



**Congress of Aboriginal Peoples  
National Aboriginal Workplace  
Strategy**

**Workbook**

**January, 2003**



***Getting Aboriginal people ready for the workplace and  
the workplace ready for Aboriginal people.***

The National Aboriginal Workplace Strategy is a program aimed at opening employment opportunities for Aboriginal People at all levels and in all sectors of the Canadian economy.

**Section A. Strategy**

A specific focused strategy for Aboriginal is required if substantial progress is to be achieved in the integration of Aboriginal persons into the mainstream economy.

The Implementation of this strategy is based on four basic objectives.

1. Identifying an appropriate economic sector
2. Establish achievable employment targets
3. Development of an effective recruiting and training strategy .
4. Implementation of an inclusive workplace strategy.

The Aboriginal Workplace Strategy must consist of a comprehensive set of elements if it is to succeed in achieving its goals and objectives.

1. **Sector Research:** To conduct labour market research to identify economic sectors where Aboriginal people are underrepresented.
2. **Identification and Selection of Employers:** Contact agencies such as HRDC local employment offices, Aboriginal employment centers, training institutions and Economic sector associations such as Chambers of Commerce in order to determine which employers are open to hiring Aboriginal persons.
3. **Voluntary Partnership:** The results of the strategy will be more successful if the employer voluntarily decides to implement the strategy than if required to do so by legislation.
4. **Partnership Implementation Agreements:** These agreements set out the principles on which the implementation strategy is based and identify the commitments of each partner to the agreement.
5. **Steering Committee:** This committee should have representation from all stakeholders in the strategy. Its role is to develop and recommend to the employer the implementation process, policies and procedures needed to achieve the principles set out in the partnership agreement.



6. **Aboriginal Issues Training:** Existing management and staff should participate in workshops. In order for a successful implementation of the Aboriginal employment strategy the employer must enlist the current employees support and participation in cross-cultural workshops.
7. **Workplace Audits:** The employer needs to review all operational policies and practices to identify potential employment barriers. Once these barriers are identified the employer needs to develop a plan to modify these policies and practices.
8. **Occupational Survey:** The employer needs to conduct a survey of all occupations and identify the formal knowledge, skills and experience required for recruitment.
9. **Setting Employment Goals:** Based on the occupational survey the employer should establish hiring goals for Aboriginal workers by occupational class, adopt a time frame, develop and implement a recruitment and hiring plan and implement an orientation and integration plan for Aboriginal employees.
10. **Develop An Education/Training Plan:** The Steering Committee must work with the mandated education and training institutions to develop and/or select suitable training programs for Aboriginal workers.
11. **Addressing Collective Agreement Issues:** Employee unions and the employer need to modify collective agreements regarding seniority and job entry levels, which tend to discriminate against potential Aboriginal employees.
12. **Developing Communications Channels between Employers, Training Institutions and the Aboriginal Community:** Communication networks must include the Aboriginal community in order for referral to job opportunities and to have accurate knowledge/skill needs information.
13. **Co-ordinating the Implementation Strategy:** A coordinating body of stakeholder managers is required to develop the coordination plan and to ensure that it operates effectively.
14. **Monitoring Implementation/Evaluation Process:** This process should identify the information necessary to determine progress and the required information retrieval system, to do a thorough evaluation of the program.
15. **Follow Up:** The follow up plan needs to set out what the expectations are following the initial project phase, this should be in the form of an employer strategy tool kit, which provides measurable objectives and results.



## Section B. Implementation

Implementation and success in achieving the strategy goals and objectives is the visible test of the employers and stakeholders commitment to the strategy.

**Partnership Agreement:** This emphasizes that the strategy involves the Aboriginal community, responsible government agencies and the employer. It is a co-operative process.

The specific initiatives flowing from the partnership agreement include:

- Initiatives to facilitate constructive race and cultural relations by examining misconceptions the employer and employees have concerning Aboriginal communities, peoples and workers;
- Career development initiatives;
- Communications network to the Aboriginal labour force;
- Action plan initiatives;
- Co-monitoring and Evaluation;
- Identifying other/all economic opportunities;

**The Steering Committee:** The committee will plan, develop and recommend the implementation processes to the employer. The employer is responsible for the actual implementation in the work place. Following is an outline of the committee composition and its role:

### Composition:

Affected stakeholders should be represented on the committee. This will include the employer's human resource personnel, a representative from the initiating agency, a representative from the Aboriginal community and a representative from the employee group and/or union(s).

### Role:

Develop an implementation plan that includes:

- Operational goals and objectives of the plan
- The implementation process
- Implementation schedule
- The monitoring and evaluation role of the committee.

The Employer may require some assistance with resources to cover any incremental costs, some budgets may not provide flexibility to assume unbudgeted special service costs ie: Education or Health sectors. It is at this stage of development that serious negotiation with AHRDS sources of training funds should be negotiated.



