Indigenous Workplace Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward
Learn, discuss, succeed. Become a leader for change

An Analysis of the Pre- & Post Survey of Workshop Participants

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Maamaawisiiwin Education Research Centre
An Analysis of Pre- & Post Survey

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About the cover:
The Talking Stick is an intrinsic part of a Talking Circle. Talking Circles are an Indigenous concept that gives all in attendance the right to speak their hearts to others in the Circle. Those that hold the Talking Stick have the opportunity to speak about anything, for as long as they choose, without interruption from others in attendance.
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Introduction

In part, cross-cultural collaborations, led by Indigenous peoples, must reflect Indigenous norms to the non-Indigenous participants as a way of educating that audience. The Indigenous Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward Workshop began with opening remarks offered by the AETS Elder, Mr. Terry Bouchard. Bouchard’s remarks provided a succinct analysis of the realities of Anishinabe and an alternative vision of the future that can be shared by Anishinabe and non-Indigenous peoples in Northwestern Ontario.

Opportunity

The young Anishinaabek finds it psychologically difficult to integrate into the mosaic of Canadian society. They hardly have any successful brothers and sisters to identify within the education, economic, and social structure of our place in this country that we introduced, we are constantly informed by mass media and people that we are stupid, undignified, savage who has many, many problems, constantly, we cannot see ourselves adapting to the roles that may exist for us. Unable to be educated and hurdle these barriers, many return to the security of the Reserves to live out their lives instead of participating in the economic growth this country has to offer.

The secondary school process, which has been exclusively designed for middle class white students, has contributed to alienate the young Anishinaabek from the old.

So, these are just some of the barriers that we face, and there may be more. But the opportunity is here, and it is time to seize on this program the presenters are offering.


If one dreams a good life, one can live a good dream (Bouchard, 2017).
Executive Summary
Recommendations for the Future

Contextualizing Indigenous Inclusion

In general, the knowledge deficit about all things Indigenous, especially in regard to how historical factors contribute to the contemporarily realities, is profound within the non-Indigenous community in Canada.

Many of the national and provincial inquiries including - the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released in 1996, Truth and Reconciliation in 2015, the Inquiry on First Nation Youth Suicide in Thunder Bay in 2016 - have all recommended some form of mandatory education programing in schools to prevent this phenomena from taking root in future generations of Canadians.

But what of the knowledge deficit that exists in business and industry that create the policies and procedures that systemically exclude Indigenous peoples from fully participating in the workplace? How do you support people, generally good people, that want to help but don’t know how? What is the overall goal?

To answer these important questions, it is necessary to understand what is at the centre of the dysfunctional relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that has existed since Jacque Cartier landed in Stadacona in 1535. To that end we offer the following.

Epistemology & Indigenous Inclusion

Willie Ermine (1995), a Cree scholar from Saskatchewan, wrote an important paper titled “Aboriginal Epistemology.” In his paper, Ermine writes:

The year 1492 marked the first meeting of two disparate world-views, each on its own uncharted course of exploration and discovery for purposeful knowledge. The encounter featured to diametric trajectories into the realm of knowledge. One was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other was on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical (p. 101).

In this short paragraph, Ermine captures the essence of the conflict between two epistemic views that still exist to this day in Canada. Ermine’s paper delineates the fundamental differences between an Indigenous epistemology and the epistemology of the dominant Western society. Ermine also examines how the failure to address these differences is the primary barrier to all interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian society.

An epistemology is a set of fundamental values and beliefs that are taught explicitly and implicitly to each new generation. While epistemology guides society, we are often unaware of its presence.
If one were to ask what your epistemology is, few of us would be able to pull together a comprehensive response. Why?

The answer is quite simple. We learn our epistemology as a child through our experience of the world around us and it is reinforced throughout those early years. Consider how a child learns to catch a ball. Learning to catch often begins with play between the child and parent. The new skill may be further reinforced through play with siblings or other children. The skill is formalized and refined when children participate in sports or just on the street when they play street-hockey, or baseball, or basketball.

The point is that our brains are patterned at an early age to respond to a ball hurtling toward us and we respond by attempting to catch it. Catching is a skill that is, for the most part, unconscious in nature and early patterning is literally hard-wired in our heads and stays with us for the rest of our lives. You may not have caught a ball in decades but, if a ball is thrown, you would respond immediately with that deeply learned skill. You would not go through a cognitive process of calculating the trajectory of the object with your eyes and aligning your hands appropriately. You just do it! You would simply react to the stimulus of the ball speeding toward you. If you were 90 you would respond in the same way and attempt to catch a ball.

Our epistemology comes naturally! It is learned in the same way and we are just as unconscious of our epistemology as we are of catching a ball.

**Linking Indigenous Epistemology to Colonization**

Colonization, and the primary tool of assimilation residential schools, were an attempt to stop the natural process of how Indigenous children learn their epistemology from their parents by removing those children from their parents.

The secondary tool of colonization was the total disruption of Indigenous expressions of epistemology - removal from traditional land-bases, the outlawing of traditional forms of governance, the clan system, ceremony, traditional economics, music, medicine, the status of women, language - the list is almost endless.

These were all attempts to eliminate an epistemic understanding that came out of one-hundred and thirty thousand years (Zimmer, 2017) of lived experience Americas and yet Indigenous people are still here.

**The So What Factor**

So, what? This is ancient history, in the past, how is it relevant to Indigenous inclusion? There are two answers to this question that have an impact on Indigenous inclusion in the workplace today.
First, the point is that while the dominant Canadian society was enacting the many tactics of colonization to eliminate an epistemology by eliminating the expression of those values and beliefs of Indigenous people, they were building a dominant society around an equally unconscious epistemology that came from Europe five-hundred years ago and has evolved into western liberal capitalism.

Second, the dominant society is just as unconscious of their epistemology as Indigenous peoples are of theirs. We just both do our epistemology and the society reflects and rewards those that align with a complimentary epistemology. Indigenous peoples, in spite of surviving the greatest colonial experiment in the history of humanity, come to employment with an epistemic understanding that is literally in conflict with the epistemic norms that underpin the policies and procedures of business and industry.

An Example of Epistemic Conflict

Consider the following story, Karen is a First Nation woman, living in an urban centre, a single mom of three, with an educational history that includes leaving high school before completing grade 12.

Karen’s kids are older now and require less of her attention, so she returns to an adult education program and with much sacrifice and determination completes grade 12 and receives an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. One day Karen sees a poster on the school bulletin board recruiting for a Personal Support Worker Program offered by her First Nation.

At this time in her life Karen is motivated to give back to community and has always been close to the elderly. Karen makes some inquiries, eventually applies and is accepted to the program where she gets top grades and her success is acknowledged at graduation.

Almost immediately after graduation Karen is employed as a Personal Support Worker at a long-term care facility close to her home and the school her kids attend. The Human Resource people are kind and thoughtful at the onset.

Karen is good at her job. She is caring, and her clients love her but there is a policy change that is the beginning of the end of her PSW career.

New policy is introduced and Karen and another PSW have six minutes each, to wake-up twenty-five patients, wash, moisturize, check their bodies for new or worsening skin conditions, dress, transfer, to mouth care, toilet and do their hair.
Karen is unable to meet the new policy and she is written up twice by her supervisor for contravening the new policy. Eventually Karen meets with HR and asked why she cannot meet the needs of the new policy and her only response is, “I’m just doing what the patients are asking for. They want to talk, they are not slabs of meat. I can’t throw them around, they are elders and deserve my respect. Besides, how many of you get ready for your day in just six minutes?”

Karen’s arguments fall on deaf ears. The policy is the policy and if Karen cannot do the job others will. Karen is eventually dismissed with cause and her PSW career is over.

In spite of all of her sacrifice, her commitment Karen believes she has failed.

This is but one example of how epistemic conflict plays out in just one sector but this conflict is not relegated to that sector alone, there are many others examples - bereavement leave, traditional hunting and gathering times, child safety - are all typical areas where the dominant epistemology can rub-up-hard against an Indigenous epistemology.

**Thinking Through Epistemic Conflict in the Workplace**

It makes little sense for AETS to recruit, develop, and implement training/educational programming for Indigenous citizens if those graduates enter the workplace and leave shortly thereafter due to similar experiences. Certainly, some level of employee attrition is normal but a significant percentage, of twenty percent or more, within the first year is symptomatic of serious epistemic conflict that is often centered in existing policies and procedures.

We believe that maintaining the Indigenous inclusion status quo just adds to the spiritual wounds that further undermine the well-being of Indigenous adults who are undoubtedly suffering from existing wounds that are a result in a lack of school success that occurred earlier in their lives.

Let us be clear, there are no easy answers, there are no quick fixes but, there can be a working vision.

