

# The National Report On Aboriginal Inclusion

## Special Profile Issue

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#### SPECIAL PROFILE ISSUE 2004

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## How We Serve Our Stakeholders

Welcome to the *Special Profile Issue* of the *National Report on Aboriginal Inclusion*. The purpose of this edition is to give readers a close-up look at the ways the Council serves Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders (AHRDAs) other Aboriginal Labour Market Centres, employers, and the Council's many other partners in government, education, and labour.

Whenever the Board of Directors of the AHRDCC convenes, an uncommon event occurs: a nearly equal number of leaders from governments, national Aboriginal organizations, and the top tiers of corporate Canada – as well as leaders from education and labour — sit down to discuss new opportunities for expanding Aboriginal employment. Such a balance in governance – rare in Aboriginal organizations – perfectly mirrors the Council's commitment to its primary stakeholders.

This *Special Profile Issue* spotlights the Council's driving philosophy: that it invites each stakeholder into new partnerships with its other stakeholders, and that it best serves each stakeholder by serving the others equally well.

## Innovator & Incubator: Your Council at Work

The mission of the AHRDCC is to ensure full participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian labour market. Now in its sixth year, the AHRDCC is a small organization. Given the monumental scale of the task, how can such a small organization make a difference?

Admittedly, all by itself, the AHRDCC cannot make a great difference. But the Council never operates all by itself. The Council is the polar opposite of a "loner" organization. In all of its

initiatives, the Council acts as a catalyst to other organizations, a designer of collaborations, a broker of partnerships, and above all, an innovator and incubator of new strategies for Aboriginal employment. The Council's strategies take on value only when they are shared by partners from Aboriginal labour market centres, Canadian employers, and education and government. This *Special Profile Issue* spotlights the Council's efforts to work with all its stakeholders, and it stresses the Council's guiding philosophy: that the Council can



Board Co-Chair Keith MacDonald (left) with Champions Co-Chair Charlie Coffey (centre) and long-serving past Champion, the Honourable Ralph Goodale (right).

best serve each stakeholder by serving the others equally well.



## Serving Labour Market Delivery Sites: the Council and AHRDAs

*The Aboriginal Sector Council works closely with Canada's AHRDAs (Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders) and their associated centres, LDMs (Local Delivery Mechanisms). The AHRDA strategy is an important part of Aboriginal human resource development in Canada and the Council is one of six pillars of that strategy. The Council is proud of its role as a sector council as well as a partner, a pillar, and a promoter of the AHRDA network.*

### A Message from President Kelly Lendsay The Partnership Cookbook

Sharing recipes is a simple idea. It is how the chefs and kitchens of Canada transfer new knowledge among themselves. Fresh recipes often act as catalysts for advances and innovations in cooking. There is no reason why labour market recipes cannot follow suit.

The AHRDAs (Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders) is a national network of community based "chefs" in Aboriginal human resource development. Other "chefs" include employers, educators, labour, governments and NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) promoting Aboriginal labour market participation. How can new recipes be more readily communicated among these cooks to create new and better recipes? How can cooks collaborate at local, regional and national levels? What cookbooks could serve Aboriginal human resource development?

The cookbook analogy is apt. Aboriginal employment and skills gap shortages involve issues that can be best addressed by network efforts among public, private and educational partners. Just as great chefs recognize the importance of sharing recipe secrets, those of us searching new routes to Aboriginal employment recognize that our efforts are useless unless we share them. How can we develop such networks and transfer such knowledge? Three key issues underlie the creation of a better partnership cookbook.

There is a *disjoint* between the supply and demand aspects of labour market planning. Employers cannot easily access Aboriginal workers and Aboriginal people feel far removed from most employers.

There is a high level of *uncertainty* among private sector employers as to what role they should play in Aboriginal development. With no clear framework, Aboriginal development needs are seen as a "black hole". Investments need to be guided to the early stages of development – career awareness, literacy and early childhood development. Clearly marked roadmaps are required.

