to request participation.

The advisory group decided to select agencies that were: located in the North End, provided human services to North End residents, and had a commitment to hiring from the geographic and cultural community. Because of their experience and success in hiring from the local community, the three largest local employers were approached. All directors agreed to participate, and gave consent for poster advertisements to be placed throughout their workplaces.

Within each agency individual interviews were conducted with front-line staff; those data were analyzed using the concept mapping method. Directors and program managers from each agency were also interviewed, and those data were analyzed using content analysis.

### ***Concept Mapping***

According to Trochim (1989), there are five major components to the concept mapping process. The first step is the generation of statements in response to a particular question asked of a specified group of participants. Second, the statements are edited for clarity, and redundant items are removed. Third, all of the statements are presented to each participant who sorts them into groups. Fourth, two types of statistical analyses are applied to the groupings that the participants provide: multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis. For example, in response to the question: “which is your favourite community to visit?” responses may include: Edmonton (person 1), Winnipeg (person 2), Toronto (person 3), Churchill (person 4), Opaskwayak Cree Nation (person 5), and the North End of Winnipeg (person 6). The same six participants would each be provided with all statements and asked to group them together. One person may group Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto into one group (large cities), Churchill and Opaskwayak into another group (northern communities), and the North End on its own (neighbourhood). The groupings provided by each participant are analyzed by software called the Concept System (Trochim, 1987). The program “averages” the groupings and describes how often the statements are grouped together by participants. The results are in the form of a “concept map” that is a graphic representation of the statements as the participants collectively grouped them.

### ***Content Analysis***

The content analysis of the notes from interviews was conducted in accordance with Creswell’s (2003) procedures, including 1) arrangement of data into types, 2) reading through the data to get a general sense of the meaning, 3) initial coding of the information into chunks and labelling into categories, 4) detailed description about the people, places and events, and

generation of codes for use with a small number of categories, 5) discussion of each theme and, finally 6) interpretation of the data.



## Results

### Perspectives of Staff

Individual interviews were conducted until a point of redundancy. After five consecutive interviews with no novel responses across participants, data collection ceased. A total of 44 individuals participated in one individual interview that included six questions. Participants were residents of the local community and employed by a local human services agency for less than 1 to 21 years. The average length of employment with their current agencies was approximately 5 years. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 67, with an average age of 41. The majority (31/44) were female. Including their current positions, participants had collectively held 108 different jobs within their current agencies. Positions ranged from casual to full-time, and included janitorial, secretarial, community development, teaching, casework, program coordination, as well as financial and managerial positions. Together they worked with the children, youth, adults and elders of the community.

Participants were asked at the conclusion of the interview if they would be interested in participating in a grouping task at a later date. All expressed interest, and attended one of four group sorting meetings held at different locations in the local area. Participants at the sorting meetings were asked to examine the responses to a particular question, and to group them together into concepts. Each participant grouped together responses for 1-3 different questions.

The following are the results of the concept mapping procedure for each of six questions asked of participants. Each unique response to the question appears on the concept map, indicated by a number that appears in the associated table. The concepts are based on the combined groupings of responses provided by each participant. The bridging index is a value between 0 and 1, which expresses how often a particular response was grouped together with others near to it on the concept map. Low bridging index values (0.00-0.25) indicate that a particular response was grouped only with those close to it on the map, while a high value

(0.75-1.00) indicates that the response was grouped together with others in different regions of the map. These values are the result of the multidimensional scaling analysis procedure.

### ***Question 1***

The concept map appears in Figure 1. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 1. Participants grouped the 93 statements into nine concepts. The numbers within each concept refer to a particular statement made by a participant in response to the question. The concepts were formed based on how often each statement was grouped together with others near to it on the map. Statements closer together on the map indicated that those statements were grouped together more often by the participants. Statements far apart on the map indicate that those statements were grouped together less often by participants. The bridging index is a value between 0 and 1 that is based on the multidimensional scaling analysis that shows how often a statement “bridged” or was grouped together by participants with statements further from it on the map. Low bridging indices (0.00-0.25) indicate that the statement was grouped together by participants only with other statements close to it on the map. A high value (0.75-1.00) indicates that the statement was grouped together by participants with statements far away from it on the map. Participants reported that the benefits to working in their own community were: having a sense of belonging, helping each other out, having the trust of their neighbours, knowing local realities, being part of established networks, building from within the community, shared values and similar experiences, as well as contributing to supportive organizations in the area.

## What are the benefits of working in your community?

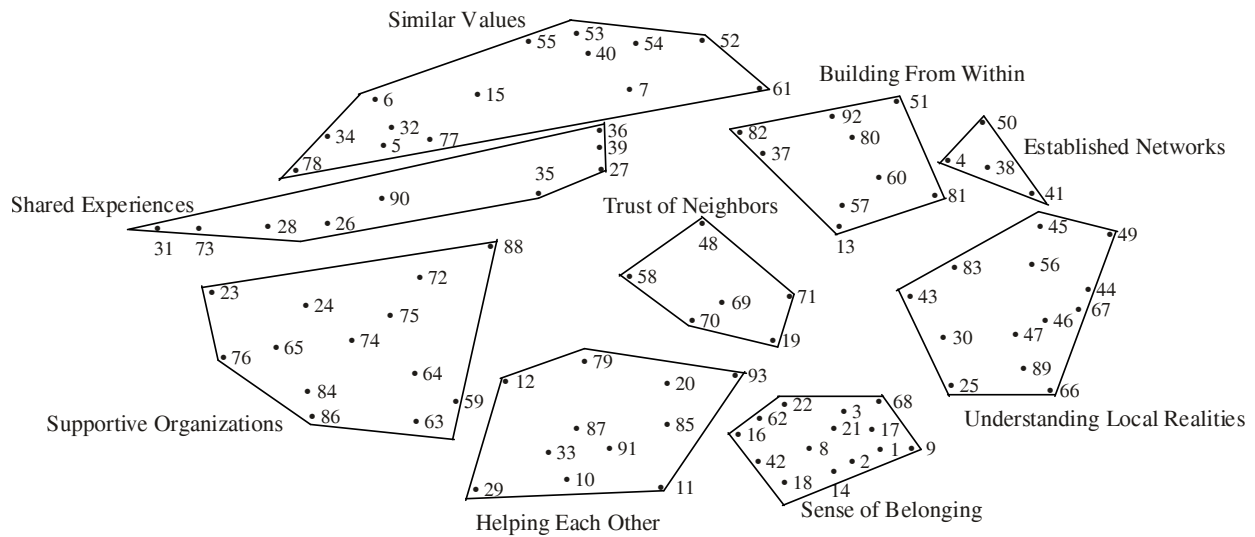


Figure 1

**Table 1**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Sense of Belonging	0.06
17. feel at ease	0.00
68. people know me personally because they see me at community functions	0.00
3. able to work in a community that I was born and raised in	0.01
62. nice feeling when people say hi outside of work	0.01
21. get to help out where I grew up	0.03
42. it's like working with family	0.04
9. can identify with people here	0.05
16. equal to one another	0.05
1. a feeling of giving back to my own community	0.08
18. feels like home here	0.09
22. get to meet a lot of people who understand	0.09
8. building relationships with neighbours	0.10
14. don't feel so different	0.12
2. ability to grow within the community	0.18
Cluster #2 – Helping Each Other	0.25
93. you know people and they know you	0.02

79.	staff are very understanding if there is are family issues	0.11
20.	get along with everyone	0.12
85.	the community people are not afraid of local staff	0.12
87.	the people are friendly	0.16
91.	welcome anybody who walks through the door	0.17
11.	community members see us as a family unit	0.25
12.	people respect this place	0.27
33.	having daily contact with people	0.37
10.	close to home	0.42
29.	have much more invested than outsiders	0.71