**Recommendation 1: Building a Strategic Vision for the Future**

The most effective way to encourage business/industry to evolve and become literally bi-epistemic in their policies and procedures is to teach them in a non-threatening, non-accusatory way through bi-cultural activities that reveal how systemic biases are connected to the epistemic norms of the
dominant society. In short, the learning is in the doing, from within a process of bi-cultural collaboration (Kitchen, Hodson, Hedican, Hodson & Herrera, 2017).

Bi-cultural collaborations between potential employers and Indigenous employment and training agencies do not occur in isolation but require an emphasis on building strategic solutions that meet the needs of both communities. By nature, this emphasis on holism must include a cross-section of strategic Indigenous employment organizations, like AETS, other employment agencies, provincial and federal service providers, with an emphasis in gathering and publishing related research evidence - all located at a central location. To be specific, we recommend that the provincial Employment Ontario programs for the North Superior Region, should be co-located with AETS who already deliver federal ASETA programs for the North Superior Region.

**Sector Education & Development**

Although, two-day workshops, like *Indigenous Workplace Inclusion*, are important, and should be continued, they are introductory opportunities only, a place to build relationships, to net-work, to be exposed to the potential of inclusion tools. However, the type of in-depth policy and procedural review that is fundamental to increasing inclusion of Indigenous people in the workplace is just not possible in that time frame.

AETS’ successful Employment and Social Development Canada, Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF), identifies the following growth sectors and associated training programs.

1. The Mining Sector
2. The Construction Sector
3. The Health Sector
4. The Forestry Sector

In the SPF proposal AETS has committed to approximately 300 trained and employed Indigenous people over the three years of the funding in those very specific sectors. This numeric goal can be leveraged to encourage specific sectoral corporations, projecting a shortfall in their labour market projections, to engage in a bi-cultural review of specific policies and procedures that often result in barriers to Indigenous employee inclusion and retention.

**Bi-Cultural Review Circles**

These Bi-Cultural Review Circles include senior corporate representatives mandated to institute policy changes and a small group of trained, respected Indigenous professionals and relevant First Nation representation to lead the Review Circle.
Indigenous Professional Organization

If we were to characterize the skill-set necessary for those Indigenous professionals we would include:

- A demonstrable connection to traditional Indigenous values/beliefs.
- A demonstrable connection to relevant Indigenous community.
- A significant corporate experience in Human Resources.
- A significant background in Employment Legislation.
- A background in Human Rights Legislation – provincial and federal.
- A detailed understanding of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- A detailed background in Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Calls to Action.
- Certification and experience working with adult populations in a teaching setting.

We believe that this level of policy/procedural review surpasses the promotion of a theoretical construct related to Indigenous inclusion. Clearly, this expertise can be developed but does not currently exist within AETS at this time but, expertise and a record of associated success does exist in Indigenous companies like Bridging Concepts.

As an example of the type of expertise necessary for this level of interaction, Bridging Concepts and Trina Maher has some “fifteen years of experience working with companies, governments and agencies to build stronger bridges and understanding with the Indigenous community to support recruitment and retention solutions.”

It seems logical to recommend that AETS and a company like Bridging Concepts build a formal working relationship to approach corporation(s) in each of the sectors to secure reciprocal agreements based on:

- AETS supply trained graduates to specific corporations within those sectors, and
- Those corporations agree to a bi-cultural holistic review of policies and procedures and a related implementation and,
- The review would be led by a new AETS position, the Indigenous Business Specialist. and a company, like Bridging Concepts, working under contract to AETS.
The Indigenous Business Specialist

We recommend the creation of a new AETS position. The Indigenous Business Specialist (IBS) at AETS is the go to resource person, the operational arm and promoter of the AETS vision to business/industry, Chambers of Commerce and various Economic Development Agencies in the northwest.

The IBS is the doorway/outreach to business/industry interested in expanding their Indigenous workforce. The IBS is the lead facilitator of the Bi-Cultural Review Circles, and the primary liaison between participating businesses, and the contracted Indigenous Professional Organization.

Finally, IBS is responsible for monitoring the employment progression realities of AETS program graduates.

Recommendation 2: The Next Generation of Indigenous Workplace Inclusion Workshop

The next generation of inclusion workshop should primarily focus on building a more relevant group of attendees that reflect the sectoral commitments outlined in the SPF proposal. This is achieved by organizing a series of second generation workshops, offered at regular intervals throughout the year, and includes personal invitations to specific sectoral representatives that have communicated their labour market projections to AETS.

The secondary focus should include those attendees in the first Workplace Inclusion Workshop and the tertiary focus should be open to new attendees from business/industry in the northwest.

Whenever possible, personal invitations should be extended to First Nation community representatives (example, First Nation Economic Development Officers) geographically relevant to those primary, secondary and tertiary attendee groups. Furthermore, primary, secondary, tertiary attendees should be purposefully seated with those relevant First Nation community representatives.

The agenda should include the topics identified by the post-workshop survey respondents (see Table 10.0.) but only from the perspective of including those topics as contributing to inclusion and then exposing those attendees to the practical solutions that increase Indigenous employee inclusion and retention. Whenever possible, small group activities should focus on case studies of exclusion that can be dissected by those Indigenous and non-Indigenous tables.

Assure ample consultation time with Indigenous and non-Indigenous support organizations, for example, Bridging Concepts, Kari Chiappetta Consulting and Maamaawisiwin Education.
Recommendation 3: Expanding the Associated Research

The *Indigenous Workplace Inclusion* workshop has positioned AETS as the leader in the area of Indigenous workplace inclusion in the territory. This position can benefit both AETS, and by extension the 8,000+ citizens, the economy of Northwestern Ontario and other Indigenous agencies, service providers and education/training authorities.

Although the preceding research study provides a window on the subject of Indigenous employment inclusion in Northwestern Ontario from the perspective of those attending the *Indigenous Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward Workshop* the view from that perspective is limited.

In part, the related research plan was dictated by factors external to MERC, a limited time schedule tied to funding criteria that made a timely Ryerson University Ethics Clearance questionable.

The original research study design included a more robust enquiry of attendees by sector that included individual interviews over a longer period of time. In part, the rational for this design was that it resulted in specific sectoral information and a detailed understanding for Indigenous inclusion that could be expanded to a longitudinal study as circumstances warranted.

A study involving humans, in any capacity, demands extensive consideration for the “respect for the person, concern for welfare and justice” (CIHR, 2014, p. 6). This is further compounded by any research that specifically includes Indigenous peoples as participants (CIHR, p. 109) who have been and, in some instances, continue to be abused by unethical researchers.

Within these principles a research study design is a thoughtful, highly ethical procedure that must include an Ethics Application to assure that the human participants are protected from unethical practice.

**Other Research Opportunities**

Within this emergent vision research opportunities are significant and is the only reliable benchmark of success. Those opportunities include:

- Longitudinal study related to *Indigenous Work Place Inclusion Workshops*.
- Sectorial training program evaluation.
- Research that follows First Nation employee retention and satisfaction.
• First Nation exit interview studies.
• Business satisfaction studies.
• Development of case-studies of Bi-Cultural Review Circles by sector.
• Economic impact on related First Nation communities.

Given these factors and opportunities we recommend that AETS secure the services of a research firm with demonstrable and significant experience in Indigenous research and methodologies, including successful university ethics applications, successful Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada funding proposals, Certification in TCPS2, and a demonstrable knowledge of, and experience working with First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario.

Furthermore, we recommend that AETS and the AETS board, in collaboration with the chosen research firm, develop a research vision that ties all initiatives into a comprehensive whole.

Sharing the Knowledge

At this point in time the evidence-based decision-making philosophy dominates the charitable, municipal, provincial and federal funding environments and generally the Indigenous community lacks research expertise in this area.

In an effort to improve Indigenous research capacity and access to Indigenous research evidence, we recommend that AETS publish research and evaluation reports on-line, as well as consider developing a public relations strategy that includes press-releases that includes abridged findings to Indigenous and non-Indigenous media in Ontario and selected media across the country.

Recommendation 4: An AETS Ethics Policy & Procedures

Taking up an expanded research focus to track the education/training impact, and Indigenous inclusion over time from multiple perspectives necessitates an AETS Ethics Policy and Procedure.

An AETS Ethics Policy and Procedures:

• Are one of four requirements to be institutionally eligible for administration of Tri-Council grants and awards should AETS wish to pursue that in the future.
• Increases the control of all aspects of research that include researchers external to AETS (i.e., universities or AETS community graduate students, etc.).
• Protects AETS communities and members from culturally uniformed researchers.
• Brings reliable research generated evidence to all aspects of AETS’ business.

A review of research ethics policies in Canada will result in similar consistent strategy because the guiding principles that shape them are set out by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* in 2014 (TCPS2). This commonality is especially evident in research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. The objective of this
‘commonality’ is to uniformly protect all human participants from abuse when engaged in research.

We recommend that AETS begin the process of developing their own Ethics Policy and Procedures.

Finally

*Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward Workshop,* is a unique attempt to begin a cross-cultural dialogue between First Nation communities and the employment community in Northwestern Ontario.

