

# Canadian Indigenous People: Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

***“Learner-Centredness”***

***A Survey of Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills  
Development Programs and Recommendations for  
Implementation and Delivery***



## ***Foreword***

'Jagged world views can collide when Aboriginal peoples and Western science clash' (Castellano, 2005). In an effort to avoid such an encounter, the principles of duty to consult and that both parties will benefit from the research through the act of collaborating to ensure that good data is gathered; is the spirit determining this research.

## ***Acknowledgments***

This initiative was funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

Much appreciation is extended to the following people who participated in this initiative:

- ✓ Susan Devins, at BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. Ekati Mine Site, Yellowknife, NWT.
- ✓ Karewn Carleton at Diavik Workplace Learning Centre, Yellowknife, NWT.
- ✓ Janice Brandt at First Nations Technical Institute, Deseranto, Ontario.
- ✓ Hildy Hanson at Keyano College, Fort McMurray, Alberta.
- ✓ Bebe Ivanochko at Northlands College, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan.
- ✓ Elva Lickers at the Six Nations Achievement Centre, Ohswaken, Ontario.
- ✓ Eleanor Thompson at Urban Circle Training Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
  
- ✓ Ningwakwe/Priscilla George, Executive Director of the National Indigenous Literacy Association
  
- ✓ Rosalie Olson, Dynamic Resource Management, Winnipeg, Manitoba
  
- ✓ Colleagues at OARS training Inc.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

All external links within this document were valid at the time of publication

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Executive Summary .....  | page 1  |
| Introduction and Background to the Initiative .....                        | page 2  |
| Survey of Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs ..... | page 7  |
| Compilation of Results .....   | page 11 |
| Discussion of Results .....  | page 21 |
| Implications and Recommendations for Program Planning .....                | page 24 |
| Checklists for Guidance .....  | page 26 |
| Workplace Practitioner Development.....                                    | page 31 |
| Bibliography .....   | page 34 |
| Appendix A: List of Aboriginal References.....                             | page 36 |



---

Produced by OARS training Inc  
(204) 284-4371  
Funded by the National Indigenous  
Literacy Association  
(204) 927-1920

### **Executive Summary**

A national survey of Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to identify critical success factors in the development, delivery and evaluation of such initiatives. The most important characteristics of these programs include:

- ❑ Adult Educators
- ❑ Integration of culturally appropriate materials
- ❑ Learner-Centred
- ❑ On-going Communication between all involved
- ❑ Strategic Partnerships
- ❑ Supportive Employers
- ❑ Voluntary Participation
- ❑ Safe Learning Environment

A checklist for guidance when developing such initiatives is provided in addition to details on the development of Workplace Practitioners.

## **Introduction**

The National Indigenous Literacy Association has partnered with Workplace Education Manitoba to develop a set of recommendations on best practice for workplace/workforce literacy for Indigenous people and the skills and knowledge for practitioner training.

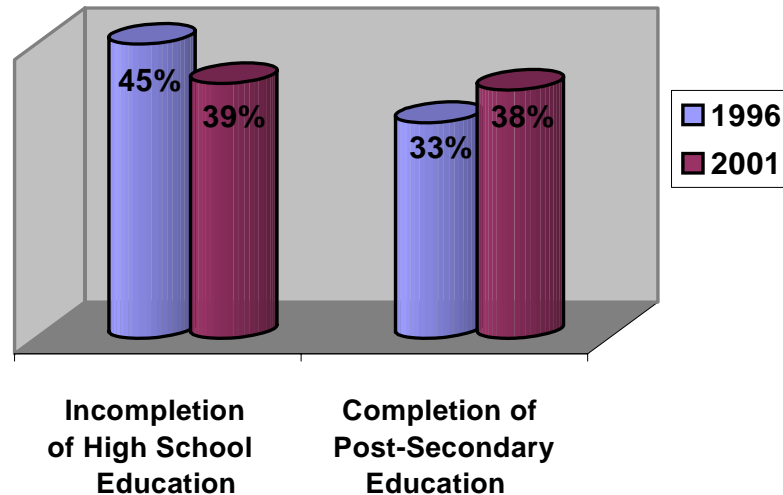
Aboriginal Canadians constitute an ever-increasing proportion of the Canadian labour force. Given that Canada is going to experience a labour market skills shortage over the coming years, it is in the best interest of Canadians that Aboriginal Canadians begin to develop the educational training and skills to compete successfully in the job market. Incorporating Aboriginal Canadians with the labour market is one of this nation's most important challenges (Brunnen, 2004).

Much has been described about the demographic boom currently igniting the significant increase in the Aboriginal population in Canada. In 2001 the number of people who self-identified as Aboriginal was 976,305, an increase of 22.2% since 1996. The non-aboriginal population rate grew by 3.4% in the same time period. This increase is usually attributed to a higher birth rate but, the reality of the situation is that the most significant contribution to this growth are people, who, over this period of time, have started to identify themselves as Aboriginal. (Lamontagne, 2004). Coupled with this increase is the concept of 'ethnic mobility'. This term is used to describe the situation by which people will change their ethnic affiliation. This 'migration' may come primarily from children whose parents chose not to identify their Aboriginal roots, but with heightened awareness and a greater sense of pride among Aboriginal people (witness the significant following across the country for the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network) elect to self-identify as Aboriginal peoples. (Guimond, 2003).

There is slow but steady increase in the rate of Aboriginal people living in urban settings. In 2001, 49% of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas, compared to 47% in 1996. In 2001, Winnipeg with 55,755 Aboriginal people followed by Edmonton with 40,935 had the largest proportion of Aboriginal people of any Canadian city (Lamontagne, 2004).

### *Educational Attainment*

Education attainment levels for Aboriginal people, while improving, still lag significantly behind their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Between 1996 and 2001, the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 who did not have a high school diploma went from 45% to 39%. At the same time the proportion of Aboriginal people with post-secondary qualification increased from 33% to 38%. Despite an improvement in education attainment level, the employment record of Aboriginal people continues to lag significantly behind that of non-Aboriginal people despite record low levels of unemployment.



High school attainment level is widely used as a predictor of labour market outcomes and income distribution with the assumption being that the lower the attainment levels, the higher the likelihood of long-term unemployment or underemployment. More recent research suggests that literacy levels might be a better predictor of labour market outcomes (Statistics Canada, 2004) rather than educational attainment. In May 2005, Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey were published. Presented by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Statistics Canada, the survey describes the picture of literacy in Canada and several other countries including Italy, Norway and the US.

(<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-603-XIE/89-603-XIE2005001.htm>) In Canada, there are a significant number of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills. Almost 42% of adults aged 16 to 65 scored level 1 and level 2 in prose literacy and did not attain skill level 3, the level considered as a minimum for coping with the demands of modern life and work. Similar trends were seen for document literacy, numeracy skills and problem solving abilities. While presently there is limited formal evidence of the literacy levels of the Aboriginal labour force (a report on such findings is anticipated in October of 2005), there are many indications that, 'a larger proportion of Aboriginal people have lower literacy skills than the average Canadian'. (Government of Canada, 2003).

### *Literacy*

Literacy has many evolving definitions. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary online ([www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary](http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary)), literacy is "the quality or state of being literate." Literate, according to this same source, derives from Middle English and Latin terms meaning "marked with letters" and "letters, literature."

The Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador

([www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/NFLD/NFLITCOU/litinfo.htm](http://www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/NFLD/NFLITCOU/litinfo.htm)) defines this term as follows.

"Literacy not only involves competency in reading and writing, but goes beyond this to include the critical and effective use of these skills in peoples' lives, and the use of language (oral and written) for all purposes." This definition involves critical thinking about what one reads, as well as expanding the term to encompass oral forms of literacy.