---

Cluster #3 – Trust of Neighbours		0.09
71.	people with huge strengths that we can learn from	0.05
69.	people living in the community will work harder	0.06
70.	people trust me enough to leave their children with me	0.06
19.	form meaningful relations with people	0.07
58.	lots of stuff going on	0.12
48.	knowing that you help people	0.15

---

Cluster #4 – Understanding Local Realities		0.28
43.	know resources around here	0.14
25.	know what is happening around here	0.16
66.	people feel safer in the community	0.20
47.	know what the community needs	0.20
89.	trust would take a little longer with someone outside the community	0.21
83.	taking advantage of the resources in the community	0.22
30.	have the same cultural and spiritual values	0.23
46.	know what is going on in the community	0.25
56.	life is about relationships	0.32
67.	people from the community will do what is appropriate for community	0.33
44.	know the people and what they are capable of	0.42
45.	know the risks and things to avoid	0.44
49.	learning from the community	0.51

---

Cluster #5 – Established Networks		0.44
4.	advocate for community members	0.42
38.	helping out all sorts of people	0.42
41.	interaction with agencies	0.44
50.	learn about issues from other perspectives	0.50

---

Cluster #6 – Building From Within		0.33
13.	different programs are offered	0.21
57.	listening and understanding	0.22
37.	support and nurture community	0.26

60.	making a difference	0.31
82.	support to build stronger relationships	0.31
81.	strong network	0.37
80.	strengths-based approach	0.40
51.	learn from grassroots people	0.43
92.	work with grassroots people	0.50

---

Cluster #7 – Similar Values 0.42

53.	learn about medicines such as sweet grass, sage, tobacco and purposes	0.25
55.	learning about culture is most important	0.27
61.	mentor next generation	0.33
54.	learn about the seven teachings	0.33
7.	being a leader	0.34
77.	share gifts	0.35
40.	influence parents to learn culture (eg. smudge)	0.36
15.	empower others	0.39
52.	learn about effects residential school on me	0.40
6.	becoming a positive role model through traditional teachings	0.45
32.	having a voice	0.52
5.	be proud to walk your talk	0.53
34.	having Native knowledge	0.66
78.	something I always wanted to do	0.66

---

Cluster #8 – Shared Experiences 0.50

36.	helping people access local agencies and supports	0.21
39.	identify problems people here face daily	0.23
27.	have life experience	0.31
35.	helping eliminate negative behaviour in the community	0.36
90.	very few criteria for services	0.41
26.	have been where they are	0.55
28.	have more confidence in myself and others	0.61
73.	really enjoy working with my own people	0.83
31.	working here is easier than at a non-Aboriginal agency	1.00

---

Cluster #9 – Supportive Organizations 0.44

88.	to provide support to struggling people	0.19
72.	provide good support network for kids who need it the most	0.26
75.	relying on each other	0.28
59.	make community safer for the people	0.35
74.	relationships are above other issues	0.41
63.	no dress code	0.42
64.	organization allows people to take ownership in the community	0.44
24.	gives the kids an opportunity to see things run well	0.49
86.	the environment is great	0.49

65.	organization has a good and strong reputation	0.51
84.	the center is a positive thing	0.52
76.	see the organization in a positive way	0.67
23.	gives people a second chance	0.69

**Question 2**

The concept map appears in Figure 2. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 2. Participants grouped the 90 statements into 12 concepts. Participants reported that the challenges of working in their own community were: the lack of privacy, the depth of need, how their work affects them personally, maintaining healthy boundaries, knowing how best to be helpful, addressing structural issues, meeting various needs, dealing with substance-related problems, gang activity, negative outside influences, working with government, and working with limited funding.

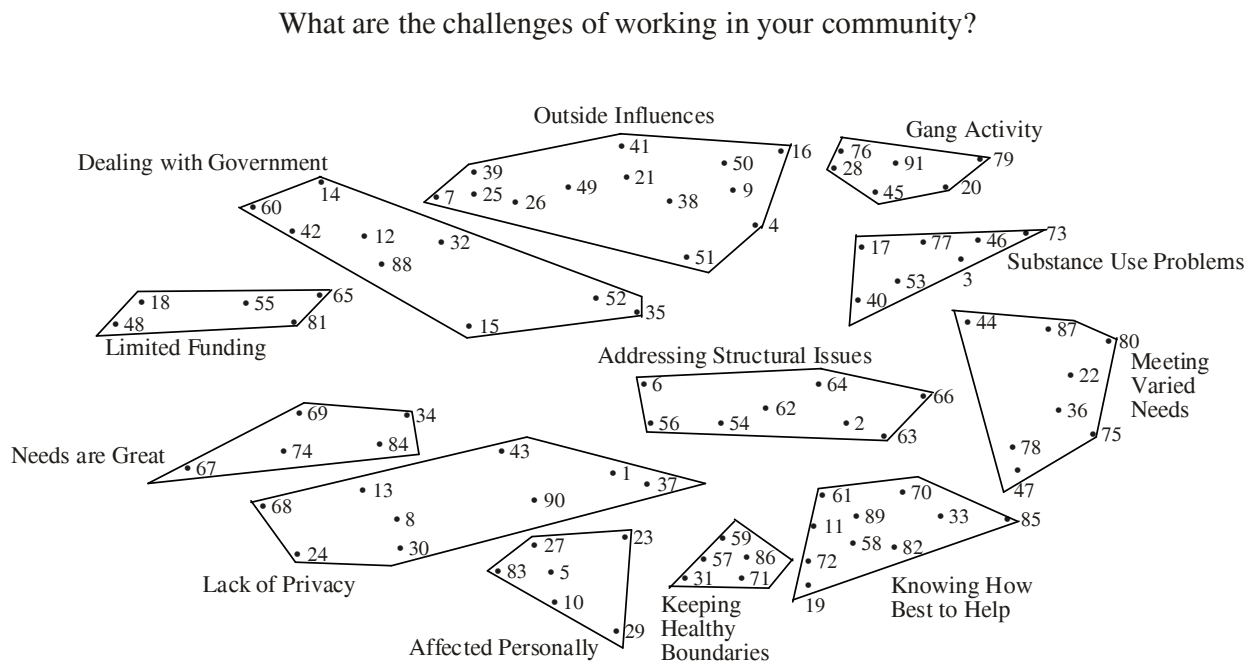


Figure 2

**Table 2**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Lack of Privacy	0.40
1. a lot of people need help	0.11
37. see somebody I know in the wrong place at the wrong time	0.19
90. you want to be there to help anyone	0.26
43. lack of personal identity	0.31
8. being a healthy role model	0.38
13. concern about staff safety	0.43
30. getting others to work together	0.50
68. sometimes I don't have money to give	0.65
24. everybody knows your business	0.77
Cluster #2 – Needs are Great	0.65
34. healing that needs to be done with little resources	0.43
84. when they get denied services	0.47
69. sometimes parents get angry easily	0.66
74. try to accommodate all different nationalities/cultures	0.72
67. sometimes I don't have bus tickets	0.97
Cluster #3 – Affected Personally	0.19
23. engaging people and keeping them engaged	0.07
29. getting attached	0.11
5. am I a friend or a staff member?	0.21
10. can't forget the tragedies that people have discussed with me	0.22
27. finding balance but still needing to address the issues	0.22
83. when something bad happens I feel it personally	0.30
Cluster #4 – Keeping Healthy Boundaries	0.08
59. people think I had something to do with them not getting service	0.03
71. you get caught in the middle of a situation	0.06
57. people tell me things but don't want anyone else to know	0.09
31. getting people to trust	0.10
86. work-home boundary issues cause conflict with my family	0.10
Cluster #5 – Knowing How Best to Help	0.19
58. people think I can get them ahead in society	0.07
11. can't help them other than being a friend	0.09
61. seeing people struggle and I can't really help them	0.11
19. don't want to come off as Mrs. Know It All	0.12
72. tempted to intervene in situations I see after work hours	0.12