This is not a new dialogue and does not blame or shame anyone in the present for the errors of the past but rather presents a detailed analysis of how Indigenous inclusion can mutually benefit communities that have been divided for far too long.

The workshop sets out a dream that has been at the centre of an unrealized relationship that Anishinabe have held from the time of first meeting with the zhaaganaash (Europeans) as the emerged from the mists to meet on the shores of Gichigami (Lake Superior).


If one dreams a good life, one can live a good dream (Bouchard, 2017).
Chapter 1

Background

Anishinabek Employment & Training Services

Anishinabek Employment and Training Services (AETS) was established in 1997 and incorporated in 2009 for the express purpose of establishing a vibrant First Nation economy through the development of a highly skilled, culturally centred and empowered workforce that meet the labour market requirements of North-western Ontario. AETS’ nine First Nation communities - Gull Bay, Lake Nipigon, Michipicoten, Pays Plat, Pic Mobert, Pic River, Red Rock, Rocky Bay and Sand Point First Nations - include some 8,000+ citizens living on-reserve and in urban settings (large cities, metropolitan areas, and smaller urban centres) across the territory.

AETS staff and Board of Directors work closely with each member of the First Nation community to enhance local control over human resource development enabling those communities to build capacities and skills that reflect local needs and requirements. AETS is positioned as an evidence-based education/training service provider, primarily focused on increasing the employability of their adult citizens through strategic education/training initiatives that reflect projected labour-market requirements as determined by each community’s Economic Development Officer (EDO).

Working closely with local business and industry, EDOs identify future labour-market needs and skill gaps that impede the employability of their citizens. AETS then works to develop programming or partners with external education/training organizations to reduce those gaps.

All associated summative AETS program research/evaluation has consistently demonstrated that improving the results of Indigenous education/training to employment depends on a holistic response that includes:

- A careful balance between traditional Indigenous and contemporary western knowledge,
- Ongoing culturally specific counselling support and,
- Numerous transitional supports at multiple entry points to education/training programs.

In 2017 AETS approached the North Superior Workforce Planning Board and proposed a collaboration that would invite the Northwestern Ontario employee community to learn more about improving the results of Indigenous education/training to employment.

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North Superior Workplace Planning Board

The North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB) is one of twenty-six Local Boards throughout Ontario mandated through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development to identify, assess, and prioritize the skills and knowledge needs of community, employers, and individual participants/learners in the local labour market through a collaborative, local labour market planning process.

The NSWPB comprises equity representatives that aid the following groups: Francophones, Persons with Disabilities, Cultural Diversity, and Women. Representatives from Education & Training, Business, and Labour also provide input that assists their respective sectors (see https://www.nswpb.ca/).

NSWPB also provides insight into local labour market indicators through a series of Community Labour Market Reports (see https://www.nswpb.ca/lepc/reports/community-labour-market-reports).

An Economic Snapshot of Northwestern Ontario

The discovery of a significant deposit of minerals in northwest Ontario’s Ring of Fire has been called the “greatest economic development opportunity in a generation” (Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2015). The associated labour-market requirements in mining, processing, infrastructure construction, ancillary and supply services hold the promise of a long-term economic benefit for Indigenous communities in the northwest.

In an effort to meet those labour-market opportunities the Federal (FedNor, 2017) and Ontario (Ministry of Education, 2007) governments have developed multiple policies and made strategic investment that have resulted in numerous initiatives in Indigenous elementary, secondary, post-secondary and trades education in Northwestern Ontario.

An economic snap-shot of AETS’ First Nation communities includes the following:

- Of those 8,000+ citizens only six percent of the population, twenty-years of age or older, have a high school diploma or an equivalent.

- There is little in the way of reliable data that accurately reflects the labour market realities of those same populations.6 With this in mind, anecdotal information (personal, 2017) suggests that sixty to eighty percent of that population is chronically unemployed.

- Related to that anecdotal information is a recent Canada Press report that reviews 2016 census data to provide an insight into the depth of poverty facing Indigenous peoples in Canada. That report concludes, “81 percent of reserves, had median incomes below the low-income measure, which Statistics Canada considers to be $22,133. for one person.”7

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In spite of a lack of hard data, it is reasonable to propose that AETS communities would reflect a similar reality. Demographic shifts among non-Indigenous populations in Northwestern Ontario, including an ageing population and the out-migration of younger populations have contributed to a general population decline of approximately nine percent between 1991 and 2011 (Moazzami, 2015) effectively shrinking the pool of potential employees and employers are forced to maintain a skilled workforce within those limitations.

In contrast, the Indigenous share of the total population in Northwestern Ontario has increased to thirteen percent in 2011. The Indigenous population are on average younger, have a higher birth rate than non-Indigenous population and generally live in urban and rural areas close to many of the current and future resource developments. And yet, Indigenous populations continue to face multiple barriers to securing and maintaining gainful employment in Northwestern Ontario and are increasingly under-represented in many sectors including; construction, forestry, health, Indigenous governance/services and mining - considered to be growth sectors over the next decade.

**Reliability of Indigenous Labour Market Data**

The reader will undoubtedly recognize the overall lack of accurate on and off-reserve Indigenous labour market data referenced in this report. Many First Nation organizations and service providers have consistently questioned the reliability of Statistics Canada data (Bailey, 2008) collected every five years, suggesting that Indigenous populations avoid participating in the national census because of an overall distrust of government in general, as an act of resistance to Canadian nationalism, or associated to living in remote communities, or because of the transient lifestyle of many Indigenous peoples.

This lack of accurate national Indigenous labour market data was echoed by Employment, Workforce Development and Labour spokesperson, Matt Pascuzzo (Press, 2017), “There is currently a lack of up-to-date, on-reserve labour market information to support program design, service delivery, and decision making (p. A9).”

In an effort to fill this data gap a national multi-million-dollar effort is now underway to build a system that gathers annual data that accurately reflects the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the labour market.

One of the few national studies that opens the window to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian economy was completed by Indigenous Works.

**Indigenous Works (formerly, the Aboriginal Human Resource Council)**

Founded in 1998, Indigenous Works (IW) is a national not-for-profit organization mandated to improve the levels of inclusion and engagement of Indigenous peoples in the national economy.
A recent 2017 national study (R. A. Malatest, 2017) of more than five-hundred medium and large companies across a variety of sectors and regions concluded, “overall results paint a pessimistic picture, with significant room for improvement (p. 3).”

The study concluded that eighty-five percent of all Canadian businesses respondents reported that they were disengaged from Indigenous communities, groups of businesses (p. 3).
Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action: Directions for Change

The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) Calls to Action #92 (2015) recognized that increasing Indigenous employment and inclusion required Canadian business and industry to:

…adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism (p. 10).

In an effort to actuate these Calls to Action and increase the inclusion - employment and retention of their citizens - AETS’s Board of Directors approached the North Superior Workforce Planning Board with the vision of creating an Indigenous inclusion workshop that included an associated research study that resulted in a joint and successful funding proposal to Ontario Centre for Workplace Innovation early in 2017.

The Centre for Workforce Innovation

Established by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation (OCWI) is a centre of excellence in research and innovation that will improve the province’s employment and training programs in supporting jobseekers’ readiness for and success in the job market.

OCWI is led by Ryerson University and includes twelve partner organizations, is charged with driving innovation in Ontario’s employment and training system. OCWI is conceived as an evidence-based, research-oriented enterprise that will highlight the most successful employment and training programs in Canada and abroad and use solid evidence to develop pilot projects that address emerging labour market challenges in Ontario.

Those research findings are shared with the general public through free online information and resources, as well as through training and development opportunities offered by the centre to
professionals working in the employment and training sector. OCWI’s mission, in part, includes assisting the province build the highly skilled workforce it needs to compete and succeed in an increasingly competitive and changing economy (see http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/ocwi_qs_and_as.html).

**Bridging Concepts**

Bridging Concepts, an Indigenous business with international training expertise working with corporations to increase levels of Indigenous inclusion, was contracted to develop a two-day workshop specific to the needs of business and industry in North-Western Ontario.

The result of the exercise was *Indigenous Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward*, a two-day educational event promoted to construction, resource and Indigenous service sectors and the community at large in the territory with the specific goal of providing tools and strategies to increase the levels of Indigenous inclusion in those sectors.

The Six Modules of the workshop focused on skilled based training and intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism to those in attendance. The workshop was facilitated by Bridging Concepts president, Trina Maher and Diane Carriere, president of the Canadian Aboriginal Human Resources Management Association.

The emphasis of the Modules was the development of individual solutions to Indigenous inclusion based on the needs, or mission of the corporations attending. The facilitators built a learning environment that was respectful where all questions were welcomed and important. This highly discursive approach encouraged openness in an effort the deal with the often difficult and challenging issues related to Indigenous inclusion.

The workshop began with an overview of some of the statistical socio-cultural and socio-economic realities or “Flash Points” of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This approach established a shared understanding of contemporary Indigenous realities that prepared the attendees for more interactive collaborations.