**Indian and Metis Issues Training Workshops:** Staff at all levels of the workplace need to participate in cultural sensitivity training, it is important that all staff are prepared for the acceptance and integration of Aboriginal employees into the workplace.

**How to Plan and Deliver the Workshops:** The following steps are important for the Steering Committee to follow in the planning and delivery of the workshops:

- Workshop goals
- Proposed content
- Retain a workshop delivery agent
- Developing workshop content
- Informing employer and staff about workshops
- Workshop scheduling
- Employees assess content and value of training
- Tailored workshops – staff with different responsibilities have different training needs. Smaller employers may not be able to have separate training for management and staff.

1. **Workplace Audit:** The workplace audit requires that the employer undertake a systematic review of all administrative policies, procedures, and practices to determine if there are barriers to the hiring of Aboriginal persons. Employers need to prepare a plan to modify, enhance and/or develop initiatives to remove barriers that do exist. This involves addressing the following issues:

**Classification Issues:**

Are the formal education/training specifications appropriate for the job? Are the Employers hiring workers with the minimum qualifications, or workers that are over qualified?

**Recruitment issues:**

How does recruitment take place? Are job openings advertised? How and where are they advertised?

- Many large employers often centralize these functions in a personnel or Human Resources Department. Managers often recruit new employees through their community and social networks. Few, if any Aboriginal people will be part of these networks.
- An important element in the strategy is to get the employer to advertise all job openings through all networks ie: Aboriginal employment centers, friendship centers, education centers, and Aboriginal media recommended by the Aboriginal communities, to ensure that Aboriginal persons are aware of all employment opportunities.



2. **Career Development Planning:** Students in school need to be made aware of career opportunities so that they can make informed choices about what careers they can or want to pursue.
3. **Selection Practices:** How new employees are selected needs to be examined. The employer should be encouraged to use selection panels to ensure that classification requirement and not some form of nepotism or culturally based hiring takes place. Where appropriate the employer should include an experienced and qualified Aboriginal person on the selection panel.
4. **Networking:** Employee networks are an important source of support to employees in assisting them to adjust to the workplace and to cope with work pressures and problems. Aboriginal employees should be encouraged to develop a formal network to support each other and to deal with Aboriginal specific issues.
5. **On the Job Training and Promotion Strategies:** Training and promotion practices need to be adopted which will enable Aboriginal persons to integrate into the workplace. There should be a focus on job training required to prepare Aboriginal employees to compete for management and high skill occupations.
6. **The Occupational Survey of the Workforce:** It will be important to do a survey of occupations
  - Identify types of occupations in the workplace.
  - Identify knowledge /skills/duties/responsibilities.
  - Identify staff composition.
  - Provide information for career development and training plans.
  - Provide information for recruitment and selection processes.
  - Determine if jobs are full, part time, or casual.
  - Assist in setting Aboriginal employment goals.

It is suggested that occupations be classed as follows:

- Those requiring literacy or grade 8;
- Those requiring partial high school; or partial high school plus some trade, vocational or other knowledge/skill training.
- Those requiring grade 12 only or less than 1 year post high school training;
- Technical and professional occupations requiring 1 to 3 years post high school training;
- Professional occupations requiring 3 or more years post high school training.



- Experience required in addition to the formal education/training requirements.

7. **Setting Employment Goals:** Data from the occupational survey should be used to establish Aboriginal employment goals and the time frame for reaching these goals. The following criteria will be used for this purpose:

- The number of potential jobs for Aboriginal employees in each occupational class.
- The time status of achieving employment within the class.
- The average annual employee turnover within the class.



## SECTION C. Addressing Educational/Training Needs

**Identify Occupations where there are Skill Shortages:** In the health care sector as an example, nursing has been identified as an occupation where there are critical shortages with high employee turnover.

**Planning For Career Development through Training:** In many professions, such as nursing, long term planning will be necessary. The Aboriginal community in co-operation with high schools, potential employers and other stakeholders need to implement a career development program in high schools. Some relationship skill development may also need to be integrated into the program. This will include skills needed to relate to colleagues, supervisors, patients and to the new cultural setting they will encounter.

**Identifying Training Roles of Stakeholders:** The following is a brief outline of stakeholder roles:

- Education needs to be stressed in the Aboriginal communities.
- Schools need to include career fairs, career counseling, presentations by different employers and other initiatives;
- Post-Secondary Institutions need to recruit students, provide student support services and refer students to potential employers;
- The employer needs to identify knowledge/skill requirements for occupations, specify what is expected of training institutions in this regard and determine what job training should be the employer's responsibility.
- The provincial post-secondary Education Departments has a role in determining how resources are to be allocated, in approving course curriculum, granting certification and in carrying on relevant research.
- The focus needs to be on whether government policies enable Aboriginal persons to take maximum advantage of training and employment opportunities.
- Government needs to be encouraged to modify policies and practices where necessary.