89.	you never know exactly how you can help somebody	0.13
82.	when I don't have answers	0.21
70.	there is tension	0.26
33.	hard to help because they're used to doing it on their own	0.29
85.	when you get to know people it is hard to know where to draw the line	0.46

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Cluster #6 – Addressing Structural Issues		0.15
56.	people not used to getting help	0.04
54.	people all have different wants and needs	0.07
62.	seeing the broader scope	0.12
64.	social issues are challenging	0.14
2.	a problem if you're White	0.15
6.	attendance	0.15
63.	seems hopeless when you are trying to get a head start	0.19
66.	some people not supportive when family members need help	0.36

---

Cluster #7 – Meeting Varied Needs		0.57
44.	language barriers	0.37
78.	walking on a tightrope	0.38
47.	my family gets into trouble and I get implicated	0.51
36.	I lost a lot of friends	0.59
22.	emotional pain	0.61
80.	get scared for the kids	0.67
75.	try to get them involved other programs	0.69
87.	working with the children who have experienced serious issues	0.73

---

Cluster #8 – Substance Use Problems		0.25
77.	violence	0.18
17.	dealing with crack heads	0.19
40.	isolation	0.23
46.	crack houses	0.27
3.	abuse	0.28
53.	parents losing kids to the system	0.28
73.	there are children 13 years old doing prostitution	0.30

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Cluster #9 – Gang Activity		0.07
76.	turf things with gangs	0.00
28.	get gangs off the streets	0.02
91.	young gang members	0.03
45.	lights broken where there are prostitutes	0.05
20.	drug issues	0.10
79.	watch kids grow up sell drugs and get into gangs	0.19

---



Cluster #10 – Outside Influences	0.18
50. not enough police	0.03
16. crime	0.07
21. emergency call response time is slow	0.08
4. alcohol problem because bars so close	0.10
38. if we were White, the police would come faster	0.10
51. not enough recognition that communities have own solutions	0.12
49. no new parks for more than 30 years	0.13
9. business-suit people who take advantage of the children (johns)	0.16
25. family bonds that were destroyed by Residential schools	0.18
26. fetal alcohol spectrum disorder	0.32
41. kids not going to school	0.33
7. attention deficit disorder	0.35
39. inner-city communities get taken advantage of	0.37
<hr/>	
Cluster #11 – Dealing with Government	0.45
35. family involved in stuff that isn't good	0.20
32. government does not look at nurturing the community	0.21
52. painful amount of poverty	0.23
15. confronting the issues that happen in the community	0.27
12. city hall does not care about people here	0.35
14. conflicting government systems	0.47
88. working with the foster parents to help them keep the kids safe	0.47
42. lack of parenting skills	0.86
60. seeing kids apprehended	0.96
<hr/>	
Cluster #12 – Limited Funding	0.79
81. we're overcharged and under serviced	0.60
65. some go back to the reserve	0.61
18. dollars attached to programs	0.83
55. people are like crabs in bucket	0.90
48. having strong financial managers	1.00

### **Question 3**

The concept map appears in Figure 3. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 3. Participants grouped the 49 statements into five concepts. Participants reported that they became connected to the agency they were employed through coming in for service, volunteering there, knowing people who worked there, applying for an advertised job opening, or following their own life path.

## How did you get connected to the agency?

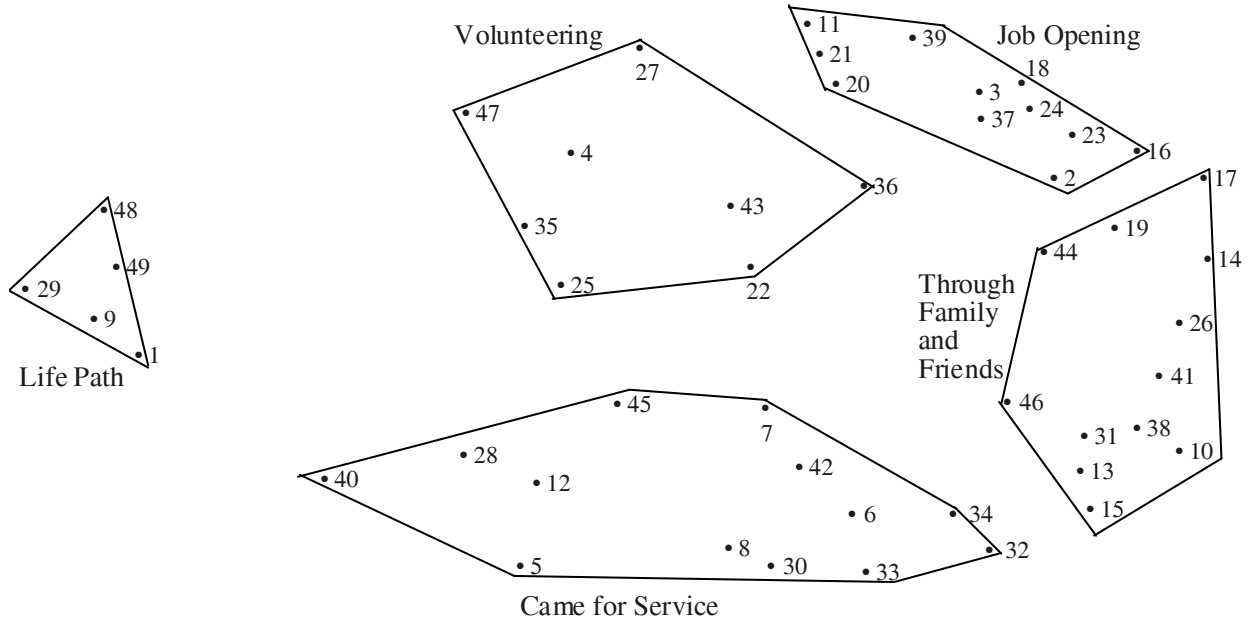


Figure 3

**Table 3**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Life Path	0.85
29. part of my healing journey	0.73
1. was introduced to my culture	0.80
9. ex-gang member, ex-addict and wanted to change my life around	0.81
49. life experience	0.92
48. wanted to change views of the community and make of a living as well	1.00
Cluster #2 – Job Opening	0.09
3. applied a few times then got hired	0.00
18. got an interview and was hired the next day	0.02
23. was in a job preparation program at a nearby agency	0.03
24. was looking to change jobs and applied here	0.04
37. part-time position opened up	0.05
16. full-time job opened up	0.09

2.	another student was working at the agency	0.13
21.	got a university degree	0.14
20.	had worked in government and knew about this agency	0.15
39.	saw the opportunity in the paper	0.17
11.	finished college program and came looking here for work	0.21

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Cluster #3 – Volunteering		0.39
22.	started out as a member of a community advisory board for the agency	0.14
43.	through a board member	0.22
36.	was on assistance myself and looking for work	0.28
25.	went door to door canvassing to get this centre started	0.44
4.	asked to drive van and stayed on	0.47
35.	staff came to me and told me to be here next day to volunteer	0.48
27.	went to the orientation	0.49
47.	agency reps came to my class asking for volunteers	0.62

---

Cluster #4 – Came for Service		0.28
34.	as a kid I came here for a dance	0.14
32.	my kids used to come here	0.15
6.	brought grandchildren to this program	0.15
42.	started volunteering and then started working here	0.17
33.	my kids used to go to school in close by	0.19
7.	came here to access services	0.25
8.	came with sister and sat around and checked everything out	0.29
30.	lived down the street	0.38
45.	very well known throughout the community	0.49
12.	first got connected when originally opened	0.51
28.	in order for kids to stay in day-care needed to volunteer	0.56
5.	been in the community the last 15 years	0.60
40.	sense of family and sense of community	0.91

---

Cluster #5 – Through Family and Friends		0.27
46.	visited the drop-in with other community people	0.15
31.	met somebody who worked here	0.17
19.	had to do a practicum and I asked to be here	0.19
13.	friend of mine told me to come here and have coffee	0.21
44.	through work with another local agency	0.21
15.	friends in the community	0.27
41.	sister used to work here	0.27
14.	friend told me to put in application	0.28
10.	family works here	0.35
38.	right across the street from home at the time	0.37
17.	got a job with them as a casual worker	0.37
26.	went to the drop-in centre when my mom started working here	0.39

**Question 4**

The concept map appears in Figure 4. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 4. Participants grouped the 84 statements into five concepts. Participants reported that their employment and education experiences before getting their present positions included: formal education, life experience, helping others, gaining cultural knowledge, and training that they received on the job.