The workshop naturally evolved to more interactive learning activities, where tables of attendees - Indigenous and non-Indigenous - became Talking Circles that problem solved through collaborative challenges. Individual tables were encouraged to share the results of their problem-solving with the larger group.

The facilitators were very sensitive to the needs of the attendees and were willing to break from the published agenda if, in their opinion, the attendees needed to move into more interactive activities. On several occasions, larger Talking Circles of Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendees were convened to explore difficult issues and build joint strategies.

This teaching approach of the facilitators was emblematic of an Indigenous, culturally responsive pedagogy of relations, where sharing personal/professional stories reveals central concepts that
run throughout the event like threads in the workshop’s tapestry. As a result, the learning becomes highly personal, prompts individual reflection that informs group collaboration exercises which illuminate obvious barriers to Indigenous inclusion and deconstructs those barriers to reveal alternative solutions.

Maamaawisiwin Education Research Centre (MERC)
Maamaawisiwin Education Research Centre in Thunder Bay was also contracted to provide a third-party analysis of the impact on the attendees of the inclusion workshop.

Established in 2014 MERC is an independent, non-aligned centre of enquiry working in the diverse field of Indigenous education/research and brings over twenty-years of national and international Indigenous research experience.

MERC’s clients include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers, agencies, businesses, First Nations and Tribal Councils serving Indigenous peoples in Northwestern Ontario.
Chapter 2

The Research Study’s Purpose, Objectives & Method

The Purpose & Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was two-fold:

1. To determine the level of registrant knowledge across a number of indices through the administration of a pre-workshop survey associated to the subject areas included in the workshop.

2. Through the administration of a post-workshop survey identify change through the comparison of data collected.

The Method of the Study

This study employs an anonymous and optional pre-survey available to the registrants at the point of registration and a post-workshop survey that is e-mailed to the pre-survey respondents approximately seven days after the workshop.

Survey Design

The survey design includes questions from three perspectives designed to establish a baseline of attendee knowledge, current corporate status relevant to Indigenous inclusion and to determine future workshop focus. This was achieved by developing questions under three areas including:

1. Where are we now?

The survey includes a series of questions (N=5) designed to establish a base-line of participant knowledge across a number of indices considered to influence Indigenous inclusion through the administration of a pre-workshop survey completed at the point of workshop registration.

In an effort to determine the effect or degree of change, a similar series of questions were developed and administered post-workshop and the resulting data was them compared to the base-line data gathered through the pre-workshop survey.

2. At the Workplace.

This series of questions (N=5) also completed by the participant at the point of completing the online workshop registration, are intended to develop an insight on the participant’s familiarity
with corporate relationships, connectivity to Indigenous community and asks the participant to identify specific examples of policy and procedures reviewed, as well as Indigenous recruitment and support strategies.

Again, the post-workshop survey mirrors the same pre-workshop questions in an effort to determine the degree of participant impact(s).

3. **Looking to the Future.**

This section of the survey includes (N=5) questions administered to participants post-workshop, are intended to develop an understanding for the future needs of the participants.

**Method Considerations**

There were several methodological decisions that were made external to MERC that should be noted.

First, the original research study design included a more robust enquiry of attendees by sector that included individual interviews and would have necessitated a successful Ryerson University Ethics application to implement. Concerns were expressed that the time involved to gain that approval may have conflicted with the scheduled date of the workshop.

To that end, inquiries were made to Dr. Patrizia Albanese, Chair of the Ryerson Research Ethics Board, about the ethical suitability of a pre-and-post workshop survey of attendees. Dr. Albanese responded to North Superior Workforce Planning Board that:

> Based on the information provided the project falls under Article 2.5 of the TCPS2 (the federal guidelines governing research ethics) as the purpose of the data collection is for program evaluation activities and performance reviews which will be used for the purpose of assessment, management and/or improvement of existing educational program activities, and so does not require research ethics board review.

Second, a decision related to that online distribution of the pre-workshop survey was also made external to MERC. The pre-survey was to be distributed only to those individuals completing the online registration attached to the North Superior Workforce Planning Board website.

When the pre-workshop survey data was initially tabulated it revealed a one-hundred and thirty percent participation rate that can be attributed to a distribution error. To correct that error required an extensive merge/purge exercise to compile an accurate list of workshop registrants and connect them to their individual pre-workshop surveys. The exercise began with the merging of all workshop registrants and matching that list with their respective pre-workshop survey. The resulting list then underwent a purging exercise to eliminate:

- All workshop attendees that did not complete a pre-workshop survey.
• All workshop attendees associated to Anishinabek Employment and Training Services, North Superior Workforce Planning Board, Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation or Maamaawisiwin Education Research Centre.
• Including a list of late workshop registrants that completed a pre-workshop survey.
• All those who registered, completed a pre-workshop survey but did not attend the workshop.
• Included a list of workshop attendees that completed the pre-workshop survey but choose to attend the dinner only.

The Final Participant Group

The final list of potential participants represented forty-seven workshop registrants that attended the workshop or the workshop dinner only and had completed the pre-workshop survey. This group represented fifty-four percent of all workshop attendees (N=87) and became the potential participants to the post-workshop survey.

Approximately one week after the workshop, private e-mails that included an invitation to participate in the post-workshop survey and an online link to the survey. Of the forty-seven potential post-workshop participants twenty-three percent (N=11) completed the post-workshop survey.

Analysis of Pre-and-Post Workshop Data

Rarely do research or evaluative studies of local Indigenous programs generate the type of “big data” that results in a statistically meaningful data set suitable for statistical analysis and this is the case of this study.

This study is descriptive in nature where the data is tabulated and presented as counts, or percentages and compares the participant’s response at both pre-and-post workshop. The related data is presented as pie charts or in comparative tables.
Chapter 3

Where Are We Now?

Comparative Analysis on the Pre-Workshop & Post-Workshop Survey Questions

This chapter presents the data associated to a series of questions (N=5) designed to establish a base-line of participant knowledge across a number of indices considered to influence Indigenous inclusion through the administration of a pre-workshop survey completed at the point of workshop registration.

In an effort to determine the effect or degree of change, a similar series of questions were developed and administered post-workshop and the resulting data was then compared to the base-line data gathered through the pre-workshop survey.

**Question 1:** Rate Your Knowledge of Indigenous Histories in Canada.

![Question 1: Pre-and-Post Workshop Survey Results](image)
**Question 2:** Rate Your Knowledge of the Impact of Canadian History on Contemporary Indigenous Peoples.

Figure 1.2. Question 2: Pre-and-Post Workshop Survey Results

**Question 3:** Rate Your Knowledge of Indigenous Culture(s).

Figure 1.3. Question 3: Pre-and-Post Workshop Survey Results
**Question 4:** Have You Attended an Indigenous Event or Visited an Indigenous Community in the Last 12 Months?

Figure 4.0. Question 4: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

**Question 4:** Will You Now Attend an Indigenous Event or Visit an Indigenous Community/Organization Over the Next 12 Months?

Figure 4.1. Question 4: Post-Workshop Survey Results
**Question 4b:** If you answer yes to Question 4, please provide an example.

Table 4.0. Question 4b: Pre-and-Post Survey Results: Frequency of Indigenous Events or Communities Visited in the Last 12 Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency that Have Visited Pre-Workshop</th>
<th>Frequency that Plan to Visit Post-Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Attended Pow Wows/Ceremonies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Attended Indigenous Teaching/Cultural Training</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Working in a First Nation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Visited Fort William First Nation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Local Indigenous Agencies/Organizations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Visited Other First Nations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Indigenous Community Member</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion:**

This preceding series of questions are designed to open a window on the level of knowledge of some of the contributing factors that influence or shape Indigenous inclusion in the workforce. Although issues of history, contemporary realities, cultural knowledge are not considered to be exhaustive bench-marks of an inclusive employment environment they can reveal a knowledge deficit that is regularly referenced in the associate literature, or community connectivity.

For the most part business and industry focus on more pragmatic strategies that result in measurable increases in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous peoples and this was the primary focus of the workshop. However, Indigenous histories, contemporary realities, cultural knowledge and community connections were a secondary element of the Workshop agenda.

These issues can be fraught with emotion and, in some instances, anger but the general tone of these Workshop proceedings can be generally characterized as non-blaming and non-shaming. This general attitude, promoted by the Facilitators, was that improving Indigenous inclusion was both logical and good for all in attendance.

This Facilitator’s attitude and the related knowledge transfer may be a contributing factor that was observable in the responses in the pre-workshop survey that spanned both extremes of the spectrum - not knowledgeable to extremely knowledgeable - versus the post-workshop survey that is
characterized by a more moderate, perhaps realistic response to questions 1, 2 and 3 (see Table 4.1).

