



Workforce Connex

Interim Report

Ontario

Labrador

British Columbia

Nova Scotia

September 2006

www.workforceconnex.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	1
Introduction and Background	2
Summary of Data	3
Forum Synopsis	4
Key Common Themes, Issues, Challenges – Demand and Supply Sides.....	6
Evaluation Highlights.....	9
Future Plans: Dates and Locations of Next Forums	10
Next Steps.....	11

Introduction/Background

The information provided in this report will summarize highlights and commitments made as a result of five Workforce Connex forums, held between April and June 2006. Individual reports for each forum will be posted at www.workforceconnex.com as they are completed.

Workforce Connex is a national forum series designed to increase Aboriginal participation in targeted trades employment and apprenticeship programs.

The concept behind the series came to life in 2005 when Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) undertook a series of roundtables with stakeholders across the country. The principal purpose of the tour was to bring together Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders (AHRDAs), the private sector and other key stakeholders to discuss collaborative partnerships in Aboriginal labour force development.

The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC) felt it was important to continue these dialogues and secured financial resources from HRSDC as part of the council's National Trades and Apprenticeship project.

This project is an innovative initiative designed to create, strengthen and leverage partnerships with private-public sectors, Aboriginal employment organizations, learning institutions and government stakeholders in an effort to collaborate on methods to recruit and retain Aboriginal participation in trades and apprenticeship.

Members of AHRDCC have been actively supporting the AHRDAs (Aboriginal employment centres) with current projects and future initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation in trades employment and apprenticeship programs.

Workforce Connex is the first of many trades and apprenticeship initiatives to link national and regional employers with opportunities to connect to Aboriginal employment and training recruitment agencies and associations.

The forums have been coordinated by AHRDCC and designed by regional steering committees with representatives from AHRDAs, HRSDC, Service Canada, provincial governments, educational institutions, private sector organizations and sector councils.

Following is a brief summary of forum participants, methodologies, commitments, participant evaluations and common themes, issues and challenges that emerged.

Summary of Data

Forum Participants by Category

Date	Location	Employers	Aboriginal Community	Organized Labour	Government	Training Institutions	Total
April 20	Thunder Bay	11	23	1	3	3	41
April 27	London	14	32	1	6	4	57
May 10/11	Vancouver	39	51	1	48	12	151
June 19	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	19	20		17	8	64
June 28/29	Membertou	32	33	2	12	14	93
Totals		115	159	5	86	41	406

The planning of each forum began with the establishment of a regional steering committee, which provided advice and direction on the architecture of each event. The following is a breakdown of the sectors involved.

Regional Steering Committee Representation

Location	Employers	Aboriginal Community	Federal Government	Province/Territory	Training Institutions
Thunder Bay			5	3	
London			5	3	
Vancouver	4	11	9	3	
Happy Valley-Goose Bay	3	4	5	5	2
Membertou	2	3	3	3	1
Totals	9	28	23	11	3

Forum Synopsis

Each of the forums had their own methodology. The following provides a brief summary of each event:

Ontario

Part 1: Walk in my Shoes/Moccasins: In an effort to better understand each other's challenges, the conversation reversed roles whereby the AHRDAs were asked to walk in the shoes of business and the private sector were asked to walk in the moccasins of AHRDAs.

Part 2: Supply Side: Discussion helped employers understand the foundation, role and employment challenges of the AHRDAs and their clients.

Part 3: Demand Side: Discussion helped the AHRDA community understand various employment trends and challenges that business and industry face.

Part 4: Connections: After both the supply and demand side of the labour market experience were revealed, the conversation focussed on what works, what doesn't work and how to improve future engagement between the supply side providers and the demand side.

Part 5: Go Forward Commitments: Participants built a list of commitments to ensure the value of the day would be captured in ongoing dialogue to sustain long-term partnerships.

British Columbia

Part 1: Presentations: a number of presentations by government officials and industry leaders provided participants with background and context for discussion.

Part 2: Sectoral Perspective: This session allowed participants to discuss issues in relation to Aboriginal employment within a single sector. The four sectors chosen for this discussion were:

- Service.
- Resources.
- Public (and health).
- Construction.

Part 3: Geographical Perspective: Participants discussed issues within specific geographical areas using a cross-sectoral perspective. The geographic regions involved were the Central/South Interior, Vancouver Island/Central Coast, Lower Mainland/Sunshine Coast and Northern British Columbia.

Part 4: Go Forward Commitments: For each of the four geographical regions, participants built a list of commitments to ensure the value of the two-day forum would extend into action and long-term partnerships.