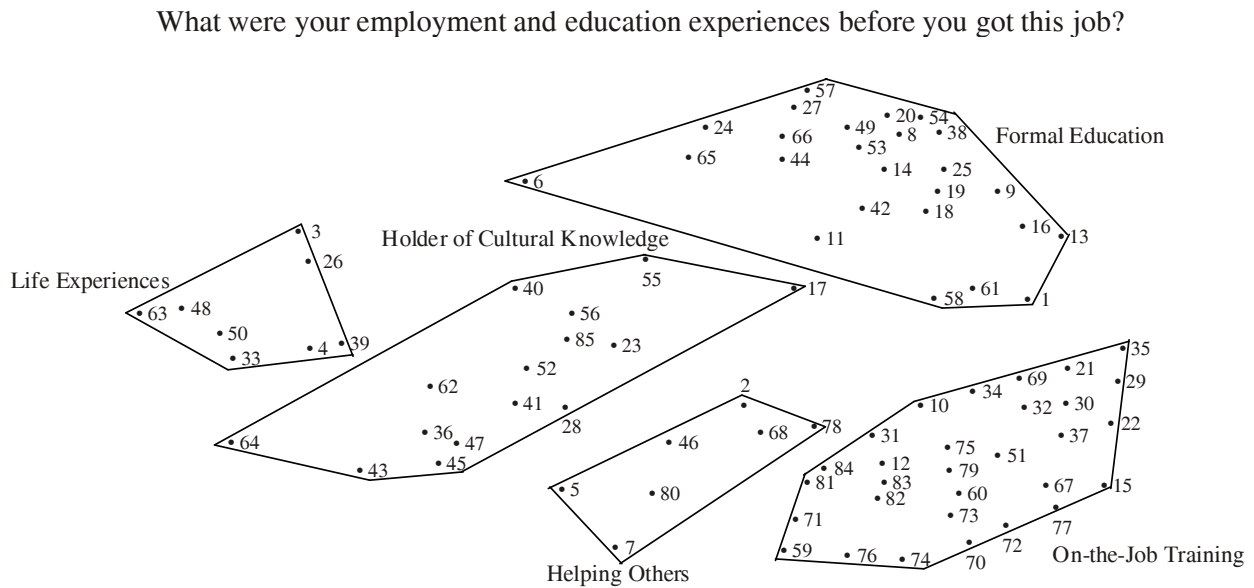


Figure 4

**Table 4**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Formal Education	0.32
25. got a certificate through continuing education	0.00
57. upgrading for grade 11	0.01
49. some college and university courses	0.01
14. completed grade 12	0.02
27. grade 12 as mature student	0.02
20. diploma at community college	0.06
38. master's degree	0.12
66. school for training program	0.19

53.	two year typing course	0.19
54.	computer skills training	0.20
8.	bachelor's degree	0.21
24.	finished grade 8 on reserve	0.29
44.	report writing	0.33
19.	course on fetal alcohol syndrome	0.40
18.	courses on drug and alcohol effects	0.41
65.	local adult education centre	0.42
9.	business learning opportunity program	0.47
42.	practicum	0.48
58.	volunteer keynote speaker	0.55
11.	child and family worker training	0.55
61.	sessional instructor at university	0.56
1.	agency trained me for the position	0.57
16.	cooking course	0.58
13.	completed a conflict resolution program	0.64
6.	attended residential school	0.77

---

Cluster #2 – Helping Others 0.58

78.	worked for Aboriginal agencies	0.30
68.	worked as a protection worker on my reserve	0.33
2.	always been a counsellor	0.43
46.	respite work	0.51
80.	worked in a community where was one of the few sober people	0.72
7.	babysitter	0.87
5.	athlete	0.89

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Cluster #3 – Holder of Cultural Knowledge 0.59

41.	Pow Wow dancer	0.39
28.	helped coordinate local Pow Wow	0.41
52.	teaching culture to own people	0.41
36.	leading ceremonies	0.47
85.	years of experience with residential kids	0.47
23.	family group conferencing	0.48
17.	counselling training workshops through reserve	0.49
47.	run sweat lodges	0.50
55.	trained cross-cultural awareness	0.56
40.	on the council of a national Aboriginal organization	0.62
45.	residential group homes	0.64
56.	travelled across Canada to detention centres for youth	0.67
62.	addictions counsellor	0.89
43.	raised 8 kids	0.92
64.	was sent to farms of relatives of the nuns and priest	1.00

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Cluster #4 – Life Experiences	0.76
63. alcoholic	0.47
48. sober for 12 years	0.48
50. son was born with FASD	0.66
3. as a kid friends always asked me for advice	0.81
26. got a lot of responsibility because of what I had done with my life	0.81
33. illegal activities	0.89
39. no work experience	0.97
4. as a woman had lots of work to do	0.98

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Cluster #5 – On-the-Job Training	0.27
81. worked in forestry	0.14
67. worked with the city	0.15
75. worked at non-Aboriginal for-profit organization	0.16
79. worked for senior citizens	0.16
72. worked at a museum	0.16
51. supervise night shift	0.17
77. worked at a deli	0.17
60. waitress	0.18
31. hotel cleaning	0.19
76. worked at non-profits	0.20
73. worked at a news centre	0.20
15. construction worker	0.21
71. worked at a health facility	0.21
70. worked as nurses aid	0.22
82. worked with provincial programs	0.22
32. hotel supervisor	0.23
12. cleaned homes	0.23
29. hired by a government agency	0.24
83. worked with the police	0.25
34. inner-city community centre staff	0.26
10. camp coordinator	0.27
37. manual labour jobs	0.29
22. Executive Director	0.31
30. hospitality industry	0.32
84. working since I was a youth	0.34
74. worked at drug store	0.34
69. worked as an interviewer for a research project	0.37
21. employment counsellor	0.43
35. joined the armed forces	0.66
59. volunteered with government	0.69

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**Question 5**

The concept map appears in Figure 5. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 5. Participants grouped the 81 statements into eight concepts. Participants reported that the employment and education opportunities they had in their current positions included: planning for services, promotion within the agency, specific skill development, enhanced self-confidence, cultural awareness, teaching others, workshops as well as certified training.