According to the National Institute for Literacy (<http://novel.nifl.gov/nifl/faqs.html>):

"The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 defines literacy as 'an individual's ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual and in society.' This is a broader view of literacy than just an individual's ability to read, which is the more traditional concept of literacy. As information and technology have become increasingly shaped by our society, the skills needed to function successfully have gone beyond reading, and literacy has come to include the skills listed in the current definition."

This definition is important as it looks at literacy, at least to some extent, from a more contextualized perspective. The definition of 'literate', then, depends on the skills needed within a particular environment. Of note, also, is the emphasis on English. This definition has implications for many Aboriginal peoples as English is not the primary language of communication (Antone and Wang, 2005).

### *Canada*

In Canada, the National Literacy Secretariat has supported over 5,000 projects in a wide array of literacy initiatives. While definitions of literacy have evolved since its establishment in 1988, many of these projects are one of the following categories of literacy programming:

1. Community based literacy programs that may, on occasion, use workplace materials as a tool for learning.
2. Workplace literacy programs only use workplace materials as a means for improving basic reading, writing and mathematical skill development. These types of classes have, in many cases, evolved into Workplace Essential Skills Development programs. This type of programming utilizes the nine essential skills (reading, document use, writing, numeracy, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use and continuous learning) as the basis for workplace relevant skill development programs.
3. Workforce development programs include aspects of employability and relevant reading, writing and mathematical materials required for high demand occupations.

### *Best Practices Synthesis*

The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) compiled information on a selection of workplace literacy programs and essential skills initiatives delivered across the country (NLS, March 2005). Two critical aspects were highlighted. The program must be an

authentic and collaborative partnership and secondly, it must be of significant benefit to all of the program partners. There are three groups of central stakeholders – the first, learners and the educator, the second, the employer and the workplace and the third group, the government and community. Further studies have documented the returns when such initiatives are implemented in companies. Internal promotion, increased productivity, greater awareness of safety, increased retention and decreased absenteeism were directly attributed to the development of such programs. (HRSDC, 2005). Employees in these programs believe that they are more capable, take more pride in their work, have improved self-confidence and accept and act on suggestions for personal improvement more readily. Other improvements noted were a greater respect for diversity, improved communication and cooperation, greater willingness to take the initiative, improved problem-solving ability and an eagerness to take on new roles as mentors and peer learning coaches. Within families and communities, employees are able to help their children with their homework, participate more in voluntary activities and enjoy improved health (HRSDC, 2005).

### *Aboriginal Programs*

Nationally, there are many programs that have worked with Aboriginal people to improve skills in the workplace. Some programs are within the communities – such as Membertou in Nova Scotia, Osoyoos in British Columbia, Six Nations Achievement Centre in Ontario and the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba. Other programs work in collaboration with Aboriginal People outside of the community. Examples include the Urban Circle Training Program in Winnipeg, Northlands College in Northern Saskatchewan and Keyano College in Fort McMurray, Alberta and the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, Winnipeg, Manitoba. There are employers who actively recruit, hire and retain Aboriginal people. This cohort include Diavik Diamond Mining in Yellowknife in the NWT, BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc., EKATI Mine Site in the NWT, BMO Bank of Montreal, Place Louis Riel All-Suite Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Syncrude Canada, Alberta, SaskTel in Regina, Saskatchewan. Of particular note is the initiative at The North West Company (NWC). Based in Winnipeg, this company is the largest private sector employer of Aboriginal people in Canada. Led by OARS training Inc., the workplace literacy program was established in 1992 and the NWC Company has taken a multi-faceted approach to develop the participants' skills in communication, computer literacy, numeracy, reading, and writing. Innovative training initiatives including informal mentoring, a wide variety of learning tools, 360-degree feedback survey and the use of translators to provide training in the first language of employees have been used. This program was given an Award of Excellence by the Conference Board of Canada in 2001 (The Conference Board of Canada, 2002). Despite the success of a number of programs, the parameters that determine the successful implementation of such programs have not been documented.

*Project Implementation*

Working in collaboration with the National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA), a survey was developed whose primary purpose was to determine the key factors that enable Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs to be successful. Approximately 20 key programs were contacted both by telephone and email. Seven completed surveys were obtained and a compilation of the results is presented. The survey instrument itself is included in the core of the report instead of being part of the appendices because it constituted the primary means of gathering information and begins to establish a framework for the successful implementation of programs.

### Survey of Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs

The purpose of the survey is to identify key elements that enable Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs to be successful. Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning, and life. They include writing, reading text, problem solving and working with others.

Name of program:

Address:

Province:

Postal Code:

Phone No: ( )

Primary Contact:

1. Does the program have an overall guiding philosophy? Yes/No If yes, it is...

---

---

---

2. How is the program planned? Please check appropriate boxes

- By an educational institution:  
Is it standard training or customized training? Please circle
- By a regulatory authority
- By an emerging issue within the industry
- By employer's needs:  
Is it management's stated needs or is it the result of training needs assessment within the company? Please Circle
- Other:

Do participants have input into the program planning stage? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

3. How is the program's logistics e.g. date, time, number of hours, number of sessions determined? Please check appropriate boxes

- By an educational institution
- By a regulatory authority
- By the industry e.g. deliver class during the off-season
- By employer's needs e.g. schedule according to shift work
- Other:

Do participants have input into the program's logistics? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

4. What are the program's entry requirements? Please check appropriate boxes

- Prerequisite course prior to the program
- Formal assessment process e.g. CAAT
- Informal Assessment process e.g. brief interview with instructor
- Orientation and Voluntary Sign-up
- Orientation and Mandatory sign-up
- Other:

Do participants have input into the program entry requirements? Yes/No Why?

5. Are additional classes required before the program for upgrading and/or life skills? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

6. Do the participants receive financial support while they attend the course? Yes/No If yes,

- 100% of their time at the course
- 50%
- Other:

7. Course Details

- Is there a tuition fee for the participant? Yes/No If Yes the cost is \$
- Average number of participants per course:
- Length of each class (the number of hours):
- The number of classes per week:
- Length of course:
- Where does the course take place? Please check the appropriate box
  - Educational Institution
  - Employer
  - Community
  - Other:

Do participants have input into the course details? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

8. Instructors:

Is the instructor a certified licensed teacher? Yes/No

Do they have a specialty in Adult Education? Yes/No

Is it critical to the program that they are Aboriginal? Yes/No Please Explain:

---

---

---

Number of years of experience working in workplace literacy:

Number of years of experience working in the industry:

Is the instructor on contract or an employee? \_\_\_\_\_

Hourly Rate:

Do participants have input into the hiring of the instructor Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

How much preparation time is the instructor given to prepare a class? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there funding and release time for the instructor to participate in training and professional development? Yes/No Please Explain

---

---

---

---

## Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills

---

9. Instructional Strategies: Please check the appropriate boxes

- Individual
- Group
- Peer Tutoring
- Labs, simulations and field trips
- Other

Do participants have input into how the program is instructed? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

10. Are computers used in the program? Yes/No

If yes, how are computers used in the program? Please check the appropriate boxes

- As a means of instruction e.g. keyboarding, spreadsheets
- As a resource for instructors and students
- Internet use
- Email use

11. Materials Used: Please check the appropriate boxes

- Contextualised entirely to reflect the industry
- Contextualised 50% to reflect the industry
- Not contextualised to reflect the industry
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Aboriginal Content

- Does the instructor only use traditional teachings as they teach? Yes/No
- Are traditional teachings integrated into the materials used in the class? Yes/No
- Are the teachings First Nations, Metis or Inuit? \_\_\_\_\_

13. How is the program evaluated? Please check the appropriate boxes

Quantitative Methods:

- Attendance Rates
- Retention Rates
- Success rate in Scheduled Exams
- Success Rate in certification/licensing exams
- In class quizzes
- On-going project based activities in class
- Class participation
- Pre and Post Course Evaluations
- Transfer of Learning Strategy where people apply what they learned at work and document
- Other:

Qualitative Methods

- Journals between the participants and the instructor
- Instructor's anecdotal evidence of increased self-esteem
- Supervisor's evidence of increased productivity
- Co-worker's anecdotal evidence
- Family's anecdotal evidence
- Friend's anecdotal evidence
- Other: e.g. greater willingness to participate in community events:

Do participants have input into how the program is evaluated? Yes/No Why?