Labrador

- Part 1: Presentations:** Presentations on the current Labrador labour market provided participants with context for discussion.
- Part 2: Panel:** A panel of private sector company representatives shared information and answered questions from the demand side perspective.
- Part 3: Demand Side:** Discussion helped the AHRDA community better understand employment trends and challenges for business and industry in Labrador.
- Part 4: Supply Side:** Discussion provided employers with an understanding of the foundation, role and employment challenges of the AHRDAs and other Aboriginal employment agencies in Labrador.
- Part 5: Go Forward Commitments:** Participants built a list of commitments to ensure the value of the forum would extend into actions and long-term partnerships.

Nova Scotia

- Part 1: Walk in my Shoes/Moccasins:** In an effort to increase understanding, the conversation reversed roles whereby the AHRDAs were asked to walk in the shoes of business and the private sector participants were asked to walk in the moccasins of the AHRDAs.
- Part 2: Presentation:** A presentation on the importance of partnerships provided participants with context for their discussions.
- Part 3: Supply Side:** The discussion enabled employers to understand the foundation, role and employment challenges of AHRDAs and other Aboriginal employment agencies in Nova Scotia.
- Part 4: Keynote:** A representative from the National Steering Committee, Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources (BEAHR), spoke of lessons learned in human resource development.
- Part 5: Demand Side:** The discussion provided the AHRDA community with employment trends and challenges faced by business and industry in Nova Scotia.
- Part 6: Go Forward Commitments:** Participants built a list of commitments to ensure that the value of the forum would extend into actions and long-term partnerships.

Key Themes, Issues, Challenges

As noted above, each forum provided the opportunity to exchange information and hold conversations about the demand and supply side of the labour market for Aboriginal Peoples.

Some of the themes, issues and challenges that were raised by the demand side recurred throughout each of the regional events. Below are the key themes, issues and challenges discussed:

SIDE	KEY THEMES, ISSUES, CHALLENGES
Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers lack information and knowledge about:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– how AHRDAs work, whom to contact for job postings. In some cases employers were not aware that AHRDAs existed– how to approach Aboriginal communities or whom to contact– the Aboriginal labour market and how to retain Aboriginal employees.• There is a lack of communication, planning, partnership and networking between employers and AHRDAs. Employers would like AHRDAs to share best practices.• Recruitment should be conducted in Aboriginal communities and high schools to expose Aboriginal youth to apprenticeship and encourage trades employment.• A cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness training program for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal is needed to help deal with cultural differences and curb stereotypes and racism.• Language and Aboriginal Peoples view of unions is a barrier to employment.• Language and Aboriginal Peoples attitude toward unions cited as barriers to employment.

Supply

- AHRDAs lack information and knowledge about:
 - jobs available, location of jobs, whom to contact for job postings
 - the job skills or qualifications required to help with recruitment issues.
- Lack of communication, planning, partnership and networking between employers and AHRDAs. AHRDAs find that employers do not know that they exist, or they are not familiar with their processes. Time is a factor in building partnerships with employers.
- Employers lack commitment and engagement to work with AHRDAs.
- There is no consideration of Aboriginal culture in the recruitment process, the policies and procedures of employers, nor the workplace environment.
- There is a need for cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness training program for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and to deal with cultural differences and curb stereotypes and racism.
- Aboriginal workers often do not have the proper qualifications (i.e., education, experience, skills training, pre-employment training or work ethic).
- There is a lack of resource people (i.e., guidance counsellors, mentors, role models), and positive advice for the Aboriginal people.
- Due to a lack of funding or fear of the unknown, transportation and relocation issues are barriers to Aboriginal employment.
- Language and the Aboriginal Peoples view of unions is a barrier to employment.

Along with the common themes, issues and challenges, the participants made 148 commitments to action that will increase Aboriginal participation in trade and apprenticeship in their regions. Some common go-forward commitments for both the supply and demand sides are outlined in the following table:

COMMON GO-FORWARD COMMITMENTS

- Exchange business cards right now.
- AHRDAs to share best practices with employers.
- Share information with their board.
- Business participants act as ambassadors and share information with their co-workers.
- Follow-ups should be done between employers, Aboriginal organizations and employees.
- AHRDAs will inform their local chamber of commerce of their existence, and engage or become a member.
- Employers will contact Aboriginal organizations.
- Employers will travel to Aboriginal communities to promote their company and to conduct job opportunity workshops/career information sessions in order to share emerging opportunities.
- AHRDAs will visit employers for a site tour, or to market potential employees.
- A central database/website must be developed to connect the demand and supply side of the labour market.
- Networking and social events will be organized to create regular contact between the demand and supply.
- AHRDAs will work with the unions.
- The youth should be involved, informed and recruited at the high school level.
- The regional organizing committees will convene to drive future action started by the forums.