There is a *lack of coordination* in aligning employer, public and Aboriginal investments to real

targets and outcomes. With effective mechanisms in place – and again, think of cookbooks – all the potential partners such as, employers, industry associations, AHRDA's and educators, will discover they can best advance their interests by helping Aboriginal people with theirs.

The Aboriginal Sector Council can help address these issues by serving as a catalyst to new partnership networks. Here are four ways that the Council is enriching and rewriting the "partnership cookbook".

The Council has acquired a great deal of human resource information and its website showcases "knowledge assets" — recipes and knowledge in human resource development.

The Council has introduced a "sectoral approach" to the AHRD Strategy across the country. This involves building "people networks" around the 30 different industry sector councils. In two national forums, the Council introduced almost 150 AHRDAs and 16 sector councils to one another.

The Council has worked with other partners to develop world-class tools for the AHRDS such as *Guiding Circles: an Aboriginal Guide to Finding Career Paths*.

*Innovative collaborative* tools and models are needed. Employers complain they cannot locate "skilled Aboriginal workers." Communities seek out stronger links to the private sector. Why should this great divide be a divide at all? The Council's expertise in designing real-time skills and employment projects, and in brokering partnerships offers a way of bridging, and hopefully someday ending, that divide.

The Council has learned much from many of the cooks working inside the AHRDS framework all across Canada. Creating new recipes, recruiting more partnership cooks and assisting Aboriginal clients so that they acquire the skills and learning necessary for meaningful careers is the shared mission of all the partners.



## “It’s Okay to Be Me” — *Guiding Circles*

It is summertime in northern Alberta and at the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, several dozen kids in their teens are spending part of their days with *Guiding Circles*, a manual of exercises designed to help them invest early attention in their career choices. It is a hard time in the community, which has recently suffered the infiltration of gang activity, four stabbings, a murder, and two suicides and several overdoses. Most of the program’s students had never given any attention to career choices. However the effect of *Guiding Circles* proves remarkable, in a way that is best expressed in the “The GC Song,” a rap song written by two of the students, Tyler Blyan and Justine Dumais. It features lines like these:

Yo! The GC book  
Gotta take a look  
Yeah, it helps me see  
It’s okay to be me  
It’s a real cool tool  
Says you gotta stay in school.



“...I particularly want to mention the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada. It has done much to link Aboriginal employment centres with corporate Canada and to nurture and promote innovative HR projects.

The AHRDCC is well positioned to support needed partnerships in training and employment. It has a track record of mobilizing the private sector, Aboriginal organizations, and government to strengthen Aboriginal participation in the labour market.

The Council’s expertise in partnering has enabled it to launch the Aboriginal Inclusion Network, an initiative designed to offer rich connections between Aboriginal employment centres and corporate managers throughout Canada. I encourage Aboriginal employment professionals and corporate managers alike to take advantage of the services the Network offers.”

**The Honourable Ethel  
Blondin-Andrew  
Minister of State (Children  
and Youth), Government of  
Canada, 2003**

*Guiding Circles* is an important innovation in the development of Aboriginal career awareness. It is Canada’s first wholly Aboriginal career guide. Most mainstream career guides invite a student to take a proficiency test and look at alternative career paths that reflect the strengths of such a test. *Guiding Circles* invites the student to embark on a journey of self-discovery balanced with community appraisals of that student.

The Council has made the AHRDAs – Canada’s Aboriginal labour market delivery sites – its partners in promoting and developing the uses of *Guiding Circles*. Co-author Gray Poehnell and the Council’s Trina Maher have traveled to numerous Aboriginal communities and trained over 270 practitioners nationwide in 17 sessions. Training in *Guiding Circles* has occurred in nearly every province and territory in Canada. For information about upcoming training sites in 2004 and 2005, visit the website, [www.guidingcircles.com](http://www.guidingcircles.com).