---

---

---

## Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills

---

14. After initial contact with potential participants, can the program refer people to appropriate agencies that can support people with significant barriers to training if there is a need?  
Yes/No Please explain

---

---

15. Do the participants have access to additional support services? (Elders on site, counsellors or advisors to help with adjustment, daycare services, after class tutoring, etc.) Yes/No  
Please explain

---

---

---

16. Does the program have a Steering Committee? Yes/No  
If yes, the number of people on the Steering Committee:  
If yes, please check the representative

- Aboriginal Advisor
- Educational Institution
- Funding Agency
- Government-Which Department(s):
- Human Resources
- Instructor
- Program Coordinator other than the Instructor
- Other Employers in the Industry
- Participants
- Regulatory Authority
- Senior Management (in company)
- Supervisor (in company)
- Union Representative
- Other:

17. How is the program funded excluding the release time for employees?

- 100% Government
- 50% Government; 50% Employer/Sector Council
- 100% Employer
- 100% Participants' Fees
- Other:

18. How is the program administered? Please check the appropriate box

- Through the Educational institution
- Through the Regulatory Authority
- Through the Employer
- Through the Funding Agency
- Through the Sector Council
- Through a community based organization
- Other:

19. Are there any other critical elements that ensure the success of the program?

---

---

---

*Source of Information:*

Best Practices in Action; Tools for Community Based Adult Literacy and Basic Education  
Program. NWT Literacy Council 2004

**Survey of Aboriginal Workforce/Essential Skills Development Programs-Compilation of Results**

The following seven programs completed the survey:

1. BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. Ekati Mine Site, Yellowknife, NWT,
2. Diavik Workplace Learning Centre, Yellowknife, NWT,
3. First Nations Technical Institute, Deseranto, Ontario,
4. Keyano College, Fort McMurray, Alberta,
5. Northlands College, Air Ronge, Saskatchewan,
6. Six Nations Achievement Centre, Ohsweken, Ontario
7. Urban Circle Training Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

| Area of Interest                            | Question(s) asked  | Yes      | No       | Further information  |
|---|--|----------|----------|--|
| <p><b>1. Overall guiding philosophy</b></p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the program have an overall guiding philosophy?</p> | <p>6</p> | <p>1</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preparing Northerners to participate in the social, economic and labour market development of Saskatchewan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare students for trades and post-secondary programs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To provide essential skills training so the workforce can work safely and productively.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Utilizing the philosophy of the Medicine Wheel, the centre is a non-profit, community based organization whose objective is to provide Aboriginal people with skill specific training targeted to job-market demands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Through a company-wide integrated approach, train individuals to do their job safely and productively and build individual capacity so people may develop transferable skills while honouring our community commitments and meeting regulatory requirements.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To support Aboriginal learners to acquire basic skills in an Aboriginal friendly environment.</li> </ul> |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest  | Question(s) asked   | Yes                  | No | Further information   |
|---|---|----------------------|----|---|
| <b>2. Program plan</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> By an educational institution<br><input type="checkbox"/> By a regulatory authority<br><input type="checkbox"/> By an emerging issue within the industry<br><input type="checkbox"/> By employer's needs<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other                 | 4<br><br>4<br>5<br>2 |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Needs Assessment held annually<br><input type="checkbox"/> Students' needs   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into the program planning stage?  | 6                    | 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> The program is designed to address the needs of the students.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Employee needs and interests comprise the program.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Has to be relevant to the participant.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Learning necessitates a supervisor-employee-workplace educator partnership for 'buy-in' or ownership and success. Negotiation is on going and changes are made as needed.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Programs are community and partner driven. |
| <b>3. Program's logistics e.g. date, time, number of hours, number of sessions determined</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> By an educational institution<br><input type="checkbox"/> By a regulatory authority<br><input type="checkbox"/> By the industry e.g. deliver class during the off-season<br><input type="checkbox"/> By employer's needs<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other | 4<br><br>1<br>4      |    |   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into the program's logistics?   | 5                    | 2  | <input type="checkbox"/> They are consulted with regard to their schedules and availability.<br><input type="checkbox"/> They do to an extent such as when they will attend with matched personal time for learning sessions. Session and study planning are negotiated with the workplace educator by the supervisor and the learner.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not directly. Programs have been designed to meet funders' criteria.   |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest  | Question(s) asked  | Yes              | No | Further information  |
|---|--|------------------|----|--|
| 4. Program's entry requirements   | <input type="checkbox"/> Prerequisite course prior to the program<br><input type="checkbox"/> Formal assessment process e.g. CAAT<br><input type="checkbox"/> Informal Assessment process e.g. brief interview with instructor<br><input type="checkbox"/> Orientation and Voluntary Sign-up<br><input type="checkbox"/> Orientation and Mandatory sign-up | 2<br>3<br>7<br>7 |    |  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into the program entry requirements?   | 6                | 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> Self defined or self declared literacy needs<br><input type="checkbox"/> An individualized assessment is done with every employee before beginning the program.<br><input type="checkbox"/> They do in as much as they can request work release time from supervisors for skills building sessions especially those related to apprenticeship certification.  |
| 5. Classes required before the program for upgrading and/or life skills |  | 2                | 5  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, in the life skills. There is a four-week pre-requisite program prior to the beginning of the class. The group contract is established and the elements of trust and belonging are established. It is only under very rare circumstances that somebody is allowed to join the group after this four-week period.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Portfolio assisted prior learning assessment process to assist learners in identifying skills and knowledge, set goals, establish direction and build self esteem and self awareness.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Literacy classes are usually the starting point.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The students' needs are addressed while they are in the course. |
| 6. Financial support while attending the course                         | <input type="checkbox"/> 100% of their time at the course<br><input type="checkbox"/> 50%<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Other:   | 4<br>1<br>1      | 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> Depends on whether the course is directly related to their job or for personal interest.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Depends on individual needs and sponsors   |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest  | Question(s) asked   | Yes | No | Further information   |
|-------------------|---|-----|----|---|
| 7. Course Details | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a tuition fee for the participant?<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Average number of participants per course<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Length of each class (the number of hours)<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> The number of classes per week<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Length of course | 1   | 6  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, \$150 per day/person for lifeskills course only.<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Range from individual tutorial to 24 people per class. Average number is 15 people per class.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Range from 1.5 hours to classes all day with regularly scheduled breaks. Average class length is 2-3 hours<br><input type="checkbox"/> Range from 2 to 10 classes per week. On average there are three classes per week.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Range from 3 weeks to 10 months. Average length of classes is 15 weeks. |
|                   | Where does the course take place?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institution<br><input type="checkbox"/> Employer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Community<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other  | 4   | 4  | 2   |
|                   | Do participants have input into the course details?   | 7   |    | <input type="checkbox"/> The course is designed around the needs of the students.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The courses are designed and developed around work requirements, based on essential skills.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The Workplace Educator is able to negotiate these with learners.  |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest      | Question(s) asked  | Yes | No | Further information   |
|-----------------------|--|-----|----|---|
| <b>8. Instructors</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the instructor a certified licensed teacher?   | 5   | 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> It varies whether or not a licensed teacher is hired as it depends on the program requirements.  |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do they have a specialty in Adult Education?  | 6   | 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> No comments made   |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Is it critical to the program that they are Aboriginal?   | 2   | 5  | <input type="checkbox"/> We are a public institution covering all communities on and off-reserve.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The instructors are sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal and adult learners.<br><input type="checkbox"/> It is more important that the adult educators are approachable, flexible and sensitive.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Desirable but balance is necessary.<br><input type="checkbox"/> While cultural homogeneity between learners and the workplace would be good, what is important is that s/he has great rapport, organized, skilled and motivates learners with suitable learning opportunities. |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Number of years of experience working in workplace literacy   |     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Range 2 – 20 years. Average number of years 11.  |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Number of years of experience working in the industry   |     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Range 5-15 years. Average number of years 9.   |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Is the instructor on contract or an employee?   |     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Contract 4; Employee 2   |
|                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Hourly rate<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into the hiring of the instructor? |     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Range from \$15-\$55; Average hourly rate \$29/hour. Salaried employees did not disclose their earnings.   |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest                   | Question(s) asked   | Yes                   | No | Further information   |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|----|---|
| <b>8. Instructor</b>               | <input type="checkbox"/> Is preparation time given to the instructor to prepare a class?  | 7                     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> One to four weeks depending on the course.<br><input type="checkbox"/> One hour of preparation /12 hours of instruction.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Two weeks<br><input type="checkbox"/> Varies (Three programs)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Community College Formula   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there funding and release time for the instructor to participate in training and professional development?  | 5                     | 2  | <input type="checkbox"/> This is accomplished through in-house training and training off-site.<br><input type="checkbox"/> PD thro' Manitoba Education and in-house training.   |
| <b>9. Instructional Strategies</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual<br><input type="checkbox"/> Group<br><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Tutoring<br><input type="checkbox"/> Labs, simulations and field trips<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other                         | 6<br>7<br>5<br>4<br>3 |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Job shadowing, role-playing, case studies, computer-based safety training.   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into how the program is instructed?   | 7                     |    | <input type="checkbox"/> The (students) are asked for feedback during the course.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The instructors try to accommodate the different learning styles within the classroom.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Student centred is an adult teaching principle.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Feedback is encouraged for improved training delivery. |
| <b>10. Use of Computers</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> As a means of instruction e.g. keyboarding, spreadsheets<br><input type="checkbox"/> As a resource for instructors and students<br><input type="checkbox"/> Internet use<br><input type="checkbox"/> Email use | 7<br>7<br>5<br>5      |    | <input type="checkbox"/> All seven programs use computers   |

## Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills

| Area of Interest   | Question(s) asked  | Yes | No | Further information   |
|--|--|-----|----|---|
| <b>11. Materials Used</b>                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Contextualised entirely to reflect the industry   | 2   |    | <input type="checkbox"/> The students often use essential skills Math/English materials prepared as refresher courses for industry.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Work and personal essential skills. |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Contextualised 50% to reflect the industry  | 4   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not contextualised to reflect the industry  |     |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   | 2   |    |   |
| <b>12. Aboriginal Content</b>                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Does the instructor only use traditional teachings as they teach?                       |     | 7  | <input type="checkbox"/> No, they are work related if they are studying on work release time.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Customized specifically for each community e.g. Iroquois, Inuit, Dene     |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Are traditional teachings integrated into the materials used in the class?              | 5   | 2  |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the teachings First Nations, Metis or Inuit?  | 5   |    |   |
| <b>13. Program Evaluation</b>                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance Rates  | 6   |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Literacy+Learning (Government of Manitoba) has an extensive evaluation process.<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Increased attendance in Band Meetings.               |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retention Rates   | 7   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Success rate in Scheduled Exams   | 3   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Success Rate in certification/licensing exams   | 2   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> In class quizzes  | 1   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> On-going project based activities in class  | 4   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Class participation   | 6   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre and Post Course Evaluations   | 5   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer of Learning Strategy where people apply what they learned at work and document | 3   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Quantitative Means of Assessment  | 1   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Journals  | 5   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased self-esteem   | 7   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor's evidence of increased productivity   | 6   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-worker's anecdotal evidence  | 4   |    |   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family's anecdotal evidence   | 4   |    |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend's anecdotal evidence           | 4  |     |    |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Qualitative Means of Assessment | 4  |     |    |   |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest                              | Question(s) asked  | Yes | No | Further information  |
|---|--|-----|----|--|
| <b>13. Program Evaluation</b>                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Do participants have input into how the program is evaluated?   | 4   | 2  | <input type="checkbox"/> There is extensive self and peer evaluation in addition to program evaluation where what worked and what didn't worked is evaluated.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Learner feedback is gauged throughout and changes made so that the program remains learner-centred and effective.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The courses are usually pass or fail. The instructor generally gives a percentage grade throughout the course based on homework, tests, assignments, and attendance.   |
| <b>14. Support for potential participants</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> After initial contact with potential participants, can the program refer people to appropriate agencies that can support people with significant barriers to training if there is a need? | 7   |    | <input type="checkbox"/> It is part of our counsellor's process.<br><input type="checkbox"/> EFAP (Employee Family Assistance Program) provides counselling and additional support to employees.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The courage to walk through the door is acknowledged. Approximately 400 people visit the program every year and only 120 people are actually enrolled in classes. The program is extensively networked with approx. 250 agencies in Winnipeg and can direct people to the most appropriate help needed.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Learners are often referred to the Adult Education centre in their community to get continued support during their personal time off. |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest                       | Question(s) asked   | Yes  | No | Further information   |
|--|---|--|----|---|
| <b>15. Additional support services</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Do the participants have access to additional support services?  | 7  |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Counsellors, advisors, social service workers.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The advisors/counsellors for the students help the students overcome any difficulties that they are experiencing e.g. childcare, financial or personal.<br><input type="checkbox"/> After class tutoring.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Counsellors are available. The workers live at the mine site for two weeks continuously and are away from their families.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Elders on site, and visits, counsellors, advisors, daycare services, after class tutoring. Each program has one full time counsellor/ life skills coach.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Individuals needing support for personal time management and/or mental health issues are referred to the appropriate professional inc. the Employee and Family Assistance Program. |
| <b>16. Steering Committee</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a Steering Committee?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Advisor<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institution<br><input type="checkbox"/> Funding Agency<br><input type="checkbox"/> Government Departments<br><input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources<br><input type="checkbox"/> Instructor<br><input type="checkbox"/> Program Coordinator other than the Instructor<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other Employers in the Industry<br><input type="checkbox"/> Participants<br><input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory Authority<br><input type="checkbox"/> Senior Management (in company)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor (in company)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Union Representative<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other | 5<br>3<br>3<br>3<br>3<br>4<br>4<br>4<br>3<br>2<br>3<br>4 | 2  | <input type="checkbox"/> Range from 8-15 people<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Post Secondary, Adult Education, Intergovernmental Affairs, Justice and Aboriginal<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> University-Distance Education Expert<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chair of Aboriginal Education<br><input type="checkbox"/> Graduates of Previous Programs  |

**Canadian Indigenous People: WorkPlace Literacy and Essential Skills**

| Area of Interest  | Question(s) asked   | Yes              | No | Further information   |
|---|---|------------------|----|---|
| <b>17. Program funding</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> 100% Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> 50% Government and 50% Employer/Sector Council<br><input type="checkbox"/> 100% Employer<br><input type="checkbox"/> 100% Participants' Fees<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other   | 2<br>2<br>2<br>1 |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Project based funding in one program.<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal groups+industry   |
| <b>18. Program administration</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Through the Educational Institution<br><input type="checkbox"/> Through the Regulatory Authority<br><input type="checkbox"/> Through the Employer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Through the Funding Agency<br><input type="checkbox"/> Through the Sector Council<br><input type="checkbox"/> Through a Community Based Organization<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other | 3<br>2<br>3      |    |   |
| <b>19. Critical elements that ensure the success of the program</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any other critical elements that ensure the success of the program?  |                  |    | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication between students, the instructor, advisors and industry.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility to meet the needs of employees and contractors.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated staff, celebrate successes and the space is a learning space.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Regularly scheduled work release time for workers needing skill development (supervisory support) AND learner commitment to continued studies when off work and the availability of community support. I would like to see Individual Learning Development Plan for employees and to develop more systematic learner evaluation methods to measure demonstrable gains and their benefits to the organization.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Respectful adult environment where learners have input and make decisions. Experiential learning is appropriate as there are many opportunities for learners to tell their stories, to be seen and to be heard. |

## **Discussion of Results**

At first glance, what is immediately evident in the array of programs surveyed is that the focus of the program is on the learner/participant. When the overall guiding philosophy of all of the programs is examined, this focus, for example “prepare students for trades and post-secondary program” or “support Aboriginal learners to acquire basic skills in an Aboriginal friendly environment” is the foundation upon which the programs is based.