Evaluation highlights

At the close of each of forum, a brief evaluation was circulated to participants. The following provides highlights of the feedback received:

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS					
	Ontario		British Columbia	Labrador	Nova Scotia
	Thunder Bay	London	Vancouver	Happy Valley - Goose Bay	Membertou
Participant response rate	51 %	52 %	33 %	52 %	57 %
Did the forum meet your expectations?	76 %	79 %	82 %	100 %	98 %
One thing that I liked about the forum	<p>Common comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very informative and a great information exchange. • Great opportunity to network – a very good way to mingle with businesses, unions, government, educational institutes and AHRDAs. • The methodology was well organized, great facilitation, small work groups is effective. • Wonderful way to have interaction with the participants and inclusive – “we are all equal”. • Having everyone on the same page is very constructive. • Increased contacts with employers. • Information received will improve opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples. 				
One thing I would change about the forum	<p>Common comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more employers participate -- not only businesses but government as well such as the Public Service Commission. • More written material on the AHRDAs. 				

<p>One thing I would change about the forum (cont'd)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more gatherings such as these. • More advertisement, marketing and promotion of the forums. • Add more time to the forum -- maybe stretch it to second day.
<p>General comment from the private sector</p>	<p>The majority of employers stated that as a result of their participation in the forum, they intend to develop plans that increase their organization's recruitment and retention of Aboriginal Peoples.</p>
<p>General comment from the AHRDAs</p>	<p>The forums have helped participants better understand the issues and constraints that employers face in their efforts to recruit and retain Aboriginal Peoples.</p>

Future plans – dates and locations of next forums

1. **Alberta Workforce Connex**, October 18–19, 2006 – Capri Centre Hotel Convention & Trade Centre, Red Deer, Alberta.
2. **Navigating Skilled Trades: Connecting with the Aboriginal Workforce**, November 14–16, 2006, Membertou Trade and Convention Centre, Nova Scotia.
3. **Quebec Workforce Connex**, January 2007 (tentative), date and location to be announced.
4. **New Brunswick Workforce Connex**, May 2007, date and location to be announced.
5. **Manitoba Workforce Connex**, Spring 2007 (tentative), date and location to be announced.
6. **Saskatchewan Workforce Connex**, Summer 2007 (tentative), date and location to be announced.

Next Steps

Each forum had specific tasks to be undertaken by both the supply side and the demand side. Upon completion of each forum, the As Said reports outlined various commitments made by participants and organizations. Follow-up meetings will be held with the regional steering committees to decide next steps.

Some examples of next steps include:

- Thunder Bay, Ontario
 - A union representative will sponsor a meeting with the AHRDAs to exchange information on organizational processes.
- London, Ontario
 - Shell Canada to start in-house discussions to revise their recruitment criteria for Aboriginal Peoples.
 - The Operating Engineers Training Institute (OETI) of Ontario will host an information sessions for the demand and the supply side of the labour market.
- Vancouver, British Columbia
 - Host lunch events and invite employers.
 - Create something similar to the 1-800-AHRDA in Ontario.
- Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador
 - Iron Ore Company will travel to communities and conduct job opportunity workshops.
 - Silver Spruce Resources will meet with Nunatsiavut Government – about possible employment-mineral exploration.
- Membertou, Nova Scotia
 - Nova Scotia Community College is developing co-op programs with Canadian Tire and Nova Scotia New Car Dealer's Association and will continue to work with Aboriginal people both on and off reserve.
 - Aboriginal Peoples Training and Employment Commission and Mi'kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat will meet with Dexter Construction.

Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada (AHRDCC) is a not-for-profit public-private organization with a mandate to increase Aboriginal participation in Canadian labour markets.

For further information on the national trades and apprenticeship project, contact the AHRDCC or one of the following team members:

820 - 606 Spadina Crescent East
Saskatoon, SK,
S7K 3H1

Toll Free: 1.866.711.5091
Fax: 1.306.956.5361
Email: contact.us@ahrdcc.com

- Sandra Stevens,
National Director, Aboriginal Trades & Apprenticeship Development
sandra.stevens@ahrdcc.com
- Peggy Berndt,
Manager, Communications & Marketing
peggy.berndt@ahrdcc.com
- Victoria LaBillois
Eastern Trades Liaison
victoria.labillois@ahrdcc.com
- David Lindley
Western Trades Liaison
david.lindley@ahrdcc.com
- Colleen Ostlund
Administrative Coordinator
colleen.ostlund@ahrdcc.com



Canada's leading innovators in Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement.

Canada

This project is funded by the Government of Canada, Human Resources and Social Development

www.workforceconnex.com