Of special interest are the categories identifying the types of events or communities visited and the frequency those categories occurred in the pre-workshop survey (see Table 4.0.). The top three categories identified in the pre-workshop survey were dominated by respondents who attended Pow Wows and/or Ceremonies (N=11), followed by Indigenous Teaching and/or Cultural Training (N=9). The third-place category identified was tied between those that visited Local Indigenous Agencies and/or Organizations (N=6) and those that Visited Other First Nations (N=6).

The number of post-workshop responses demonstrated an interesting shift from Pow Wows and Cultural Training to direct engagement with Local Indigenous Agencies/Organizations, arguably where the work of Indigenous inclusion will generate significant results.

This welcoming environment may also be responsible for the increase commitment (+ 25) to visit an Indigenous community or attend an Indigenous event noted in the question 4 of the pre-and-post workshop results (Figure 4.0).
Table 4.1. Compiled Pre- and Post Workshop Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Response</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Response</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rate your knowledge of Indigenous Histories in Canada.</td>
<td>22% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>73% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>+ 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rate your knowledge of the impact of Canadian history on contemporary Indigenous peoples.</td>
<td>21% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>82% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>+ 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Rate your knowledge of Indigenous culture(s).</td>
<td>30% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>67% responded they were Moderately knowledgeable.</td>
<td>+ 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4
At the Workplace

Pre-Workshop & Post-Workshop Survey Results

This chapter presents data associated to questions (N=5) also completed by the participant at the point of online workshop registration, are intended to develop an insight on the participant’s familiarity with corporate relationships, connectivity to Indigenous community and asks the participant to identify specific examples of policy and procedures reviewed, as well as Indigenous recruitment and support strategies.

Again, the post-workshop survey mirrors the same pre-workshop questions in an effort to determine the degree of participant impact(s).

Question 5: Have You Looked at Your Workplace’s Policies & Procedures Through the Lens of Indigenous Workplace Inclusion?

Figure 5.0. Question 5: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

![Pre-Workshop Survey Results](image-url)

- Yes, I have: 57%
- No, I have not: 43%
**Question 5:** Will you Look at your Workplace’s Policies & Procedures Through the Lens of Indigenous Workplace Inclusion?

Figure 5.1. Question 5: Post-Workshop Survey Results

Post-Workshop Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, I will</th>
<th>No, I will not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion:**

Post-workshop results (see Figure 5.1.) would seem to indicate an increased awareness and a related commitment (N=91%) to review existing policies and procedures, or a review was underway, or a review had been completed.

Clearly, this is an overwhelmingly positive indicator of respondent readiness to consider some level of policy and procedural review in an effort to increase Indigenous inclusion. It is not, however, an indication that those respondents know how to build a strategic response that is specific, achievable or measurable. It is reasonable to suggest that without Indigenous input, that strategic response will struggle to achieve the goal of Indigenous inclusion because epistemic norms will prevail (see p. 44 for a fuller explanation for how epistemological norms impact Indigenous inclusion). The key to increasing Indigenous inclusion will be the availability of Indigenous federal programs (i.e., AETS for the North Superior Region) and non-Indigenous resources (i.e., Employment Ontario services for the North Superior Region) at the provincial level under one roof that brings together potential employers and potential Indigenous employees.

When asked to identify specific examples of policies and procedures, pre-workshop, only resulted in fifteen actual (see Table 5.0.). A generous analysis of those responses that identifies specific policies and procedures total seven respondents (Bold) that identified specific policies and procedures that had undergone a review in an effort to eliminate barriers to Indigenous inclusion.
Table 5.0. Workplace Policies & Procedures Reviewed – Pre-and-Post Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Survey Examples – Have Reviewed</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples – Will Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Review where we are posting for our positions, partner with other Indigenous communities to provide employment opportunities.</td>
<td>As I work for a larger organization and not in Human Resources-this does not apply to me. However, members from our HR team were there and I hope they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Our company is all based on Indigenous workplace inclusion.</td>
<td>Look for an opportunity for awareness, sharing and how inclusion should be at the forefront of our operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>We are currently going through inclusion and diversity training.</td>
<td>Ensuring cultural welcoming and thank you are incorporated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Developing the consultation process.</td>
<td>We are already doing this as part of the Employment Equity process. We have gone through a systems analysis, identified barriers and are in the process of correction. However, the information learned at the session has given us a better understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>ASET Agreement holder.</td>
<td>As a result of the training, we are looking at our diversity policies, both internally and at the governance level. The Board of Directors will introduce an Indigenous Lead position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am Aboriginal and manage the company.</td>
<td>We are limited’s to what we can change due to provincial legislation, but we may be able to alter the hiring program pre-constable and pre-Ontario Police College attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>We have reviewed our policies and procedure through the employment equity process; identified potential barriers and are working on eliminating them.</td>
<td>We are doing this prior to the workshop. The workshop did not have an impact on our policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>We do look at our policies for inclusion of all.</td>
<td>We are an Indigenous owned business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Formed proposal for Indigenous Officer Recruitment and Training Pilot program.</td>
<td>I will ensure that our policies…inclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>This is work that we are now beginning.</td>
<td>Looking at our policies to ensure they are very inclusive of all cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Reviewed spread-sheets showing the number of employees in each position &amp; what percentage are women, First Nation, or a visible minority, and have a disability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Opportunity for employees to maintain their traditional practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>How our recruitment processes are based on Eurocentric thinking and not necessarily inviting Indigenous people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Orientation on the Seven Grandfather Teachings and Medicine Wheel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Policy on traditional gathering practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: How Often Do You Connect with Indigenous Communities/Organizations for the Purposes of Employment Recruitment?

Figure 6.0. Question 6: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

Question 6: How Often Will You Now Connect with Indigenous Communities/Organizations for the Purposes of Employment Recruitment?

Figure 6.1. Question 6: Post-Workshop Survey Results
Discussion:

Question 6 demonstrates a significant commitment to improve community connectivity for the purposes of Indigenous employment recruitment between pre-workshop results and post-workshop results.

Sixty-four percent of all pre-workshop respondents had connected to community annually, bi-annually, quarterly or monthly for the purposes of Indigenous recruitment, while thirty-six percent responded that they had not connected to Indigenous community at all.

In the post-workshop response connectivity to community for the purposes of recruiting Indigenous people annually, bi-annually, quarterly or monthly increased to ninety-one percent in the future, an improvement of twenty-seven percent.

In the interest of an enhanced delivery solution and based on the demonstration of improved community connectivity for Indigenous employment recruitment, it would stand to reason that co-locating provincial Ontario programs for the North Superior Region would better serve the Indigenous community as well as the local and regional employers engaged in Indigenous employment recruitment.
Question 7: Are You Aware of Specific Recruitment Strategies to Attract Indigenous Talent in Your Workplace?

Figure 7.0. Question 7: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

Question 7: Are You More Aware of Specific Recruitment Strategies to Attract Indigenous Talent in Your Workplace?

Figure 7.1. Question 7: Post-Workshop Survey Results
Question 7b: Please give an example of a recruitment strategy.

Table 7.0. Compiled Examples of Recruitment Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Survey Examples</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We work with First Nations, FN businesses, FN orgs, Tribal Councils &amp; PTOs.</td>
<td>I am not involved in the hiring for our organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hiring preference given to membership.</td>
<td>Present existing strategy and have departmental input as to how they can contribute and support the strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In my unit we are increasing our efforts to build relationships with stakeholder groups &amp; increase awareness of career opportunities in our organizations with several other stakeholders including educational institutions and internal units.</td>
<td>We can work directly with organizations (like AETS) to train potential employees/intern specifically for our industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We reach out to Indigenous organizations when we are hiring. We are currently reviewing this process to find most effective ways.</td>
<td>Can’t recall off the top of my head—would need to refer to the provided literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employment opportunity is provided either providing entry level position, training partnership with other organization, provide community supports and retention. It’s a work in progress.</td>
<td>We are not more aware of recruitment strategies as a result of the workshop, we employed our own inclusive strategies prior to the workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The college encourages all individuals to apply for their recruitment opportunities and is an equal opportunity employer.</td>
<td>Building relationships with the communities and organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>There was a previous program in partnership with all local Indigenous employment agency that was specifically designed to support Indigenous applicants through the application, testing and training.</td>
<td>I understand some organizations I can reach [out] to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recruitment fairs targeting Indigenous talent.</td>
<td>Again. The importance of not only seeking to build relationships with stakeholders was highlighted, but also how we will go about engaging and being aware of the need to not only “consult” but “include” feedback and suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Currently beginning a consultation process to engage Indigenous groups in the community in regards to employment with our corporation.</td>
<td>Work with Local Delivery Mechanisms and FNs directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Working through some recommendations from the inquest as well as beginning some consultation with different groups in the community to gain insight.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion:

A total of thirty-seven percent of all pre-workshop respondents to question 7 were aware of specific recruitment strategies to attract Indigenous talent to their organizations. When surveyed post-workshop those aware of specific strategies increased to seventy-three percent an increase of approximately fifty percent.