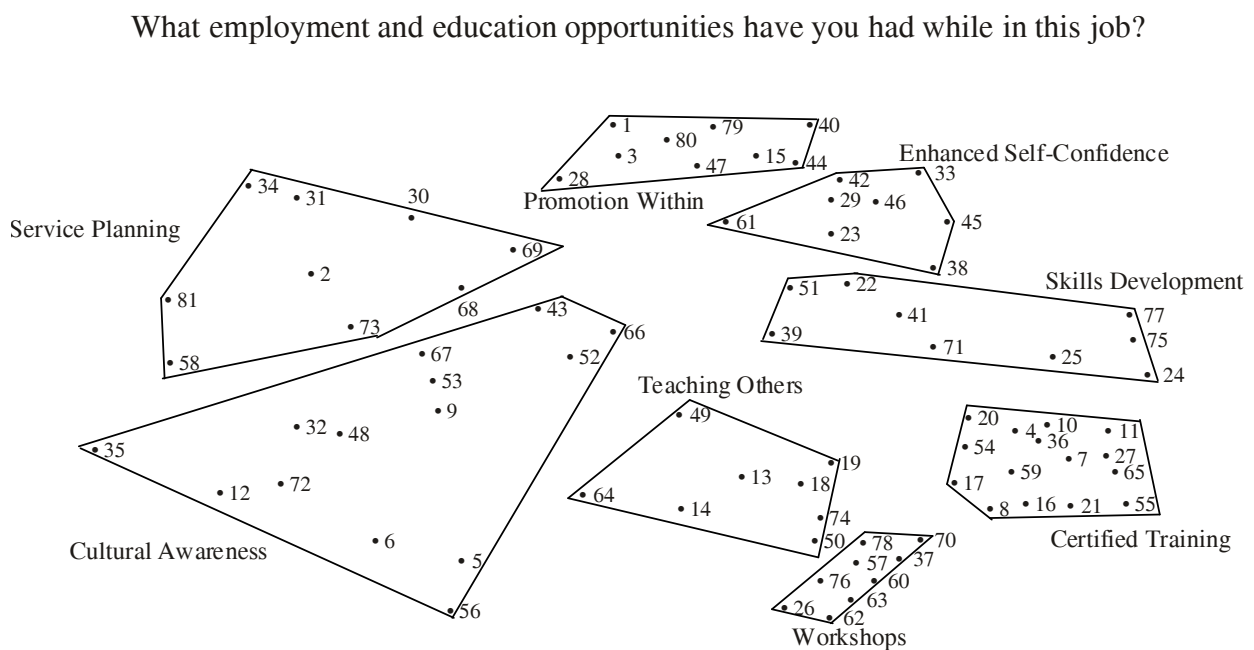


Figure 5

**Table 5**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Promotion Within	0.34
44. learned that everyone can help	0.23
40. help on the job to do what I was asked to do	0.24
79. volunteerism	0.28
15. experience has been the biggest thing	0.29
47. if you are responsible, is possible to move up	0.29

80.	working as a team	0.34
3.	site manager has taken me under wing, to teach everything	0.42
1.	my own empowerment	0.43
28.	a good mentor	0.52

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Cluster #2 – Enhanced Self-Confidence		0.35
42.	learn just from listening to people	0.27
61.	on the Board of Directors for local agency	0.32
23.	organizational skills	0.34
46.	put me in the Toastmasters now they can't shut me up	0.35
45.	used to be scared to try new things	0.36
33.	learned to have confidence in myself	0.36
29.	many leadership opportunities	0.37
38.	how to listen and talk to kids	0.40

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Cluster #3 – Service Planning		0.74
69.	proposals for grants	0.46
68.	strategic planning	0.50
30.	chances to coordinate events	0.59
73.	teach how to budget, make food stretch	0.71
31.	prepare material to present to staff	0.73
2.	agency is helping pay upgrading costs	0.85
58.	nonviolent crisis intervention training	0.89
34.	opportunity to travel North America	0.90
81.	passion and nurturing	1.00

---

Cluster #4 – Cultural Awareness		0.59
66.	research with the university	0.31
52.	art therapy	0.36
43.	how to sew medicine bags	0.38
9.	conference planning and development	0.46
53.	learning about culture	0.47
67.	sharing circles for men	0.53
32.	learned about medicine picking	0.57
48.	language class	0.63
35.	worked with Elders	0.70
56.	many opportunities to participate in cultural workshops	0.71
5.	attend conferences to better our services	0.72
72.	teach Aboriginal family group conferences	0.73
6.	attending college to receive a diploma	0.85
12.	culturally appropriate ways of counselling	0.86

---

Cluster #5 – Certified Training		0.06
36.	health and diabetes training	0.00



11.	crisis stabilization training	0.00
8.	child care training	0.00
59.	nonviolent crisis intervention training	0.00
4.	anti-racism training	0.02
7.	attention-deficit hyperactivity training	0.02
10.	CPR training	0.04
27.	grief and loss training	0.04
17.	family crisis training	0.05
54.	management competency training	0.05
21.	food handlers training	0.08
20.	first aid course	0.10
55.	management training	0.13
65.	provincial core competency training	0.16
16.	facilitator training	0.19

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Cluster #6 – Skills Development		0.36
39.	how to manage money	0.29
22.	fund raising skills	0.30
71.	basic computer skills	0.30
51.	crafts and skills from women from the community	0.32
41.	I have a certificate in public speaking	0.34
25.	training to be a supervisor	0.34
24.	lots of training here	0.43
75.	team building training	0.46
77.	trained 6 youth in different agencies	0.49

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Cluster #7 – Teaching Others		0.30
19.	fetal alcohol syndrome information	0.16
18.	family counselling	0.17
13.	drug education program	0.21
49.	language learning	0.29
14.	early childhood education	0.30
50.	zoning, scaling, land management	0.36
64.	project development	0.39
74.	teach at community college	0.50

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Cluster #8 – Workshops		0.11
78.	vicarious trauma workshop	0.06
57.	mood disorders workshop	0.07
37.	Hepatitis workshops	0.08
60.	nutrition workshops	0.08
70.	suicide awareness workshop	0.08
63.	personal development workshop	0.09
62.	parenting workshops	0.11

76. tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities workshop	0.14
26. going to workshops	0.31

**Question 6**

The concept map appears in Figure 6. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered statement in Table 6. Participants grouped the 70 statements into nine concepts. Participants reported that the employment and education opportunities they saw in their futures included: advancement in their work, formal education, gaining new skills, teaching others, learning more about themselves, professional development, work experience, helping the youth, and working for their own community.