### What Trainees Have Said about *Guiding Circles*:

“It digs right into the inside of the person. It focuses on the individual.”

– A participant from the Flin Flon Training Session

“It made me focus on the person’s *worth* rather than *skill*; what I mean is it helped me be more creative when working with unemployed Aboriginals. Yes it (*Guiding Circles*) challenged me to look at myself as a recruitment officer and how my strategies were not effective. It made me look in directions I never knew how.”

– Kate V. Morin, participant in the Flin Flon Training Session

“Guiding Circles provides support to employment officers who view their clients as more than a job or work. To see clients and yourself on the whole can be an eye opening experience.”

– Debilyn C. Jordan, participant in the Ottawa Training Session

## Creating an Inclusive Workplace – the Council and Employers

The Aboriginal talent pool represents the fastest-growing workforce in Canada, yet Aboriginal employment is not growing at a comparable rate. One source of this discrepancy is the workplace. How can the Canadian workplace become more open to, and accepting of, Aboriginal employees? The Council works closely with a number of Canadian employers to foster a climate of change and to promote innovative ways in which employers can attract Aboriginal talent and encourage the growth of that talent within their organizations.

### The AHRDCC Welcomes Its Associate Members

The Council is proud to announce its *Associate Membership* program. With this program, the Council gives recognition to those organizations that are partners with the Council in various initiatives, from projects in skills development to the Inclusion Network. An Associate Member of the Council is an organization dedicated to the principles of inclusion and committed to reaching a new threshold of Aboriginal inclusion in the Canadian workplace.

The Council has commissioned a work of art and is in the process of distributing certificates that incorporate this artwork to all its Associate Members. The piece, shown here, was created by renowned Métis artist, Alvin McKay of Saskatoon, known for his widely admired sponge technique, which he uses in applying vibrant acrylic colours to canvas. His work can be found in collections throughout Canada, the U.S.A., Germany, and China.



### Toward the Inclusive Workplace: Resources for Employers

Over the year 2004, the Council will be unveiling several new resources to help employers improve their ROI, or Return on Inclusion. The Council's website and the Inclusion Network will feature a range of new resources, including guidelines, tip sheets, self-assessments and other tools for creating a more inclusive workplace. Likewise, the Council will be publishing *The Employer's Guide to Aboriginal Inclusion*, a small guide designed to help make the workplace a true home to Aboriginal employees. The Council will also continue to give its popular workshop, *Diversified Human Capital: the New Profit Centre*, which has reached more than 400 managers across Canada.

The following five Management drivers provide the framework which organizations use to create the conditions that create Aboriginal inclusion:

**Leadership and Commitment** — An organization's commitment to Aboriginal inclusion is anchored in its leadership, with fixed policies, goals, targets and timetables wholly supported by senior executives (not every company has a Board of Directors - but they all have leaders).

**Recruitment & Retention** — An organization committed to employment equity and diversity engages in practices which encourage the location, recruitment, and retention of Aboriginal people.

**Community Relations** — When an organization demonstrates a commitment to integrating its corporate strategies with those of Aboriginal communities, the results prove mutually beneficial.

**Employee Development** — An organization shows its support for career advancement through its practices and policies around employee development and education.

**Alliances & Business Development** — An organization increases market and profit share and its attraction as partner-of-choice through its ability to seek out, nurture and support new initiatives involving Aboriginal customers, partners and suppliers.

# Extending Employers' Reach into the Aboriginal Talent Pool: the Aboriginal Inclusion Network



Canada's corporate leaders are taking notice of the Aboriginal Inclusion Network (iN), a new means that enables employers to reach deeply into Canada's Aboriginal labour pool and a strategy for nurturing inclusionary practices through the power of partnerships and networking.

Employers are responding enthusiastically to the Inclusion Network. When Canada Post ran a job opportunity for a welder in Winnipeg, the response surprised everyone. "Those people in Winnipeg are just amazed," says Dwight Powless of Canada Post. "The job offer for a welder went up and back came 17 responses. All qualified."