However, when asked to provide specific examples of recruitment strategies their organizations employ to attract Indigenous talent few (Bold) of the pre-or-post-workshop responses identified specifics (see Table 7.0.). Instead, strategies would seem to be dominated by the notion that development is dictated by the realities or the needs or specific relationships in the moment, but there are no hard values, beliefs or overall goals identified that would maintain some sort of mission focus to increase Indigenous recruitment. This can be interpreted as a positive, flexible strategic philosophy, or an indicator of an organization that is just beginning to think about Indigenous recruitment.
**Question 8:** To the Best of Your Knowledge, Does Your Workplace Have Policies and Practices that Support an Indigenous Inclusive Environment?

Figure 8.0. Question 8: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

![Pre-Workshop Survey Results](image)

**Question 8:** To the Best of Your Knowledge, does Your Workplace Need to Improve Policies and Practices that Support an Indigenous Inclusive Environment?

Figure 8.1. Question 8: Post-Workshop Survey Results

![Post-Workshop Survey Results](image)
**Question 8b:** Please Give an Example of Policies & Practices to be Improved.

### Table 8.0. Workplace Policies & Practices to be Improved - Pre-and-Post Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Survey Examples – Have Improved</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples – Plan to Improve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>We believe our policies are inclusive of all people.</td>
<td>Awareness for all departments of the organization and how they can ensure that it is applied within their workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Support and encourage traditional practices in the work space. Smudging allowed in offices and feast encouraged.</td>
<td>Need to find a way to attract more first nations workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Again, we engage the above.</td>
<td>I believe the policies are in place, it is the behaviors that need to be altered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>When we hire there is a policy developed to suit the job description.</td>
<td>Something as simple as a smudge room/area; include an elder in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Smudging policy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Generally, we are working on our P&amp;P to ensure they are free of bias, but we have nothing specifically to attract any specific group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I believe we try to create an inclusive environment for all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Specific policies provided at orientation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>We do a variety of training and are looking to enhance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>FN have access to work site to continue their traditional harvesting and other opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Respect campaign developed and implemented by the College.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Cultural competency training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Cultural awareness training, video series project, welcome project for students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Working with our Aboriginal Liaison there are a number of initiatives that take place including training for all employees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion:

There are two examples of improvements noted by the pre-workshop participants that are worthy of discussion. It is not uncommon for many corporations to believe, even after a significant unilateral review process, that their policies and procedures are “inclusive of all people.” This phenomenon can be a defensive kneejerk response to being challenged about systemic bias that inhibits Indigenous inclusion. The simple response to is this, where is the evidence of Indigenous inclusion in the workforce.

The second example that may also indicate a token response to Indigenous inclusion, is the reference to the development of a “smudging policy.” Indigenous inclusion in the workplace is a
much more complex issue than inaugurating a policy that allows for an Indigenous ceremony. Furthermore, assuming that Indigenous spiritual traditions are limited to a Smudge Ceremony alone is an insult to those who do or do not follow that spiritual tradition.

Both of these ideas can be a red flag that these businesses and/or industries do not engage Indigenous expertise in the practices and procedural review but rather literally did the very least they could do. In the end, not including Indigenous people in development of policy that directly relates to them, is not inclusion but it is exclusion.
Question 9: Are There Currently any Indigenous Employee Network Supports in Your Workplace?

Figure 9.0. Question 9: Pre-Workshop Survey Results

Question 9: Will You Consider Putting Indigenous Employee Network Supports or Related Events in Your Workplace?

Figure 9.1. Question 9: Post-Workshop Survey Results
**Question 9b:** Please give an example of network supports or related events in your workplace.

Table 9.0. Compiled Examples of Network Supports or Related Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Survey Examples – Have Now</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples - Plan To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Training opportunities.</td>
<td>Enhance the existing supports/events by including making it a requirement for each department to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The community supports all membership who work for the band.</td>
<td>I don’t have an example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Because we work at the mine – the mine has committees that support to hire from the signatory communities.</td>
<td>Having cultural sensitivity training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>We have the Aboriginal Liaison’s office.</td>
<td>I will ensure our Indigenous Workers know who their networks are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>FN community coordinators who provide direction and support for the people and company.</td>
<td>Early stages of engagement within our organization on this item and related to question 10. At present we are looking at completing a comprehensive review of our recruitment/induction program/evaluation/outreach and engagement processes to determine validity of current practices and/or identifying burdens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>100 percent Aboriginal.</td>
<td>We already do this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Nation to Nation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Many of the staff are indigenous; nothing specific that I am aware of.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Aboriginal Liaison’s Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Not active.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Aboriginal Liaison’s Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion:**

In general, the pre-and-post workshop responses would indicate a confusion or lack of understanding for what Indigenous employee supports are. It is not uncommon for business and industry to be confused by the notion of including alternative supports for a particular group of employees.

Recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees can be enhanced by offering ongoing support networks that reflect the needs of those employees. For example, single mothers that need to start the workday later because they have to drop their kids off to school. Or regular access to Talking Circles convened by recognized Elders in particularly stressful work environments. Aboriginal Liaison Offices or First Nation Community Coordinators that have the power to shape policy and procedures are all example of meaningful support networks.
Chapter 5
Looking to the Future
Pre-Workshop & Post-Workshop Survey Results

This chapter presents the data associated to survey questions (N=5) administered to participants post-workshop and are intended to develop an understanding for the future needs of those participants.

Question 10: Which 3 Topics or Areas Would You Like to Focus On?

Table 10.0. Compiled Responses of Future Topic Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pre-Workshop Responses</th>
<th>% YES</th>
<th>% NO</th>
<th>Ranked Choices</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Responses</th>
<th>% YES</th>
<th>% NO</th>
<th>Ranked Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Indigenous histories.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indigenous histories.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Creating an inclusive workplace.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Creating an inclusive workplace.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Relationship building.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship building.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Communications.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Communications.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Indigenous employee recruitment.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indigenous employee recruitment.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

It is interesting to note how the participant’s topic focus shifts before attending the workshop and after attending the workshop. Pre-workshop data would seem to support the notion of the pragmatism of business, focusing on the hard issues that building an inclusive Indigenous workplace. A place where issues of Indigenous history and communications are not considered to be germane to achieving that agenda.

The ranking of the three-potential future focus areas noted in the post-workshop responses, ranked in order, includes:

1. Relationship Building tied with Communications.

What you can conclude is that the tied responses are equally important the respondents. This may reflect the growing participant understanding of the holistic relationship between the histories and the contemporary realities.

The key here is to develop programming that connects the historic experience with contemporary realities not to focus exclusively on the historic experience alone. For example, historically many Indigenous people have taken a minimum of four days to attend a funeral. A company that only allows for a total of three-day bereavement leave sets Indigenous people up for a conflict of culture.
Question 11: Do You Believe that You Met Potential Indigenous Partners at the Event and/or the Dinner?

Figure 11.0. Question 11: Post-Workshop Survey Results

Table 11.0. Compiled Examples of Potential Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>AETS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>KKETS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Other organizations that can provide services to enhance relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>For starters—the host agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I have reached out to M.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am extremely interested in engaging with ASETAs not only in the northwest but in all of our service areas throughout the province of Ontario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>There were other local delivery mechanisms like AETS, that I now know more about and will work with them as well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Creating and maintaining a constructive learning environment that includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants is no easy task. It is reasonable to suggest that even those early adopters attending Indigenous Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward carry a level of distrust, biases, that unchecked could have rendered the workshop experience unproductive.

Workshop activities prepare the ground for the more practical group activities that unpack common understandings. The agenda is not fixed but rather a guideline that gives way to the facilitator’s sense of the audience and when necessary, include Talking Circle activities where personal stories
are shared. The learning becomes personal and by extension meaningful and that feeling can be the propellent that drives discussions about Indigenous inclusion when those participants return to work.

In many ways the workshop learning environment included traditional Indigenous values – respect, collaboration, Talking Circles, group problem solving activities – are educational tactics that result in participants developing relationships that support Indigenous inclusion initiatives.

The key outcome of this learning environment is evident in the seventy-three percent of the respondents who believe they had met future partners.
**Question 12:** Do You Believe that You Now Have the Tools Necessary to Move Forward with Indigenous Inclusion in Your Workplace?

Figure 12.0. Question 12: Post-Workshop Survey Results

Table 12.0. Compiled Examples of Tools Necessary to Move Ahead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Post-Workshop Survey Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>It is not my job in my workplace to do this. My ED is working on something with the board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I don’t completely have all the tools, but much was offered at the sessions, I am having a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard time answering this question because without attempting to use the tools of which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’ve only just learned, I don’t know what’s missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>We had these tools in place prior to the workshop. We do not feel the workshop added or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved our ability to recruit Indigenous workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I think a follow up in a year would be helpful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The sense of optimism and the willingness to get on with the job is evident in this strong response (N=73 percent). The strong response is also a testament to the overall curriculum design of the workshop and the focus on teaching the tools of inclusion.
Conclusion

It is difficult to draw one all-encompassing conclusion from the data presented in this report. In one sense the data can be interpreted as a shared belief that Indigenous inclusion is good for all, a willingness to seek alternative strategies and Indigenous support to implement those strategies.