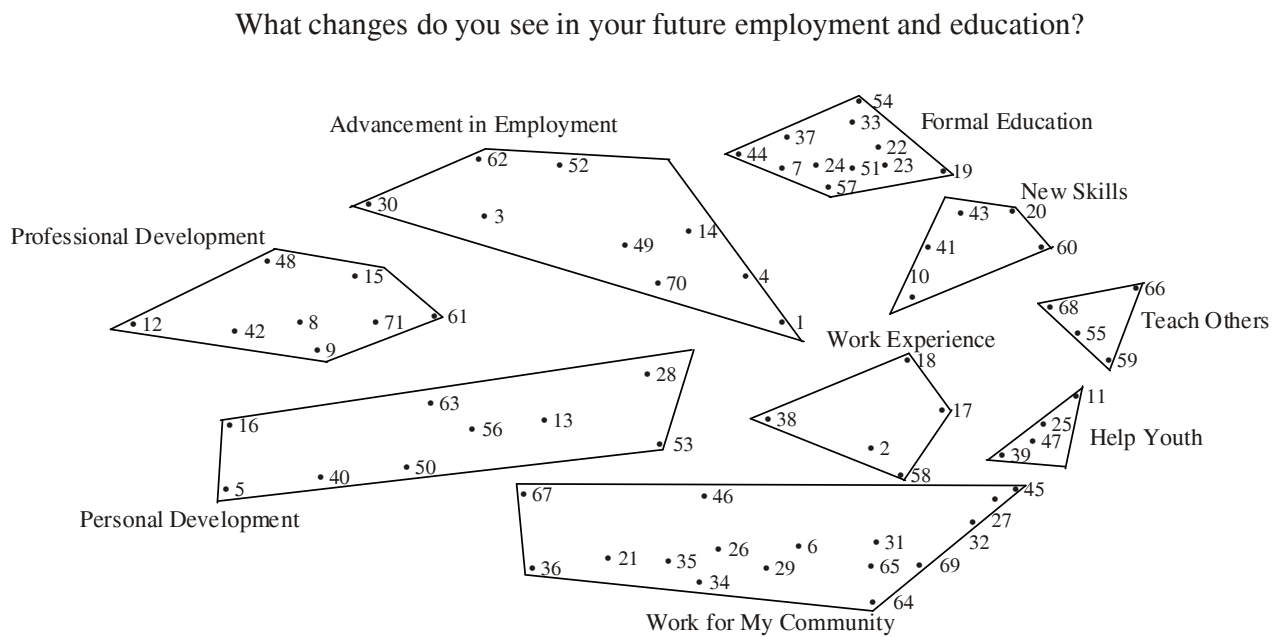


Figure 6

**Table 6**  
**Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map**

Cluster and Statement	Bridging Index
Cluster #1 – Advancement in Employment	0.42
1. be part of conference facilitation team	0.18
4. become a social worker	0.21
49. start my own business	0.30
14. work my way up to management	0.31
70. learning something everyday	0.32
3. community economic development practitioner	0.51
52. addictions training	0.57
62. work on highway construction	0.60
30. no more education	0.74
Cluster #2 – Formal Education	0.09
24. go back to school	0.00
37. get a diploma	0.01
51. take more evening courses	0.01
22. go to medical school	0.03
23. graduate from high school	0.03
7. continue on in my studies	0.11
57. more training	0.11
33. hands on training	0.15
19. get my grade 12	0.18
54. getting my degree	0.18
44. more training in different area	0.22
Cluster #3 – New Skills	0.27
41. learn program evaluation	0.19
43. become a teacher’s aid	0.21
10. develop training programs	0.23
20. certificate for childcare	0.27
60. whatever education I can get within this agency	0.42
Cluster #4 – Teach Others	0.43
68. run programs	0.35
59. lead groups	0.42
55. this job has given me the confidence that I can do other things too	0.44
66. workshops to better understand kids	0.52
Cluster #5 – Work Experience	0.23
38. get more activities for seniors	0.16

58.	volunteer	0.22
2.	be part of organizational team	0.23
17.	dealing with funding issues with my band	0.26
18.	more first hand front line experience	0.29

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Cluster #6 – Help Youth		0.37
39.	work with kids in care	0.31
25.	help Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together	0.37
47.	a patient teacher	0.38
11.	development of workshops for teens	0.45

---

Cluster #7 – Work for My Community		0.31
31.	working for the community	0.18
27.	help young people take responsibility	0.22
65.	continue working here	0.22
6.	better the lives of people in the community	0.22
46.	pass along resources of our culture	0.23
26.	help people become self-sufficient and self-reliant	0.24
32.	working for the little ones	0.25
64.	working here is not about the money	0.25
29.	I can't picture leaving the community	0.27
35.	advocate for my people	0.29
69.	would only work at an Aboriginal agency like this one	0.32
45.	where my heart leads me	0.38
21.	give a helping hand	0.39
34.	advocate for children and families	0.42
67.	advise police about gang issues and crime	0.43
36.	keep working	0.60

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Cluster #8 – Personal Development		0.56
53.	teach language, ceremonies, values, and traditions	0.21
28.	retirement	0.22
13.	more things I never expected to do	0.43
56.	work as a counsellor with women who have experienced abuse	0.46
63.	work with newly landed immigrants	0.46
50.	struggling between working in a place like this versus larger organization	0.58
40.	I'm a piece of furniture around here that they have to take with them	0.78
16.	foster parenting	0.86
5.	become better parent	1.00

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Cluster #9 – Professional Development		0.64
61.	work for federal government	0.38
9.	could work for government but I wouldn't want to	0.53
15.	federal politics	0.53

8.	contract out to other non-profit and profit organizations	0.57
48.	working less	0.71
42.	like it here, but could make more money elsewhere	0.86
12.	something else	0.87

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## Perspectives of Directors and Managers

We interviewed nine representatives of three community-based family services organizations doing community development work in Winnipeg's North End. Results of these interviews were obtained through a content analysis procedure. Two participants were male and seven were female. The average age was 43 years. Participants had been involved in their present organizations for less than one year to over 11 years, and together had held over 17 different positions within the organizations. Several, but not all, started out as volunteers, practicum students, or mentors within their organizations before moving into roles as program developers, coordinators, and managers. Over half had top-level administrative (e.g., executive director, acting executive director) experience.

Their commitment to hiring from the geographical and cultural communities within which their organizations were situated was evident throughout the interviews. The reasons are based on a strong sense of respect for local wisdom and expertise, and the utilization of those gifts for the benefit of each other.

*...our community (members are) genuinely the experts in what direction we (the organization) should be going... they have more passion in what we're about and where we are going...*

*...self empowerment goes a long way in our community investing their gifts and strengths...*

*(We) really believe in hiring from the community...(we) know that it is messy, complicated, all tangled, up, but it's the most powerful way for the individuals and for the community...*

*...employees feel better and neighbours get a sense of hope for themselves...*

*...I never see anything as a failure... there's always a good reason...*

There were five themes apparent from the interviews. Participants talked about their own development as employees of their organizations, their organization's current policies and

practices on hiring from the community, the ways they work as employers of others from the community, the benefits of hiring from the community and the challenges they face hiring from the community.

### ***Getting to the Present Position***

Participants talked about the paths they took to their positions of leadership within the organizations. While some started out within community organizations and moved “up to” their current positions, others made lateral moves into their positions from other community organizations.

*...I started with this organization and worked my way up to the house manager position...*

*...I used to be Executive Director at another organization and sat on a committee with staff from this organization...that’s how I got to know the people...*

Getting a first job within the agency depended on someone giving them a chance to do the job, and support to learn what was needed to advance.

*....somebody believed in me and gave me a chance...*

*...I told people who hired me that I could write proposals...so, once I got the job, I got friends to help me learn about proposal writing!*

*I got to where I am today as the result of excellent leaders and teachers... our agency always provides growing and learning opportunities to their staff...this is what empowers ones ability to grow and learn...*

Having their own expertise valued and recognized as a prospective staff member was passed on to others they later were in a position to hire.

*...they needed an individual who had work experience, I am also from the area...*

The pathways to their current positions were not the same, nor clearly laid out in advance. But, they talked about their common desires to do something to help out in the

community that would address common concerns, as well as their ongoing commitment to this goal and process, years later.

*...I started off as a community member same as everyone else with concerns in the community... volunteered at kid's school, went back to school myself and got a Social Work degree...*

*...started working in the community... looking at safety issues in this building... gangs took over... beautiful building being depleted...took over board... secured funders... renovated building...I was a founding member and hired as Assistant Director...little did I know was being set up to be Director...*

*In the community, a lot of people's jobs are through networking...they get to know you first...*

*...hired as a favor to a friend on the board at the time, and said I'd do it for a year, but I'm still here years later...*

### ***Policies and Procedures***

Participants discussed their organizational policies related to hiring locally. All agencies had policies about hiring from the community. Some of these policies were related specifically to hiring from the Aboriginal community, and others were more specific to hiring from the local neighborhood community.