While the program planning itself may be developed by an educational institution, as is the case in four of the surveyed programs, again the focus is on the participant. Those surveyed indicated “the program is designed to address the needs of the students” or “has to be relevant to the participant”. A number of programs combine the needs of an educational institution, with defined accreditation criteria, with those of an employer. In this way, a participant can improve the skills needed on their job and simultaneously gain a credential. Another critical element is the willingness to develop customized programs to meet the needs of participants. One program, located in a remote Northern community, conducts a Community Needs Assessment within its community to determine appropriate training needs. While initially the participants may not have input into the program planning stage, ultimately conducting an assessment at this level ensures that the learner will be participating in a training initiative that will, in the long term, enable them to live and work within their own community. Hence, again the focus on the needs of the learner.

When the actual program logistics are being scheduled, again the focus on the learner is evident – “they are consulted with regard to their schedules and availability”. All of the programs surveyed have an informal assessment process e.g. a brief interview with the instructor as an entry requirement and while programs working with regulated trades or programs may have more formal assessment procedures, the need to establish rapport and a comfort level for the learner is critical. Coupled with this factor is that the learners volunteer to participate in the workplace programs surveyed. Many of the programs acknowledge the courage that people need to even volunteer to participate in a workplace program and these programs work with the knowledge and skills of the individual at their entry into the program. Only two of the programs surveyed had a requirement for classes prior to enrolment into the ‘workplace’ program. While such a requirement might be initially construed as a barrier, the experience that the participants gain in these programs ensures that they are successful in subsequent workplace programs. One program, in an urban setting, has a four-week pre-requisite program prior to the beginning of the class. The group contract is established and the elements of trust and belonging are established. It is only under very rare circumstances that somebody is allowed to join the group after this four-week period. In another program, a portfolio-based assisted prior learning assessment process assists learners in identifying

their skills and knowledge, set goals, establish direction and build self-esteem and self-awareness.

With regard to financial support given to participants, four of the seven programs were able to fund the participants for all of their time spent in a course. This is a slight shift change from the more traditionally based workplace education programs where employees participated on a 50:50 level where their employer paid for 50% of their time in class. The majority of the programs surveyed do not have a tuition fee.

In terms of the details for a course the following emerged:

- ❑ The average number of participants per class ranged from an individual tutorial to 24 people per class. Average number is 15 people per class.
- ❑ The length of each class ranged from 1.5 hours to classes all day with regularly scheduled breaks. Average class length is 2-3 hours.
- ❑ The number of classes ranged from 2 to 10 classes per week. On average there are three classes per week.
- ❑ The length of each course ranged from 3 weeks to 10 months. Average length of classes is 15 weeks.

Classes take place in many different locations: on site at the job, in the community or at an educational institution. The previous trend of being learner-centred is again evident as all of the programs indicated that the participants have input into the course details such as the time of the class, number of classes per week, location, breaks etc.

In terms of instructors, five of the seven programs surveyed indicated that the instructor/practitioner is a certified licensed teacher. Six of the seven programs indicated that the instructors have a specialty in Adult Education. This clearly delineates the need to ensure that instructors are informed in the pedagogy of adult instruction as the needs and experiences of adults are significantly different than that of children or youth. An interesting divergence emerged when the programs were asked about the criticality of the instructor being an Aboriginal person. Two programs clearly thought it was critical to their programs and the other programs, while acknowledging its importance, said, "While cultural homogeneity between learners and the workplace would be good, what is important is that s/he has great rapport, organized, skilled and motivates learners with suitable learning opportunities". The instructors in the programs surveyed had on average 11 years of teaching experience and nine years working in the industry. The majority work on contract earning in the range of \$15-\$55/hour, an average earning of \$29/hour. Salaried employees did not disclose their earnings. All of the instructors are given preparation time to deliver their programs. This length of time varies greatly and largely depends on the type of course and whether or not it has been previously delivered. Five of the seven programs surveyed indicated that both funding and release time was available to instructors to participate in professional development opportunities both in-house and off-site.

Wide arrays of instructional strategies are used in the programs including individual instruction, peer tutoring, and field trips. Other creative ways of instructing suggested are job shadowing, role-playing and the use of customized case studies. Again, the theme of being focused on the learner emerges as all of the programs indicated that the participants have input into the instruction of the classes. There is a need to accommodate the learning styles of many within the classroom scenario. All of the seven programs use computers as a means of instruction e.g. keyboarding, spreadsheets, as a resource, to conduct research on-line and to email. Such skills are vital to ensure long-term employability in today's economy. In one program, mandatory safety training is delivered entirely on computer. The materials used, in the majority of programs, were contextualised to reflect the industry. Instructors in the majority of the programs integrate traditional Aboriginal teachings into the programs. Of particular note is the desire to incorporate teachings that relate directly to the participants' roots. Iroquois, Inuit and Dene teachings have been used in classes. One program has seven different official Aboriginal language groups working on site and as appropriate, is integrated into the classes to make the information more relevant to the learners.

There is an extensive array of quantitative and qualitative methods used to evaluate the programs. Methods cited include:

- Attendance rates
- Retention rates
- Success rate in Scheduled Exams
- Success rate in Certification/Licensing Exams
- On-going project based activities in class
- Class participation
- Pre and Post Course Evaluations
- Journals
- Increased self-esteem
- Supervisor's evidence of increased productivity
- Increased participation in community events.

A very striking feature is the importance on the participants' evaluation of the program. One program has an additional evaluation component of extensive self and peer-evaluation in addition to an evaluation of the program itself.

The support provided to *potential* participants, where the courage to walk through the door is acknowledged, is provided in all seven programs surveyed. In one program in Winnipeg, approximately 400 people visit the program every year and only 120 people are actually enrolled in classes. The program is extensively networked with approximately 250 agencies in Winnipeg and can direct people to the most appropriate help needed. Extensive support is also available to the participants in all of the seven

programs surveyed. A number of programs have Elders on-site or Elders visit the program on a regular basis. Many programs have counsellors, advisors, daycare services, and after class tutoring available. One program in Winnipeg has one full-time counsellor/life skills coach for each course and this aspect of the program is crucial to ensure the success of the program for the participants.

In terms of the structuring of the administration of the program, the majority of the programs have a steering committee consisting of a wide array of representatives including the Aboriginal community, educational institutions, government, human resources, the instructor, participants, and senior management. Other representatives included a specialist in distance education delivery and graduates of previous programs. The funding for the programs is derived essentially from government and the employers and is typically administered through the primary funding source.

Critical elements that ensure the success of the program focused on the need for on-going communication between all involved in the program and the need for flexibility to meet the needs of all involved. In addition, it is also critical to celebrate success!