This conclusion is the direct result of a curriculum focus that surpasses the predominant thematic approach to bi-cultural training that exclusively focuses on the historic realities of residential schools, or the sixties scoop, and every other colonial atrocity. This focus becomes a trap that captures Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in an eternal narrative of victim and perpetrator, that does little to support the ongoing project of Indigenous decolonization by bringing real solutions to the contemporary outcome of economic inequity and poverty.

A dispassionate view of AETS activity, actuated in education/training programing that addresses the shortfall in labour market projections, programming that looks to enhance Anishinabe identity, and now workshops that result in bi-cultural collaborations to improve inclusion/retention of AETS citizens, is emblematic of a sophisticated, holistic strategic vision that situates AETS as leader in the territory.

What should be equally clear from this study, is that Indigenous inclusion/retention is an emergent issue in many of the corporate boardrooms in the northwest and AETS is now identified as a leader in this area.

The question now is, what happens next?
Chapter 6
Recommendations for the Future

Contextualizing Indigenous Inclusion

In general, the knowledge deficit about all things Indigenous, especially in regard to how historical factors contribute to the contemporarily realities, is profound within the non-Indigenous community in Canada.

Many of the national and provincial inquiries including - the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released in 1996, Truth and Reconciliation in 2015, the Inquiry on First Nation Youth Suicide in Thunder Bay in 2016 - have all recommended some form of mandatory education programing in schools to prevent this phenomena from taking root in future generations of Canadians.

But what of the knowledge deficit that exists in business and industry that create the policies and procedures that systemically exclude Indigenous peoples from fully participating in the workplace? How do you support people, generally good people, that want to help but don’t know how? What is the overall goal?

To answer these important questions, it is necessary to understand what is at the centre of the dysfunctional relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that has existed since Jacque Cartier landed in Stadacona in 1535. To that end we offer the following.

Epistemology & Indigenous Inclusion

Willie Ermine (1995), a Cree scholar from Saskatchewan, wrote an important paper titled “Aboriginal Epistemology.” In his paper, Ermine writes:

"The year 1492 marked the first meeting of two disparate world-views, each on its own uncharted course of exploration and discovery for purposeful knowledge. The encounter featured to diametric trajectories into the realm of knowledge. One was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other was on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical (p. 101)."

In this short paragraph, Ermine captures the essence of the conflict between two epistemic views that still exist to this day in Canada. Ermine’s paper delineates the fundamental differences between an Indigenous epistemology and the epistemology of the dominant Western society. Ermine also examines how the failure to address these differences is the primary barrier to all interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian society.

An epistemology is a set of fundamental values and beliefs that are taught explicitly and implicitly to each new generation. While epistemology guides society, we are often unaware of its presence.
If one were to ask what your epistemology is, few of us would be able to pull together a comprehensive response. Why?

The answer is quite simple. We learn our epistemology as a child through our experience of the world around us and it is reinforced throughout those early years. Consider how a child learns to catch a ball. Learning to catch often begins with play between the child and parent. The new skill may be further reinforced through play with siblings or other children. The skill is formalized and refined when children participate in sports or just on the street when they play street-hockey, or baseball, or basketball.

The point is that our brains are patterned at an early age to respond to a ball hurtling toward us and we respond by attempting to catch it. Catching is a skill that is, for the most part, unconscious in nature and early patterning is literally hard-wired in our heads and stays with us for the rest of our lives. You may not have caught a ball in decades but, if a ball is thrown, you would respond immediately with that deeply learned skill. You would not go through a cognitive process of calculating the trajectory of the object with your eyes and aligning your hands appropriately. You just do it! You would simply react to the stimulus of the ball speeding toward you. If you were 90 you would respond in the same way and attempt to catch a ball.

Our epistemology comes naturally! It is learned in the same way and we are just as unconscious of our epistemology as we are of catching a ball.

**Linking Indigenous Epistemology to Colonization**

Colonization, and the primary tool of assimilation residential schools, were an attempt to stop the natural process of how Indigenous children learn their epistemology from their parents by removing those children from their parents.

The secondary tool of colonization was the total disruption of Indigenous expressions of epistemology - removal from traditional land-bases, the outlawing of traditional forms of governance, the clan system, ceremony, traditional economics, music, medicine, the status of women, language - the list is almost endless.

These were all attempts to eliminate an epistemic understanding that came out of one-hundred and thirty thousand years (Zimmer, 2017) of lived experience Americas and yet Indigenous people are still here.

**The So What Factor**

So, what? This is ancient history, in the past, how is it relevant to Indigenous inclusion? There are two answers to this question that have an impact on Indigenous inclusion in the workplace today.
First, the point is that while the dominant Canadian society was enacting the many tactics of colonization to eliminate an epistemology by eliminating the expression of those values and beliefs of Indigenous people, they were building a dominant society around an equally unconscious epistemology that came from Europe five-hundred years ago and has evolved into western liberal capitalism.

Second, the dominant society is just as unconscious of their epistemology as Indigenous peoples are of theirs. We just both do our epistemology and the society reflects and rewards those that align with a complimentary epistemology. Indigenous peoples, in spite of surviving the greatest colonial experiment in the history of humanity, come to employment with an epistemic understanding that is literally in conflict with the epistemic norms that underpin the policies and procedures of business and industry.

**An Example of Epistemic Conflict**

Consider the following story, Karen is a First Nation woman, living in an urban centre, a single mom of three, with an educational history that includes leaving high school before completing grade 12.

Karen’s kids are older now and require less of her attention, so she returns to an adult education program and with much sacrifice and determination completes grade 12 and receives an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. One day Karen sees a poster on the school bulletin board recruiting for a Personal Support Worker Program offered by her First Nation.

At this time in her life Karen is motivated to give back to community and has always been close to the elderly. Karen makes some inquiries, eventually applies and is accepted to the program where she gets top grades and her success is acknowledged at graduation.

Almost immediately after graduation Karen is employed as a Personal Support Worker at a long-term care facility close to her home and the school her kids attend. The Human Resource people are kind and thoughtful at the onset.

Karen is good at her job. She is caring, and her clients love her but there is a policy change that is the beginning of the end of her PSW career.

New policy is introduced and Karen and another PSW have six minutes each, to wake-up twenty-five patients, wash, moisturize, check their bodies for new or worsening skin conditions, dress, transfer, to mouth care, toilet and do their hair.
Karen is unable to meet the new policy and she is written up twice by her supervisor for contravening the new policy. Eventually Karen meets with HR and asked why she cannot meet the needs of the new policy and her only response is, “I’m just doing what the patients are asking for. They want to talk, they are not slabs of meat. I can’t throw them around, they are elders and deserve my respect. Besides, how many of you get ready for your day in just six minutes?”

Karen’s arguments fall on deaf ears. The policy is the policy and if Karen cannot do the job others will. Karen is eventually dismissed with cause and her PSW career is over.

In spite of all of her sacrifice, her commitment Karen believes she has failed.

This is but one example of how epistemic conflict plays out in just one sector but this conflict is not relegated to that sector alone, there are many others examples - bereavement leave, traditional hunting and gathering times, child safety - are all typical areas where the dominant epistemology can rub-up-hard against an Indigenous epistemology.

**Thinking Through Epistemic Conflict in the Workplace**

It makes little sense for AETS to recruit, develop, and implement training/educational programing for Indigenous citizens if those graduates enter the workplace and leave shortly thereafter due to similar experiences. Certainly, some level of employee attrition is normal but a significant percentage, of twenty percent or more, within the first year is symptomatic of serious epistemic conflict that is often centered in existing policies and procedures.

We believe that maintaining the Indigenous inclusion status quo just adds to the spiritual wounds that further undermine the well-being of Indigenous adults who are undoubtedly suffering from existing wounds that are a result in a lack of school success that occurred earlier in their lives.

Let us be clear, there are no easy answers, there are no quick fixes but, there can be a working vision.
Recommendation 1: Building a Strategic Vision for the Future

The most effective way to encourage business/industry to evolve and become literally bi-epistemic in their policies and procedures is to teach them in a non-threatening, non-accusatory way through bi-cultural activities that reveal how systemic biases are connected to the epistemic norms of the dominant society. In short, the learning is in the doing, from within a process of bi-cultural collaboration (Kitchen, Hodson, Hedican, Hodson & Herrera, 2017).

Bi-cultural collaborations between potential employers and Indigenous employment and training agencies do not occur in isolation but require an emphasis on building strategic solutions that meet the needs of both communities. By nature, this emphasis on holism must include a cross-section of strategic Indigenous employment organizations, like AETS, other employment agencies, provincial and federal service providers, with an emphasis in gathering and publishing related research evidence - all located at a central location. To be specific, we recommend that the provincial Employment Ontario programs for the North Superior Region, should be co-located with AETS who already deliver federal ASETA programs for the North Superior Region.