*...our mandate is to have 80% Aboriginal staff...*

*...we only hire Aboriginal people...others tend not to share the same values, have different operating philosophies, and there are huge value differences, plus there are lots of Aboriginal people who don't get jobs, period...so we make sure our opportunities are for Aboriginal people, first...there are lots of opportunities elsewhere for non-Aboriginal people...*

*...it is our practice and philosophy to hire from the community because people here are best served by others from same background...this leads to the best outcomes...*

*...we try to hire from within the community but anyone is able to apply... first choice goes to people from the community...*



*...is in our policies to hire from community as much as possible...  
Board of Directors also has to have a majority of community  
people...*

The procedures for hiring locally included a series of steps to advertise for positions, first within the organizations, then outside of the organizations, locally and then more broadly. However, individuals hired must have good personal qualities and should have related life experience.

*...it is part of our human resource policy, to advertise any openings  
internally, first...*

*...try to keep people within the agency, so informally strongly  
encourage people to apply for jobs they are qualified for, and  
encourage volunteers to apply for jobs...*

*...our policy is to hire whenever possible for any position to hire  
within the community. We look at the pool of volunteers (have to  
be community members), then participants, then advertise in the  
local community, and only after that, if there is still nobody, do we  
advertise within broader community. If there's a position we can't  
fill locally, we look outside the community. That doesn't mean that  
the skill set isn't available in the community, just not at that time.*

*... educational background is good, however we also look at a  
person's gifts and strengths and what they can offer to the  
community and the youth we work with... I look for staff that have  
passion and understanding of what our youth encounter today...  
life experience is a plus...*

There were also common practices related to hiring individuals with criminal records. All organizations had hired individuals with records, but looked carefully at the record in the context of the individual's life and the position applied for.

*...all staff must pass criminal record and child abuse registry  
check...a criminal record does not exclude you from being an  
employee... but, the charge cannot be related to child abuse check,  
and the charge should be 4 years prior...*

*...we inform applicants during the interview (about criminal record  
check), give the opportunity to tell us what we'll find...we tell them*

*it won't stop them from being hired...it is more to see if they'll talk about it...we look at fit between what the record is and the position, and do not hire anyone with a child abuse registry...*

*...the program that I am in at this time also looks at having a clear criminal record and child abuse registry. It all depends on the charge and how recent the charges are... Something serious that has done harm to others; we would have to make the best decision on the best interest of our youth...If one does have a criminal record which is minor, I ask the staff person to write me a letter stating what the charge entailed, the results of the charges, and what they have learned or healing they did to overcome the charge...*

### **Ways of Working with Staff**

Although staff members from outside the geographic or cultural communities working within these organizations were relatively few, participants indicated that there were some differences between how they worked with those staff.

*...all staff are expected to perform all the same duties whether or not from the community...but, what may be different is that I'd rather send someone from the community to events in the community and someone from outside the community outside community events...*

*...my management style is about character and personality... I push my staff to try, and put pressure on them to take the chance while telling them that they can do it...so if had someone from outside who didn't need to push I wouldn't push her...*

*...we are the place of 1000 chances, but if I hired from outside wouldn't be as quick to give more chances...*

*...I expect more from outside people... that they know they can't come in late everyday... don't need to supervise closely... they know when reports need to be done. I expect less of my time is used when I hire professional people, though that's not always the case...*

The philosophy and approach to working with staff from the community were described by participants.

*people here speak more about the value of their work than the outcome, keeps us honest, more supportive...team-building is important...skills are secondary because you can teach those...we hire people who are passionate, trying is important – here we focus on supportive learning*

*...teach them they are not here only for a pay cheque, can't miss work the day after pay day...new staff every year...they have a hard time being told something... its not just a job its an experience...do a job that earns you a pay cheque...with the young kids you still have time to change their ways...understand that this home for most of the children, they come here to be nurtured (feed)*

*I handle staff with patience, caution, sometimes people are sensitive, but everyone is different, different moods, financial situations, different relationships problems, personal problems, large families, and not set in their lives...*

*people from outside the community don't understand our philosophy, our patience with staff, and the flexibility with how we let anybody into the centre...*

*here we put the people first, like loan someone money and take it off their cheque, take time off when kids are sick, understands if there is something you have to go out of town...*

*... I believe that as a manager you need to be at the same level as your staff and not come into to work everyday with your title on your sleeve...we are about learning and everyday you learn something different... sometimes our staff need support and we are here to help them as well to best of our abilities...*

Participants noted that they needed to be aware as administrators and supervisors of potential problems, and had developed ways of recognizing and dealing with staff-related challenges.

*sometimes they're not sure whether they should listen to me because I joke around with community people... this is a very flexible place...structures not as visible...*

*have learned to have only limited amount of patience otherwise you can be taken advantage of...need your own boundaries. Fine to give chances but don't keep giving endlessly...*

*I don't take anything for granted...try not to make assumptions and to spell things out. Have reinforced how critical it is to be flexible. Have to respond to different folks differently. Learned some creative responses to discipline issues. Harm reduction in terms of staff who use substances. It is about responding to that individual person's needs as a supervisor, their previous experience and how they're functioning in the job.*

### **Benefits**

There are a range of benefits to hiring from the community, for the staff, residents, organization, and the community as a whole. The staff who are local, can get to work without a lot of travel, and already know the people they are working with.

*It is closer for them to get to work, they know the area and the people...a lot of them know each other...*

The qualifications that local staff members bring to the job, given their knowledge of local issues, resources, as well as life experience, make them more approachable to those coming into the organizations.

*knowledge of the issues in the area...personal experience of the area...personal contacts...because of the knowledge and experience they have about the area/community, it is easier for the community members to accept them...*

*...local people relate to youth better...they have come from backgrounds where they've lived in the North End/reserve and have had hard lives, so the youth open up more...*

*the community has more invested in where they live... they have relationships with the community members ... we are a capacity building agency... our community are the experts, not those who are the professional in our community... hiring experiential people also benefit the youth we work with on a daily basis, as being a survivor is what helps our kids to have hope in their future that they too can be survivors...*

The organizations benefit from hiring locally. People who come for service get relevant service from people who understand local realities, and are more receptive to working together.

*...we already have a relationship with the person, we share values, we're already connected, we know them, they know us, there's a sincere commitment to working together...*

*...we find that people from the community are more successful at this work site...*

*...we know the families and kids... door is open for communication, easier if you know the people, can talk about issues they may be facing...kids feel more comfortable...*

*...we are more of a family setting which for us here helps the kids...they relax more, they open up more...*

*...hiring locally ensures that programs are appropriate and make sense for the community...*

The community as a whole benefits from local hiring, because there is a greater sense of ownership, commitment, and sustainability, as well as formal opportunities for people to share their strengths with each other.

*...it's in their community so they'll give more, will stay later without necessarily needing to get paid for it...*

*...the personal investment of making the community better...*

*...we want to avoid people jumping in and out of the North End...*

*...it leads to the best outcomes, community economic development, the model of hiring from the community has integrity, shared values at the core, and we're not afraid of our own...*

*...it is consistent with who we are – about developing individuals, families, and community – and, the best way is to provide opportunities to people and work with them to make them successful...*

## **Challenges**

Participants described multiple challenges associated with hiring from the community, including staff training and support, mobility, and managing dual relationships. The training needs of staff hired from the community are diverse, and can be multiple, including awareness of other supports available, specific job-related skills, general work experience and self-confidence.

*...sometimes there's limited knowledge of resources outside the community, and sometimes there is limited understanding of the issues of the community...*

*...hard to find someone who is trained from within the community...*

*...the organization needs to and wants to adapt and change, we don't have jobs to fit people into, we build jobs to fit people, we have policies and governance that are community-based...  
...need for more training, hardest on administration, there are things that have to be taught...*

*...often, there's no work experience at all, so complete training is required...*

*...must have tolerance...they don't understand the importance to come to work everyday...*

*...require training for basic job behaviour, such as coming into work on time after payday...*

*...find what they're good at, develop skills they may not have...*

*...help them realize the skills they have to begin with...*

In addition, there is considerable mobility of staff members from the community to other opportunities outside of the organization.