### **Implications and Recommendations for Program Planning**

Based on the findings the following factors are critical to consider in the development of programs:

- ✓ It is critical that the program is as learner-centred as possible and involves the participants in as many aspects of the programming as possible. As an extension of the concept of being learner-centred, it is also critical to acknowledge the learner as a whole person who might need additional support/flexibility to overcome personal barriers such as daycare issues or other personal matters.
- ✓ Voluntary participation in the programs and, preferably, the willingness of the employers to pay the employees when they attend the classes.
- ✓ Instructors experienced in the delivery of workplace education programs and an awareness of issues impacting the workplace and the need to be flexible to these concerns.
- ✓ Principles of Adult Learning using a wide array of instructional and evaluation strategies must be used. It is critical that the instructor adapt their instructional strategies to the needs of the Aboriginal learner. There is evidence in the literature to focus on doing, talking and then reading about an activity, rather than the more usual approach of reading, talking and then doing an activity (Hughes and More, 1997 and MacKellar, 2005). In addition, observing and imitating the work of peers is a legitimate way of informal learning in Aboriginal culture.
- ✓ Integration of traditional teachings reflecting the participants' roots as an inherent part of the contextualized materials delivered in the course. Examples include

ethnomathematics (the study of mathematics of cultural groups) (Gilsdorf, 2005), where different aspects of math may be taught using an Aboriginal perspective. Further evidence discussed at the Essential Skills Invitational Symposium (March 2005, Saskatoon) reiterated the importance of ensuring that essential skills are taught in context of the whole person and the community from where they originate. Additional resources can be found on-line, including Cradleboard Teaching Project ([www.cradleboard.org](http://www.cradleboard.org)) and further information on a holistic approach to instruction is described in *Literacy and Learning: Acknowledging Aboriginal Holistic Approaches to Learning in Relation to "Best Practices' Literacy"* Training programs (OISE, 2003). An additional resource is the *Rainbow/Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy* (2002). Instructors need to be sensitive to nuance and bias that exist in materials. Further information uncovered in the course of the research for this initiative is presented in Appendix A.

- ✓ The need for on-going communication between the instructor, the workplace and the participant and other steering committee members. It is also critical to maintain detailed program documents, as this information will support the program as a business case.
- ✓ It is critical to ensure that sufficient time, support and funding are provided for all aspects of the program including strategic partnerships prior to, during and after the implementation of the program.
- ✓ Supportive employers who see a value in the learning acquired regardless of the levels attained are essential. Whenever possible, identify and engage program champions at the level of senior management in the company.
- ✓ A 'safe' learning environment, where participants can learn, take risks and are respected regardless of their literacy skills.

#### **Summary of Key Factors to Ensure Successful Implementation of Programs**

- ✓ Learner-Centred
- ✓ Voluntary Participation
- ✓ Adult Educators
- ✓ Integration of culturally appropriate materials
  - ✓ On-going Communication
  - ✓ Strategic Partnerships
  - ✓ Supportive Employers
- ✓ Safe Learning Environment

## Checklists for Guidance when Implementing Workplace Development Programs

### ***Overall Program Structure:***

#### **1. Review the following list and consider the importance of the Program's Steering Committee Structure. Who would make a valuable contribution and enrich the program?**

- Aboriginal Advisor?
- Educational Institution Representative?
- Funding Agency Representative?
- Government Departments?
- Instructor?
- Program Coordinator other than the Instructor?
- Primary Employer?
- Human Resources within a company?
- Other Employers in the Industry?
- Participants?
- Regulatory Authority, if applicable?
- Senior Management (in company)?
- Supervisor (in company)?
- Union Representative, if applicable?
- Is there a means of recording, preparing and distributing minutes/outcomes of the meetings?
- Is there a means of tracking the in-kind contributions from committee members and their supporting organizations?

#### **2. Factors to consider in Program Logistics**

- Is there a prerequisite course prior to the program beginning? How critical is this prerequisite course to the program outcomes and is it a barrier to many potential participants?
- Is there a formal assessment process e.g. CAAT prior to the program beginning? How critical is this prerequisite to the program outcomes and is it a barrier to many potential participants?
- What considerations are in place to recognise the participants' prior learning?
- Are guidelines in place on how to conduct assessments ethically and in a confidential manner?
- Is there an Informal Assessment process e.g. brief interview with instructor prior to the beginning of the program?
- Is there an Orientation and Voluntary Sign-up prior to the beginning of the program?
- Are Application Forms compliant with legal and ethical regulations?
- Is financial support available for the participants in the course?
- Is there a tuition fee for the participant?

### Checklists for Guidance when Implementing Workplace Development Programs

(continued)

- Average number of participants per course?
- Length of each class?
- The number of classes per week?
- Length of course?
- Is the length of the course appropriate i.e. not too long and not too short?
- Where does the course take place?
- Is the location constantly available for the program?
- Is the location of the course clean, safe and easily accessible?
- Is there sufficient equipment such as tables, desks, computers etc. available on a consistent basis at the location?
- Is it necessary to provide transportation to and from training?
- Is it necessary to provide financial support for child or elder care?

### 3. Factors to consider when retaining an Instructor

- Is it critical to the program that the instructor a certified licensed teacher? Licensing requirements for apprenticeship may require a certified licensed teacher.
- Does the instructor have a specialty in Adult Education?
- Does the instructor have experience teaching as a workplace educator?
- Does the instructor have previous experience working in the industry?
- Is the Instructor experienced integrating traditional teachings into their mode of instruction?
- Does the instructor use a variety of instructional techniques?
- Is it critical to the program that they are Aboriginal?
- Is the instructor on contract or an employee?
- Is preparation time given to the instructor to prepare the course?
- Is the instructor developing new materials or using materials that were delivered in a previous course? How will the effectiveness of the materials be evaluated?
- Are the materials appropriate for use in an Adult Education environment? Are the materials well organized, up to date, understandable, clear and free from cultural, racial, class and gender bias?
- Is there funding and release time for the instructor to participate in training and professional development?

**4. Program Evaluation: It is critical that students are advised how their performance in the program will be evaluated.**

| Evaluation Strategy                           | Documentation  | Accountability   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Quantitative Methods</b>                   |  |  |
| Attendance rates                              | Participants sign themselves into each class. If possible, an employee number is also used.                                    | Clearly documents who has attended classes. If a participant leaves class early, the departure time is noted and initialled by the participant. Avoids disputes when employers are paying for a portion or all of the time in attendance or if the number of hours of in class attendance is a prerequisite for course completion. |
| Retention rates                               | Permission is sought in writing at the time of application to contact the person if they leave the course prior to its ending. | The person is contacted and the reason(s) for departure is noted. If a large proportion of a program is leaving for similar reasons, the program must be adjusted accordingly.   |
| Success rate in Scheduled Exams               | Participants are advised in writing at the beginning of the program how the class will be evaluated.                           | The instructor ensures that the marks are recorded and stored securely whether in paper or electronic format. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner.   |
| Success rate in Certification/Licensing Exams | Permission is sought in writing at the time of application to contact the licensing authority for results.                     | The instructor ensures that the results are stored securely whether in paper or electronic format. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner.  |
| In-class quizzes                              | Participants are advised in writing at the beginning of the program how the class will be evaluated.                           | The instructor ensures that the marks are recorded and stored securely whether in paper or electronic format. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner.   |

**Checklists for Guidance when Implementing Workplace Development Programs**

(continued)

| <b>Evaluation Strategy</b>                 | <b>Documentation</b>   | <b>Accountability</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| On-going project based activities in-class | Participants are advised in writing at the beginning of the program how the class will be evaluated.   | Using the principle of reflective practice, the instructor can document at the end of each class if any of the participants excelled or if any of the participants had poor performance below expectations. Ongoing poor performance may indicate that the participant needs further support either personal or academic. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner. |
| Class participation                        |  | Using the principle of reflective practice, the instructor can document at the end of each class if any of the participants excelled or if any of the participants had poor performance below expectations. Ongoing poor performance may indicate that the participant needs further support either personal or academic. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner. |
| Pre and Post Course Evaluations            | Participants are advised in writing at the beginning of the program how the class will be evaluated.   | The instructor ensures that the results are stored securely whether in paper or electronic format. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and respectful manner.  |
| Transfer of Learning Strategy              | This is a defined structured strategy where prior to the beginning of a course a transfer of learning strategy is put in place. Supervisors are advised, on an on-going basis what is being taught and actively works with the participant to apply this knowledge or skills to the workplace situation. | Using this method, where people apply what they learned at work and document the outcomes provides the instructor with an excellent opportunity to flex to the needs of the participant. There is the ability to revise if further improvement is needed or to move quickly onto further information if it is documented that the participant has mastered the knowledge or skill(s).                  |