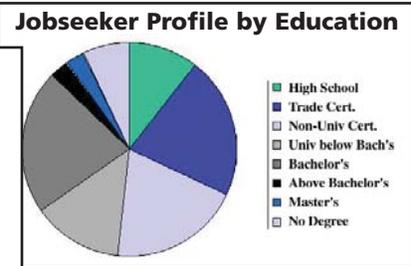
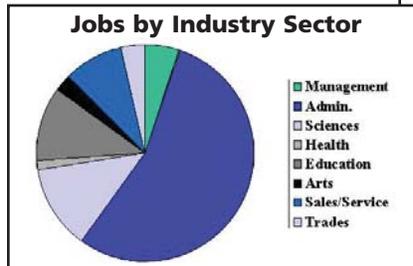
Says Rose Dashchuk, Recruiting, Staffing and Diversity Consultant at Weyerhaeuser Company, "My regional managers are so excited about the Inclusion Network. It offers employers a threefold benefit – leverage, one-stop shopping and increased internal efficiencies."

The appreciation is echoed on the supply side of the equation. Tom Ghostkeeper of the Métis Settlements of Alberta, says, "Great news that there is an organization that will help us connect to the corporate sector – most large companies don't know we exist."

The Inclusion Network offers employers a means of posting job opportunities and sending them to more than 350 Aboriginal employment centres. It offers the employment centres access to the latest information from corporate employers. It offers Aboriginal job-seekers the opportunity to respond to job offerings and post their profiles and résumés on the system's Talent Database. It also offers databases on Aboriginal college programs and scholarships.

The Inclusion Network has been growing rapidly. As of early 2004, more than 60 companies have joined, including Canada Post, Citizens Bank of Canada, HSBC, Petro Canada, the RBC Financial Group, Scotiabank, Weyerhaeuser Company, Shell, Donna Cona, Armour Transport and the Yanke Group

of Companies. More than 2,000 jobseekers have registered for the Inclusion Network and more than half of them have posted profiles and/or résumés of



themselves on the Inclusion Network's Talent Database. More than 95% of the AHRDAs have been trained to use the Inclusion Network. Likewise, postings go to Aboriginal student centres at more than 80 colleges, as well as friendship centres across Canada.

Anyone seeking information about the Inclusion Network can contact Crystal Kosa, by phone (1-866-711-5091) or by e-mail ([clkosa@telusplanet.net](mailto:clkosa@telusplanet.net)), or visit the Inclusion Network at [inclusionnetwork.ca](http://inclusionnetwork.ca).

*"...I want to encourage employers in Canada to take advantage of the Inclusion Network as they plan for their human resource needs of the future. The Inclusion Network provides a unique opportunity to provide fair employment opportunity for Canada's Aboriginal people while at the same time recognizing that the skills of Aboriginal people are an essential part of Canada's economic future."*

- Neil Gavigan, Director, Labour Standards and Workplace Equity

## A Passion for Partnering: the Council and Its Stakeholders

*In its role as innovator and incubator, the Council not only works with AHRDAs and employers but also works closely with government at all levels, with educators, with labour, and with other important partners such as sector councils. No innovation has meaning by itself and no initiative will show real reach and promise until it has been equally shared by partners in both the private and the public sectors. Here are a few glimpses of the Council's passion for partnering at work.*

### The DNA of Partnering: Developing a National Trades Agenda

**W**hat does partnering mean to the Council? It is the DNA of every Council initiative and like DNA, it grows from what it spawns. The more partnering that occurs, the larger the reach of an initiative spreads, ensuring that more partners are attracted – an expanding process that can be seen in one thread of the Council's initiatives: its work in the trades.



In 1999 a Report funded by HRDC, "Making It Work," spotlighted the trades as an excellent route for expanding Aboriginal employment. Following its release, the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Committee launched the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Program, known as AAAP. The goal of AAAP was to get 180 Aboriginal people registered as trade apprentices. As of March, 2004, the program is exceeding targets in meeting this goal.