Sector Education & Development

Although, two-day workshops, like Indigenous Workplace Inclusion, are important, and should be continued, they are introductory opportunities only, a place to build relationships, to net-work, to be exposed to the potential of inclusion tools. However, the type of in-depth policy and procedural review that is fundamental to increasing inclusion of Indigenous people in the workplace is just not possible in that time frame.

AETS’ successful Employment and Social Development Canada, Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF), identifies the following growth sectors and associated training programs.

1. The Mining Sector
2. The Construction Sector
3. The Health Sector
4. The Forestry Sector

In the SPF proposal AETS has committed to approximately 300 trained and employed Indigenous people over the three years of the funding in those very specific sectors. This numeric goal can be leveraged to encourage specific sectoral corporations, projecting a shortfall in their labour market projections, to engage in a bi-cultural review of specific policies and procedures that often result in barriers to Indigenous employee inclusion and retention.
Bi-Cultural Review Circles

These Bi-Cultural Review Circles include senior corporate representatives mandated to institute policy changes and a small group of trained, respected Indigenous professionals and relevant First Nation representation to lead the Review Circle.

Indigenous Professional Organization

If we were to characterize the skill-set necessary for those Indigenous professionals we would include:

- A demonstrable connection to traditional Indigenous values/beliefs.
- A demonstrable connection to relevant Indigenous community.
- A significant corporate experience in Human Resources.
- A significant background in Employment Legislation.
- A background in Human Rights Legislation – provincial and federal.
- A detailed understanding of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- A detailed background in Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Calls to Action.
- Certification and experience working with adult populations in a teaching setting.

We believe that this level of policy/procedural review surpasses the promotion of a theoretical construct related to Indigenous inclusion. Clearly, this expertise can be developed but does not currently exist within AETS at this time but, expertise and a record of associated success does exist in Indigenous companies like Bridging Concepts.

As an example of the type of expertise necessary for this level of interaction, Bridging Concepts and Trina Maher has some “fifteen years of experience working with companies, governments and agencies to build stronger bridges and understanding with the Indigenous community to support recruitment and retention solutions.”

It seems logical to recommend that AETS and a company like Bridging Concepts build a formal working relationship to approach corporation(s) in each of the sectors to secure reciprocal agreements based on:

- AETS supply trained graduates to specific corporations within those sectors, and
- Those corporations agree to a bi-cultural holistic review of policies and procedures and a related implementation and,
- The review would be led by a new AETS position, the Indigenous Business Specialist. and a company, like Bridging Concepts, working under contract to AETS.
The Indigenous Business Specialist

We recommend the creation of a new AETS position. The Indigenous Business Specialist (IBS) at AETS is the go to resource person, the operational arm and promoter of the AETS vision to business/industry, Chambers of Commerce and various Economic Development Agencies in the northwest.

The IBS is the doorway/outreach to business/industry interested in expanding their Indigenous workforce. The IBS is the lead facilitator of the Bi-Cultural Review Circles, and the primary liaison between participating businesses, and the contracted Indigenous Professional Organization.

Finally, IBS is responsible for monitoring the employment progression realities of AETS program graduates.
**Recommendation 2: The Next Generation of Indigenous Workplace Inclusion Workshop**

The next generation of inclusion workshop should primarily focus on building a more relevant group of attendees that reflect the sectoral commitments outlined in the SPF proposal. This is achieved by organizing a series of second generation workshops, offered at regular intervals throughout the year, and includes personal invitations to specific sectoral representatives that have communicated their labour market projections to AETS.

The secondary focus should include those attendees in the first Workplace Inclusion Workshop and the tertiary focus should be open to new attendees from business/industry in the northwest.

Whenever possible, personal invitations should be extended to First Nation community representatives (example, First Nation Economic Development Officers) geographically relevant to those primary, secondary and tertiary attendee groups. Furthermore, primary, secondary, tertiary attendees should be purposefully seated with those relevant First Nation community representatives.

The agenda should include the topics identified by the post-workshop survey respondents (see Table 10.0.) but only from the perspective of including those topics as contributing to inclusion and then exposing those attendees to the practical solutions that increase Indigenous employee inclusion and retention. Whenever possible, small group activities should focus on case studies of exclusion that can be dissected by those Indigenous and non-Indigenous tables.

Assure ample consultation time with Indigenous and non-Indigenous support organizations, for example, Bridging Concepts, Kari Chiappetta Consulting and Maamaawisiwin Education Research Centre, Internet Technology and related agencies involved in planning, creating, promoting and implementing the next generation of Inclusion Workshop.

Develop and submit a further funding proposal to Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation under the Targeted Research Projects by AETS.
Recommendation 3: Expanding the Associated Research

The Indigenous Workplace Inclusion Workshop has positioned AETS as the leader in the area of Indigenous workplace inclusion in the territory. This position can benefit both AETS, and by extension the 8,000+ citizens, the economy of Northwestern Ontario and other Indigenous agencies, service providers and education/training authorities.

Although the preceding research study provides a window on the subject of Indigenous employment inclusion in Northwestern Ontario from the perspective of those attending the Indigenous Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward Workshop the view from that perspective is limited.

In part, the related research plan was dictated by factors external to MERC, a limited time schedule tied to funding criteria that made a timely Ryerson University Ethics Clearance questionable.

The original research study design included a more robust enquiry of attendees by sector that included individual interviews over a longer period of time. In part, the rational for this design was that it resulted in specific sectoral information and a detailed understanding for Indigenous inclusion that could be expanded to a longitudinal study as circumstances warranted.

A study involving humans, in any capacity, demands extensive consideration for the “respect for the person, concern for welfare and justice” (CIHR, 2014, p. 6). This is further compounded by any research that specifically includes Indigenous peoples as participants (CIHR, p. 109) who have been and, in some instances, continue to be abused by unethical researchers.

Within these principles a research study design is a thoughtful, highly ethical procedure that must include an Ethics Application to assure that the human participants are protected from unethical practice.

Other Research Opportunities

Within this emergent vision research opportunities are significant and is the only reliable benchmark of success. Those opportunities include:

- Longitudinal study related to Indigenous Work Place Inclusion workshops.
- Sectorial training program evaluation.
- Research that follows First Nation employee retention and satisfaction.
- First Nation exit interview studies.
- Business satisfaction studies.
- Development of case-studies of Bi-Cultural Review Circles by sector.
- Economic impact on related First Nation communities.
Given these factors and opportunities we recommend that AETS secure the services of a research firm with demonstrable and significant experience in Indigenous research and methodologies, including successful university ethics applications, successful Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada funding proposals, Certification in TCPS2, and a demonstrable knowledge of, and experience working with First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario.

Furthermore, we recommend that AETS and the AETS board, in collaboration with the chosen research firm, develop a research vision that ties all initiatives into a comprehensive whole.

**Sharing the Knowledge**

At this point in time the evidence-based decision-making philosophy dominates the charitable, municipal, provincial and federal funding environments and generally the Indigenous community lacks research expertise in this area.

In an effort to improve Indigenous research capacity and access to Indigenous research evidence, we recommend that AETS publish research and evaluation reports on-line, as well as consider developing a public relations strategy that includes press-releases that includes abridged findings to Indigenous and non-Indigenous media in Ontario and selected media across the country.
Recommendation 4: An AETS Ethics Policy & Procedures

Taking up an expanded research focus to track the education/training impact, and Indigenous inclusion over time from multiple perspectives necessitates an AETS Ethics Policy and Procedure.

An AETS Ethics Policy and Procedures:

- Are one of four requirements to be institutionally eligible for administration of Tri-Council grants and awards should AETS wish to pursue that in the future.
- Increases the control of all aspects of research that include researchers external to AETS (i.e., universities or AETS community graduate students, etc.).
- Protects AETS communities and members from culturally uniformed researchers.
- Brings reliable research generated evidence to all aspects of AETS’ business.

A review of research ethics policies in Canada will result in similar consistent strategy because the guiding principles that shape them are set out by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* in 2014 (TCPS2). This commonality is especially evident in research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in Canada. The objective of this ‘commonality’ is to uniformly protect all human participants from abuse when engaged in research.

We recommend that AETS begin the process of developing their own Ethics Policy and Procedures.

Finally

*Work Place Inclusion: Strategies for Moving Forward Workshop,* is a unique attempt to begin a cross-cultural dialogue between First Nation communities and the employment community in Northwestern Ontario.

This is not a new dialogue and does not blame or shame anyone in the present for the errors of the past but rather presents a detailed analysis of how Indigenous inclusion can mutually benefit communities that have been divided for far too long.

The workshop sets out a vision that has been at the centre of an unrealized relationship that Anishinabe have held from the time of first meeting with the zhaaganaash (Europeans) as the emerged from the mists to meet on the shores of Gichigami (Lake Superior).


If one dreams a good life, one can live a good dream (Bouchard, 2017).
References