**Checklists for Guidance when Implementing Workplace Development Programs**

(continued)

| Evaluation Strategy  | Documentation                         | Accountability   |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Qualitative Methods</b>   |                                       |  |
| Journals between the participants and the instructor               | Either in paper or electronic format. | The instructor ensures that the journals are stored securely whether in paper or electronic format. Feedback is provided to the student in a confidential and non-judgmental manner. In most jurisdictions if anything of a criminal/abusive nature is disclosed, the instructor must inform the police. |
| Instructor's anecdotal evidence of increased self-esteem           | Either in paper or electronic format. | Using the principle of reflective practice, the instructor can document at the end of each class evidence of increased self esteem e.g. greater willingness to participate in class, posture, clothing and overall disposition.  |
| Supervisor's evidence of increased productivity                    | Either in paper or electronic format  | The instructor can maintain on-going regular contact with supervisor and ask for evidence of increased productivity or efficiency.   |
| Anecdotal evidence from co-workers/family/friends                  | Either in paper or electronic format  | The instructor can document as it arises.  |
| Other: e.g. greater willingness to participate in community events | Either in paper or electronic format  | The instructor can document as it arises.  |

## **Workplace Practitioner Development**

Despite the preponderance of Adult Education for many decades and the more recent shift to life long learning after post secondary education is completed, the position of a Workplace Practitioner remains relatively unknown. The role of such an instructor is one of a facilitator between the world of work and the essential skills required for tasks in a job. In addition, the instructor has to balance the needs of the actual industry with those of the participants while at the same time delivering learner-centred relevant materials. Frequently, the instructor is the 'portal' of information conveying the needs and wants of an industry to the employees and conversely, enabling employees to work cohesively within an industry that may have very different values.

People tend to gravitate to the position of a Workplace Practitioner. Many are certified licensed teachers (within the K-S4 system) who have 'floated' into Adult Education and are open to the challenge presented by the role of a Workplace Practitioner. In remote Northern communities, where many First Nations workplace development programs are delivered, there are a number of limiting factors to consider. Within society there is a lack of understanding for the need for Workplace Practitioner..."after all he's got his grade ten, why do I have to pay to teach him to read and write?" There is difficulty in trying to find people to teach in remote communities and it is difficult to pay people a reasonable wage to teach when small businesses are competing with mining, gas and oil companies. The other significant factor is that physical resources are stretched and frequently, a suitable learning space is not readily available (NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils, 2005).

In 1999, the National Literacy Secretariat published "The Maturing of a Profession: An Overview of Workplace Education Practitioner Development Opportunities" (Roger, 1999). This report profiles many of the professional development opportunities made available to Workplace Education Practitioners across Canada at the local, regional and national level. Almost all of the training opportunities are delivered on an 'as needed' basis and tended to be at the introductory level. Topics covered include basic principles and processes in Workplace Education, conducting needs assessments within an organization, program design and evaluation tools and techniques. The training events tended to be one or two day events and the focus has been on practical skill development with theoretical, philosophical or academic components less common. There was minimal articulation with academic institutions. Only one practitioner development opportunity was structured as a mentored practicum (Literacy BC and ABC Canada, 1997).

There have been a number of attempts to document the skills that are needed to be a Workplace Practitioner (Millar, 1999?). In 2003, the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition documented the Practitioner Standards Model Development Project for practitioners in the field of Native Literacy. A recent publication, 'Hardwired for Hope – Effective ABE /Literacy Instructors' focuses on the qualitative aspects needed to be an instructor <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/hwired/cover.htm> In 2005, the Workplace Practitioner Competency System<sup>®</sup> was developed. A summary is provided below.

**The Workplace Practitioner Competency System<sup>®</sup>, funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)** provides a comprehensive understanding of the critical competencies that lead to successful performance as a Workplace Practitioner specializing in Essential Skills Solutions.

The project, led by **Sandi Howell, Essential Skills & PLAR Coordinator, Industry Training Partnerships of Manitoba Advanced Education and Training in partnership with Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC)**, is a critical step to defining the professional requirements of Workplace Practitioners who work with learners, at all levels, within all types of systems. This is a direct response to implementing the Manitoba Essential Skills Framework, which includes three strategic goals: build awareness of the value of Essential Skills, improve Essential Skills assessment outcomes and develop effective training responses.

**Rosalie E. Olson, of Dynamic Resource Management, Winnipeg Manitoba designed The Workplace Practitioner Competency System<sup>®</sup>** is based on comprehensive research and needs assessment process. Recognizing the national and international trend toward increase certification of professionals in many fields and occupations, The Workplace Practitioner Competency System<sup>®</sup> incorporates a learner-centred model and uniquely integrates the Human Resource Skills Development (HRSD) Canada Essential Skills methodology into the problem-solving process that leads to learner-centred solutions.

The System includes a three-dimension model that defines the depth and scope of Workplace Practitioner practice, including comprehensive competency statements, self-assessment tools, and sample Learning Plans. **The Workplace Practitioner Competency System<sup>®</sup>** recognizes the importance of linking a diverse range of roles around the common goal – address the Essential Skills levels of Canadians. The System defines five Foundation KSA (Knowledge, Skills, Attributes) competency areas, seven Areas of Workplace Practice and five Essential Skills Integration levels. The Foundation KSA competency areas cross all seven Areas of Practice to show the importance of these competencies in successful workplace practice. Of note, the Foundation KSA: Personal Attributes, illuminates the distinct set of personal attitudes and attributes that Workplace Practitioner must bring to their work with learners in order

to respond effectively to their needs. It captures a learner/client-centred mindset together with the care and sensitivity necessary to recognize and respect all learners in their learning process.

**The Workplace Practitioner Competency System**<sup>®</sup> achieves a number of key outcomes. It defines the competency requirements of workplace education and the Essential Skills connection in developing and implementing learning solutions. It allows practitioners to determine their Workplace Practitioner Competency Profile and develop a Learning Plan to direct their professional development activities by using the competency-based guidelines and self-assessment outcomes and, it an important tool for leaders to build practitioner capacity within their organization.

The project is currently in Phase II, which includes testing **The Workplace Practitioner Competency System**<sup>®</sup> with a range of practitioners and workplaces to address actual learning and business needs. For more information, please contact: Rosalie E. Olson  
E-mail: [reo.dynamic@shaw.ca](mailto:reo.dynamic@shaw.ca)