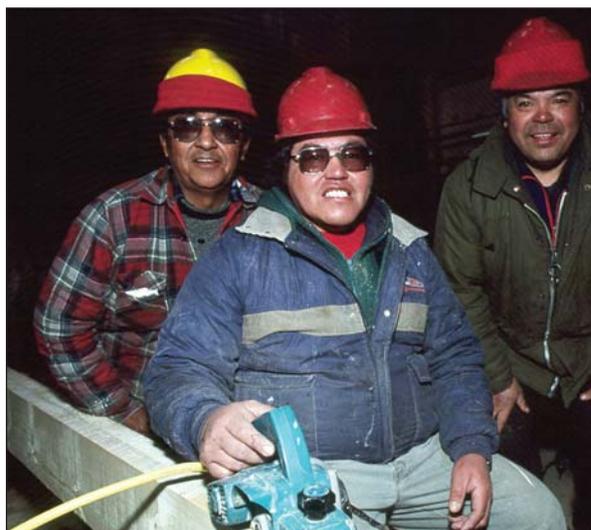
The success of AAAP owes partly to its promotional campaign, "Think Trades" (see [www.thinktrades.com](http://www.thinktrades.com)). The campaign has encouraged Aboriginal people to look seriously at trades and apprenticeships, and has encouraged employers to join the project.

However the most impressive effect of the AAAP may be that it has helped in launching similar trades projects. In a gesture that could be called "hands

across the mountains," the AAAP assisted the Urban AHRDA ACCESS, the First Nations Employment Society, and the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia in launching Aboriginal Careers in the Trades, or ACT. The Council helped the BC groups design an umbrella strategy involving a partnership among the Council, AHRDAs, two levels of government, and private sector companies.

The information sharing between the AAAP and ACT is a concrete example of "knowledge transfer" in action. These real-time projects are concrete examples of "actionable knowledge". The Council wants to promote such projects so other organizations can adapt them as models and templates. The Council's vision is to encourage projects that are so effective in creating employment that they are replicated across Canada, and their practitioners – clusters of new partners applying tested initiatives — become a "community of practice" across Canada.

The Council's vision is fast becoming a reality. The first Aboriginal Western Canadian Trades Symposium is being held October 20-22, 2004 in Saskatoon and efforts are underway to organize a full national forum in 2005. As with DNA, something that begins with a tiny start can go a long, long way.



## Introducing Our Friends and Colleagues to One Another: AHRDAs and the Sector Councils

The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada is one of approximately 30 sector councils, industry driven organizations that address such issues as the rising human resource skills



and learning demands of their respective industry sectors. Their collective goal is to improve the quality of the Canadian labour force. The AHRDCC is a unique sector council, representing a specific labour

market rather than a specific industry. Embedded in this situation is a magnificent opportunity, which the Council has seized, to introduce sector councils for plastics, environment, trucking, construction, wood manufacturing, and other industry areas, to the Aboriginal training sites, or AHRDAs, where Aboriginal people can train to enter these industries.

### **AHRDA – Sector Council Forums**

In November of 2003 and February of 2004, the Council hosted forums in Ottawa and Halifax with the purpose of brokering not only new acquaintances but new collaborations for training Aboriginal people. In those forums, 16 different Sector Councils were given the opportunity to meet with over 150 representatives of AHRDAs and LDMs.

Results of these forums indicate that both sector councils and Aboriginal labour centres wish to pursue a growing friendship. As one Sector Council officer said, “It’s clear to me from what I heard from the AHRDAs that more communication would benefit everyone. Good start here! Thanks.” Among the other comments: “...should be more gatherings/sharing exchange/such as this one” and “This was great...it would be useful to have more.”