*...they many not want to keep a permanent position in the organization long-term basis...*

*...we are a stepping stone to help them move onto better jobs, get the skills and move on...to stay here defeats the purpose...*

*...hard for them to keep the job...always coming and going...high turnover rate.*

The challenges of dual relationships are many. Not only do staff members have personal as well as business connections with each other within and outside of the organization, but also with recipients of service who may also be friends, neighbors or family members. Problems in relationships outside of work can interfere with functioning in the organization, and vice versa.

*...gossip, because everybody knows everybody...*

*personal history of the community for some people...*

*...could be conflicts with other people...nobody gets along with everyone else all the time...*

*...community conflicts that take place after work...here, they have to learn to respect everyone whether they like it or not...*

*...keeping confidentiality is an issue because they have friends outside of work and sometimes say things that should stay at work...people talk...*

*...because they work together and socialize with one another, a conflict outside of the organization can come in to the centre and impact work...*

*...our community is small and sometimes the people you are working with find out where you live and may come to you for support when you are on off time with your own family...*

## Summary

Community-based human services organizations like Andrews Street Family Centre are making a positive difference. ASFC is located in the heart of Winnipeg's North End. The Centre hires extensively from the local community. The majority of current volunteers, staff, and board members are local residents. Many new volunteers and staff (who often have limited formal education and a great deal of life experience) are hired for secure jobs that pay a liveable wage and provide opportunities for educational upgrading leading to employment advancement. Andrews Street Family Centre - and other organizations like it in Winnipeg's North End - place great emphasis on supporting local residents in their work within the organization. The efforts of the organization go well beyond basic job training to include extra support for staff while they address personal issues, for example, striking a balance between the demands of work and family. The organization also helps staff plan for their futures, and accomplish their educational goals.

Interviews with agency staff and directors indicated that there are multiple benefits to hiring locally. Such benefits include the pre-existence of relationships between people and groups within the community, the ease with which trust is developed because experiences are shared, and the relevance of local services. Another major benefit is the ability to enhance local expertise to address local issues through the recognition of strengths and capacities that already exist within the community. Specifically, we were told that having a sense of fitting in, learning from, and giving back to the community were priorities for staff who felt a real sense of ownership and stake in the wellbeing of their own families, neighbours, and local organizations. Administrators and senior level staff members noted that the commitment to learning from and helping others in their local community carried a great deal of influence on who was hired. It was said that passion and commitment were prerequisites for employment, but that skills could be developed with organizational support, as needed.

We learned that there was a great deal of support and training provided to them as employees of local organizations. They described having multiple opportunities to refine their skills in specific areas such as program development and delivery, as well as advance to new



positions within the organizations. They also talked about the many workshops and training sessions made available to them, as well as the more informal support of their peers and mentors. In addition to employment-related skills, the staff talked about the benefits to themselves and their own general sense of wellness that was enhanced through increased self-awareness and self-confidence. Staff talked about how these experiences within the organizations were a step along their life paths and that their paths headed in a variety of directions that included more responsibilities within the organizations, working more with different groups, and more formal education.

There were also challenges. These challenges included meeting the depth and range of needs that exist within the community. Structural issues, such as poverty and racism, continued to affect day-to-day realities within the community such as modest formal educational and employment opportunities. These difficulties manifested to agencies as demands on their resources which become absorbed into service delivery budgets. These costs were not well-understood by those outside the community who perceived program dollars going directly to service for participants. The delivery of service to participants does not adequately cover the costs – human and financial – of the organization that trains and supports the staff to deliver the services.

## Conclusion

There was a range of ways that people came to be employed by the organizations. Often, their involvement started as a casual contact – a drop in to a centre on the advice of someone they trusted – and developed into greater levels of involvement – volunteering – and eventually, paid employment. Once inside the agencies, volunteers and staff participated in a variety of training activities for personal development, professional or academic credit, delivered in-house or through partnerships with other agencies or institutions. Most powerful were our data on future plans of staff members who all talked about enhancing their skills, credentials, knowledge, and community contributions in the future. The substantial and far-reaching impact of employment and support opportunities provided by local agencies on the lives of staff, as well as their families and neighbours, and indeed, the community overall, cannot be overstated.

Both directors and staff of community-based agencies identified several benefits to hiring and working within their own geographical and cultural communities. In general, their responses indicated a strong need to hire and train locally, to enhance existing capacity from within as well as meet local needs in a way that respects local realities and recognizes individual and collective gifts. Local community agencies, as described by staff and directors, were clearly seen as successful with this work, and as important vehicles by which to continue the process of community development through adult learning. The informal learning opportunities provided to local residents through volunteerism and employment in local agencies provide links to formal learning and employment. However, the challenges of hiring locally reflect the depth of need that remains to be addressed, and illustrate the reality that external funding remains necessary. Dealing with external systems, though crucial for funding, often takes effort and agency resources away from service provision to staff and residents who come for service. Indeed, it is of great importance to recognize the commitment of resources made by agencies that hire and train locally. A variety of formal educational opportunities, such as specific skills training through accredited workshops, and informal opportunities, such as the advice and guidance of an experienced staff member, are regularly made available. Indeed, these data

indicate that the training and support offered both formally and informally to adult learners within community-based organizations is substantial and necessary in order to provide service that is relevant and accessible, as well as beneficial for the community over the longer term. It is crucial that funding bodies recognize the “service” provided to staff in addition to those services provided to those coming to an organization for service.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that:

- 1) A greater financial investment be made into the support of locally-run, community- and culturally-based organizations providing human services in high poverty urban neighbourhoods to Aboriginal peoples.

Our data indicate that the depth and range of local need could be better met through increased funding to locally-run, community-, and culturally-based organizations.

- 2) The services provided by locally-staffed organizations to employees be accounted for as “service” within program funding, in recognition of the substantial resources expended on staff support, in-house training, as well as partnerships with educational institutions.

Our data indicate that participating community- and culturally-based organizations in high poverty urban neighbourhoods provide a great deal of formal training and informal support to staff members, and that these efforts are often not formally recognized in program funding.

- 3) Life experience and on-the-job training be formally recognized within admission requirements among formal education settings, such as high schools, community colleges. and universities.

Our data indicate that many staff members of community- and culturally-based organizations do go on to further their education, and that the skills and confidence they obtain and enhance through employment experience complement their wealth of life experience. This learning should be accounted for in admission decisions to formal education services.

- 4) Community- and culturally-based organizations be approached regarding educational service delivery to local residents to ensure local relevance and promote accessibility.

Our data indicate that community- and culturally-based organizations in high poverty urban neighbourhoods understand the range and depth of local needs, as well as recognize the strengths that individuals, families, and their neighbours possess. This knowledge should be incorporated into the development and delivery of formal education services.

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## Appendix: Interview Guides

### Staff

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Titles/Positions held in organization: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the benefits of working in your community?
2. What are the challenges of working in your community?
3. How did you get connected to the agency?
4. What were your employment and education experiences before you got this job?
5. What employment and education opportunities have you had while in this job?
6. What changes do you see in your future employment and education?

### Directors and Managers

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Titles/Positions held in organization: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What policies and procedures do you have for hiring from the community?
2. What are the benefits of hiring from the community?
3. What are the challenges of hiring from the community?
4. What are the benefits of hiring from outside the community?
5. What are the challenges of hiring from outside the community?
6. What lessons have you learned from hiring from the community?
7. How is your style of management different when working with staff from the community versus those from outside the community?
8. How do you handle hiring individuals with criminal records?
9. How did you get to where you are within the agency?