## Bibliography

1. Antone, E and Wang, L. (2005) Policy Implications for Aboriginal Literacy. Presentation at Shawane Dagoiwin (Being Respectful, Caring and Compassionate for Aboriginal research) Forum in Winnipeg, Manitoba June 1-3, 2005.
2. Best Practices in Action: Tools for Community Based Adult Literacy and Basic Education Program. NWT Literacy Council 2004
3. Brant Castellano, Marlene (2005). Comment made during the Keynote Address at Shawane Dagoiwin (Being Respectful, Caring and Compassionate for Aboriginal research) Forum in Winnipeg, Manitoba June 1-3, 2005.
4. Brunnen, B (2004). Working towards parity: Recommendations of the Aboriginal Human Capital Strategies Initiative. Canada West Foundation.
5. Gilsdorf, T. (2005). Ethnomathematics of Indigenous Groups. Presentation at Shawane Dagoiwin (Being Respectful, Caring and Compassionate for Aboriginal research) Forum in Winnipeg, Manitoba June 1-3, 2005.
6. Government of Canada (2003): Raising Literacy Skills-The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response, Parliamentary Report on Literacy in Canada, Ottawa, 2003 p. 31 in Lamontage, F. (2004). The Aboriginal Workforce: What lies ahead. Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC Commentary).
7. Guimond, E (2003) in Lamontage, F. (2004). The Aboriginal Workforce: What lies ahead. Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC Commentary).
8. Hughes, P. and More, A (1997). Aboriginal Ways of Learning and Learning Styles. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education. December 4, 1997.
9. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) 2005. Building Essential Skills in the Workplace. ISBN 0-662-39637-5.
10. Lamontage, F. (2004). The Aboriginal Workforce: What lies ahead. Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC Commentary).
11. Literacy and Learning: Acknowledging Aboriginal Holistic Approaches to Learning in Relation to "Best Practices" Literacy Training programs. (OISE, 2003).
12. Literacy BC and ABC Canada (1997). Mentored Practicum: A Pilot Project with Workplace Educators-Final Report September 1997.
13. MacKellar, C (2005) A discussion on Aboriginal Education on [www.paragonvisualeducation.com.au/aboriginal\\_learningstyles.html](http://www.paragonvisualeducation.com.au/aboriginal_learningstyles.html)
14. Millar, R. (1999?) DACUM facilitated on the skills of a Workplace Educator. Attended by author.
15. National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) (2005). Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills-Best Practices Synthesis.
16. NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils (2005). Workplace and Workforce Literacy in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut: A Discussion Paper. Developed by Havi Echenberg, March 2005.

17. Ontario Native Literacy Coalition 2003. Practitioner Standards Model Development Project. Kate Thompson Researcher/Writer.
18. Roger, M. (1999) *The Maturing of a Profession: An overview of Workplace Education Practitioner Development Opportunities*. NLS Publication ISBN 0-662-27627-2.
19. Statistics Canada June 2004. Literacy Scores, Human Capital and Growth across Fourteen OECD Countries. Authors S. Columbe, F. Tremblay and S. Marchand in Lamontage, F. (2004). *The Aboriginal Workforce: What lies ahead*. Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC Commentary).
20. The Conference Board of Canada-Case Study on The North West Company in Education and Learning Section (2002).
21. The Rainbow/Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy – Rainbow in the Living Literacies Text in the November 2002 Conference.

## **Appendix A**

### **List of Aboriginal References**

#### **Teaching**

1. AlphaPlus: AlphaRoute Placement Tool: Informal on-line assessment tool designed to identify literacy students' starting levels for reading writing and numeracy outcomes in Alpha Route (April 5, 2005). Online newsletter.
2. AUSTRALIA: A Handbook of case studies: Models of delivery of vocational education and training in schools in rural and remote areas: Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. Government of Australia, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (2000).
3. AUSTRALIA: Connecting Youth: Snapshot of Vocational Education Participation by Indigenous Youth living in remote Northern Territory by Louise Clark and Pam Bettison (2002).
4. AUSTRALIA: Multiliteracies and life transitions: Language, Literacy and Numeracy Issues in an aboriginal health worker training. Every, A. Language Australia (2002).
5. AUSTRALIA: The impact of context on Indigenous vocational education and training aspirations and outcomes by Susan Gelade and Tom Stehlik. Australian National Training Authority (2004).
6. Bibliography of Aboriginal Literacy Resources 1986-2004. National Literacy Secretariat Website at [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/nls/Resources/04\\_alrbib.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/nls/Resources/04_alrbib.shtml)
7. Collaborative Needs Assessment: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners by Sue Folinsbee and Paul Jurmo (Includes information on clarity and bias in workplace documents). Available at [www.abc-canada.org](http://www.abc-canada.org)
8. Developing a Process for Evaluating Education in a First Nations Community. PhD Dissertation by Donald S. Tessier, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta (2003).
9. First Nations Technical Institute-Janice Brant- PLAR Process for Aboriginal Peoples.
10. Indigenous Knowledge in a multicultural world by David Newhouse, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Native Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario.
11. Indigenous Women's health Book: Within the Sacred Circle (2005). Published by the Native American Women's health Education Resource Center. ISBN 0-9741297-0-4.
12. Literacy BC: A Whole-System Approach to designing and developing aboriginal culture based literacy curriculum program lesson plans (2001) ONLC.
13. Literacy BC: ABE first Nations Students: Delivery Styles and Curriculum in BC.
14. Literacy BC: Communications Strategy (2001) ONLC.
15. Literacy BC: Educating for Change: Community-Based, Student Centered Literacy Programming with First Nations Adults. (1994).
16. Literacy BC: Empowering the Spirit: Native Literacy Curriculum.
17. Literacy BC: Good Practice in use: Guidelines for good practice in Workplace Education.

18. Native Learning Styles – Revised Edition 2002 from ONLC.
19. Research in Practice Initiatives: Importance of establishing rapport in the classroom.
20. Teaching and Learning with Native Americans: A Handbook for Non-Native American Adult Educators. Schultz and Kroeger (1996). Compiled from the Four Winds Walk in Balance on Mother Earth Curriculum Guide for the Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Centre Inc.

### **Partnerships**

1. Aboriginal Canada Portal inc. information on national and provincial aboriginal organizations.
2. Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada. Information online.
3. Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships. Information online.
4. Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative – best practice case studies available. Information online.
5. Interprovincial Association on Native Employment. Information online.
6. Partners for Careers- Roberta Hewson- Executive Director. Based in Winnipeg; Information online.
7. Recruitment and Hiring Guidelines- Aboriginal Employers Resource (Martens and Associates, 1994). Edmonton, Alberta.

### **Further Information**

1. AUSTRALIA: Indigenous Education, Ainley (Australian Council for Educational Research). A longitudinal study evaluating educational practices that enhances educational outcomes for students 2002 onwards.
2. AUSTRALIA: Indigenous Training Review Frames Skills Agenda (14 Feb. 2005) Press Release.
3. AUSTRALIA: New Effort needed to improve Indigenous Education (2004) Press Release.
4. AUSTRALIA: The role of Community Development Employment Projects in rural and remote communities (2004). National Centre for Vocational Education Research (36 pages).
5. AUSTRALIA: Work together for Indigenous Youth (2005). An initiative by the Australian Government-Department of Education, Science and Training.
6. Canada and Manitoba sign partnership to bring employers and aboriginal communities together (News Release, March 9, 2005).
7. Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business – Information online.
8. Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) – Urban Initiative Labour Market Development Program- NOTE: Consolidated Revenues Fund (CRF) – Services and programs are described. National Aboriginal Workplace Strategy Workbook is also available.

9. Contact North: Access through Innovation: A Snapshot. Educational and Training Needs of Northern Ontario Residents (2004). Introduction, Survey Overview, Methodology and Logistics, Executive Summary. Primary barriers: cost, finances, funding, expense of tuition, distance, lack of availability of programs/courses, accessibility and availability of schools, lack of educators, having to leave community, lack of job opportunities once graduates, access to technology, telephone and internet service. NOTE: 88.7% of respondents indicated that if the requested training or to take course, they would prefer to stay in their community. Reference included: Building Basic Skills for adults in small remote communities (Knight + Tobin, 2002)
10. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada: Press Release: March 8, 2005: Education Ministers adopt three ambitious action plans on aboriginal education, literacy and post secondary capacity.
11. Equipped for the Future (EFF). A program based in the US that links essential and employability skills into all aspects of a person's life.  
Five-module Aboriginal cultural awareness program is available.
12. Government of Canada announces funding to deliver Skills Development and employment in the Nunavut Offshore Fishery – Press Release March 22,2005.
13. Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council <http://nuuchahnulth.org/index.html>
14. Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network
15. Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board – Keewatin Career Development Corporation.
16. Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board. Learning at Work Project: Essential Workplace Skills: Solutions for the Small Workplace (Curry, 2001).
17. Saskatchewan: First Nations University of Canada, Regina, Saskatchewan. A
18. Sunchild E-Learning Community. Essential Skills and Employability Skills are embedded into the curriculum.