### **Emerging Sector Council Opportunities**

One of the results of AHRDAs meeting with Sector Councils is a spotlight on opportunities. Here are two examples:

***Forty Aboriginal internships in trucking are available in spring 2004*** – business operations in marketing, accounting, administration, and other opportunities in the field such as mechanics, dispatchers, and transportation safety professionals. Contact Trina Maher, AHRDCC for more information. (The Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council, CTHRC.)

***Forty Youth Internship Opportunities are available*** to Aboriginal post secondary graduates seeking work experience in the areas of environmental conservation, protection, education and communication. See the BEAHR site, [www.beahr.com](http://www.beahr.com), or look for opportunities listed at [www.inclusionnetwork.ca](http://www.inclusionnetwork.ca).



## Partnering with Educators: the Upcoming Symposia for AHRDAs and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)

How can community college programs across Canada be better tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal training? What innovations in education, training, and distance education can expand employment opportunities for Aboriginal people? How can retention and completion rates improve? Questions such as these are driving a fast-growing partnership between the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the Council, and the AHRDAs and will be the focus of upcoming symposia under discussion.

A pilot forum on this issue was held in March 2004, at the Vancouver Community College with co-hosts, Dale Dorn, President and Roy Mussell, Sto:Lo Nation AHRDA, leading the discussions.

The forum raised questions about aligning educational program development with community needs, developing Aboriginal assessment tools, and providing cleaner routes of access to Aboriginal students over the present “preparation classes.” Anyone seeking further information can contact Trina Maher at [trina.maher@ahrdcc.com](mailto:trina.maher@ahrdcc.com).

## Our Champions and Board of Directors

The Council is fortunate to have a unique, two-tiered governance structure which gives a balanced representation among stakeholders in the major Aboriginal organizations, governments, and industry, with representations as well from organized labour and education.

The Champions are widely recognized leaders in Aboriginal human resource development. They are an indispensable source of vision and long-term guidance. The Board of Directors represents an equivalent balance, ensuring the Council's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal communities, employers, and government.

### THE CHAMPIONS

(as of May 11, 2004)

- John Bernard**, President, Donna Cona Inc.  
**The Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew**, Minister of State (Children and Youth), Government of Canada  
**Gerald Brown**, President, Association of Canadian Community Colleges  
**Kukdookaa Terri Brown**, President, Native Women's Association of Canada  
**The Honourable Pearl Calahasen**, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Government of Alberta  
**James (Jim) E. Carter**, President and Chief Operating Officer, Syncrude Canada Ltd.  
**Clément Chartier**, President, Métis National Council  
**The Honourable Denis Coderre**, Federal Interlocutor, Métis and Non-Status Indians, Government of Canada  
**Charles S. Coffey (Co-Chair)**, Executive Vice-President, Government and Community Affairs, RBC Financial Group  
**Chief Dwight Dorey**, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples  
**The Honourable John Efford**, Minister of Natural Resources, Government of Canada  
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**Martin (Marty) Klyne**, Chairman, National Aboriginal Economic Development Board  
**Jose Kusugak**, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami  
**The Honourable Oscar Lathlin**, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Government of Manitoba  
**The Honourable Andy Mitchell**, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Government of Canada  
**Tim Penner**, President, Procter & Gamble Canada  
**Paul Perkins**, VP Policy & Planning, Weyerhaeuser  
**Chief Sophie Pierre (Co-Chair)**, President, St. Eugene Mission Resort Development, Cranbrook BC  
**The Honourable Maynard Sonntag**, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of Saskatchewan  
**The Honourable Joseph Volpe**, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Government of Canada

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### The National Report On Aboriginal Inclusion

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(as of May 11, 2004)

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**Eleanor Brockington**, Director, Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Government of Manitoba  
**David Chartrand**, President, Manitoba Métis Federation  
**Rose Dashchuk**, Senior Staffing, Recruiting and Diversity Consultant, Weyerhaeuser Company  
**Joe Dragon**, Director, Policy and Communications, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Government of the Northwest Territories  
**André Guertin**, Senior Policy Advisor, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Privy Council Office  
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