**Program and Curriculum Development:** The need will be to determine how current training can be enhanced for Aboriginal students and to determine what cultural content should be included in that training.

**Job Orientation:** This orientation should include information about reasons for work place policies/practices, the employee union(s), the union role in the workplace, union contact people, and who Aboriginal people employees can call on for work related issues and Collective Agreement provisions.



**Internal Training for Job Advancement:** The employer should, with the Aboriginal staff, prepare an internal training plan to help Aboriginal employees move up in the occupational hierarchy.



## **Section D. Addressing Collective Agreement Issues – Working with Unions**

There are barriers to Aboriginal employment in Collective Agreements, which include the entry level to employment, seniority rights and internal union representation issues.

### **Issues and Strategies:**

**Entry Level to Jobs** – Low skill/pay entry and casual entry to jobs delays progress to achieving a fair Aboriginal representation in the workforce.

A strategy needs to be put in place to reduce the number of casual positions and to increase the number of full time positions

**Seniority Rights and Issues** – Employees are promoted, paid, laid off and re called on the basis of seniority rather than qualifications or merit. It is recommended that the principle of a more inclusive workplace for Aboriginal people should be incorporated into employee collective agreements.

**Employer Union Partnership Agreements** – The employer can initiate proposal with the union and make them a partner to the Aboriginal employment strategy. The union then becomes a partner with the employer in removing workplace barriers, in recruiting and in retaining Aboriginal workers.

**Internal Union Staffing and Internal Representation Issues** – Unions should be asked to commit themselves to the “Representative Workforce” principle for their own staffing. Unions should provide for meaningful Aboriginal representation on union boards, committees, task forces and other similar bodies.

**Support Services on the Job and for Aboriginal Students** – Appoint Aboriginal union representatives to work with Aboriginal employees. Unions can also support better training opportunities and provide some financial aid.



## Section E. Developing a Communications Strategy

An effective communications network is needed to share information among the stakeholders effective communications are essential to the success of any undertaking.

The following sub-sections include some of the communications channels for exchanging required information:

**Employer – Aboriginal Community:** To recruit Aboriginal workers the employers need to establish routine procedures for making information available regarding job openings.

**Employer/Training Institutions:** Employers need to keep the concerned training institutions aware of specific skills needed, skill shortages, high employee turnover, and specific job openings.

Training Institutions must make the employer aware of: courses currently offered, time and cost to deliver training.

**Aboriginal Community/Union/Employer:** In order to improve relationships between unions and the Aboriginal community it is important to share legal and governing rights; legal, historical, and member information; and to identify problems and find resolutions.

**Government Agency/ Stakeholders:** Government departments/agencies (education systems, labour and education departments, human rights etc.) directly concerned with issues, which impact the employment of Aboriginal persons, need to be involved stakeholders to explore the needs, problems, and solutions of all.



## **Section F. Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Monitoring Functions: Each of the stakeholders will need to be represented on an Overall Strategy Committee to:

- Identify indicators of success
- Prepare an information retrieval process
- Prepare periodic reports for stakeholders

Information Gathering by the Employers:

- How many and what job openings have been advertised in the Aboriginal community and how were they advertised?
- How many Aboriginal candidates were there? How many were hired?
- How many have been terminated and why?
- What support services were offered?
- Data regarding promotions lay off and recall.
- Problems identified by Aboriginal employees.
- Staff training workshops offered on Indian/Metis issues.

Career Development Data:

- Number and type of career initiatives implemented
- Locations, target audience, numbers reached
- Participant feedback

Training Institution Data: designed to address the needs of Aboriginal students

- Support services and systems.
- Numbers of applications received.
- Number of students accepted into training programs.
- Number of graduates.
- Success in job placement.
- Problems with training as identified by Aboriginal students

Collective Agreement Data:

- What problems and/or barriers were identified?
- How and were they resolved?
- What services did unions offer to Aboriginal employees?
- Were steps taken by unions to employ Aboriginal persons as union representatives?



- Was significant Aboriginal representation assured on internal union boards and committee?

**Evaluation:** On an annual basis each committee, council or other structure should evaluate its initiatives against the goals and objectives it established within its mandate area.

Possibly every 3-5 years, the initiating agency should consider appointing a qualified evaluator to do a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy. This should deal with the following:

- Identify goals and objectives and evaluate how appropriate these were.
- Identify problem areas and initiatives that did not work.
- Recommend modifications, additions and other elements, which may need to be incorporated.
- Recommend a plan of action for future initiatives.

**Follow up:** The annual evaluation needs to be followed up with a specific plan of action both for the short and long term. That plan should include:

- The operational goals and objectives.
- Specific initiatives to be taken by each stakeholder to implement its role in the strategy.
- Identify resource needs.
- Update short, medium, and long term employment goals.