

Transitioning Aboriginal Youth from Unemployment to School or Work.

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What are barriers experienced by Aboriginal youth who are unable to find success in retaining employment?

Brunner (2003), "labor market challenges faced by Aboriginal people do not stem from an unwillingness to participate in the labor market, but rather from the lack of success in securing and retaining employment" (p. 1).

Research indicates Aboriginal youth experience barriers to work and school

Aboriginal youth may be unable to be productive in the workplace or educational program as they often lack soft skills such as: good work habits, workplace comportment and anger management (Kingslow, n.d.) essential for workplace or educational success.

Brunner (2003) maintains that it is important for Western Canadian governments, business and community to work together to ensure that every opportunity exists for Aboriginal people to acquire the human capital (defined as education, training and skills people can bring to the labor market) necessary to successfully participate in the labor market. We must develop and nurture human resources (Anaquod, November 15, 1994).

Primary reasons for Aboriginal people leaving a job

- A survey completed between September 4, 2004 and October 25, 2004 by 222 Aboriginal people found:
- Overall low job satisfaction as the primary reason for leaving jobs. This includes management style (13%); insufficient wages/salary (11%); lack of support (7%); an unfriendly workplace (7%); workplace culture (7%); problem with boss (6%); problem with co-worker (5%) and lack of benefits (5%) (Pollara, n.d.)
- Further studies indicate the primary reason for employees to leave a job is the feeling of 'not fitting in'. The sense of inclusion devalues the sense of contribution, and connection to the team (Moynahan, 2005).

How youth see themselves!

- Data collected by assessing over 100 Aboriginal youth in Calgary for a period of 24 month using the employment readiness scale (ERS) www.employmentreadiness.org clearly points towards barriers such as: lack of education; lack of transferable skills required in the current labor market; addictions or having someone in their immediate family with addictions; lack of social support systems; and living in a perpetual crisis.
- “Aboriginal youth in Calgary and surrounding areas want and need formalized programming and ongoing support in a culturally sensitive environment to acquire and use employability skill sets for successful enter for active and meaningful participation the labor force” (Welsh, 2007).

Staff members with the Just Say Y.E.S. program indicate youth need the following supports and program characteristics for successful transition into work and school.

- A visible member in the Aboriginal community.
- Knowledgeable of community resources which youth can access.
- Provide guidance to youth, working through barriers preventing successful goal attainment.
- Connect youth with community resources and support, support and more support so they understand there is help and they are not alone.
- Offer them choices for a positive lifestyle through mentorship.
- Assist youth re-connect with their vision of a future, encourage youth to dream.
- Works with representatives of the business community at all levels to create a positive partnership.
- Assist youth in the development and maintenance of personal career goals.
- Positive mentor: A person in their work place that they are able to relate to
- Making a contribution: Assisting in meaningful tasks.
- Inclusion: Being heard, respected, and valued in what they have to say and offer.
- Support youth on a daily basis.

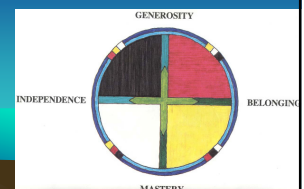
Aboriginal Youth say they need ongoing support, education and training programs to increase skills and reduce barriers to employment and education.

Aboriginal youth require programs which are culturally sensitive focusing on:

- Career decision making skills
- How to find a job;
- Skills to acquire and sustain a job
- Skills to maintain a job
- Skill development to manage a career
- Work Experience to build work history (Just Say Y.E.S., 2007).

Transition starts with the possibility of a new beginning. The Just Say Y.E.S. program assists with transition to school and work...

- Creates a sense of belonging by establishing a positive network for increased self esteem.
- Have Aboriginal workers who are role models so youth can identify with them.
- Have them engage in activities to encourage personal growth and awareness of opportunity to develop mastery.
- Help youth to connect with their personal vision to work towards independence.
- Provide support, lots and lots of support for continued growth.
- Offer opportunity for generosity to others for continued self esteem building.



Success begins with...

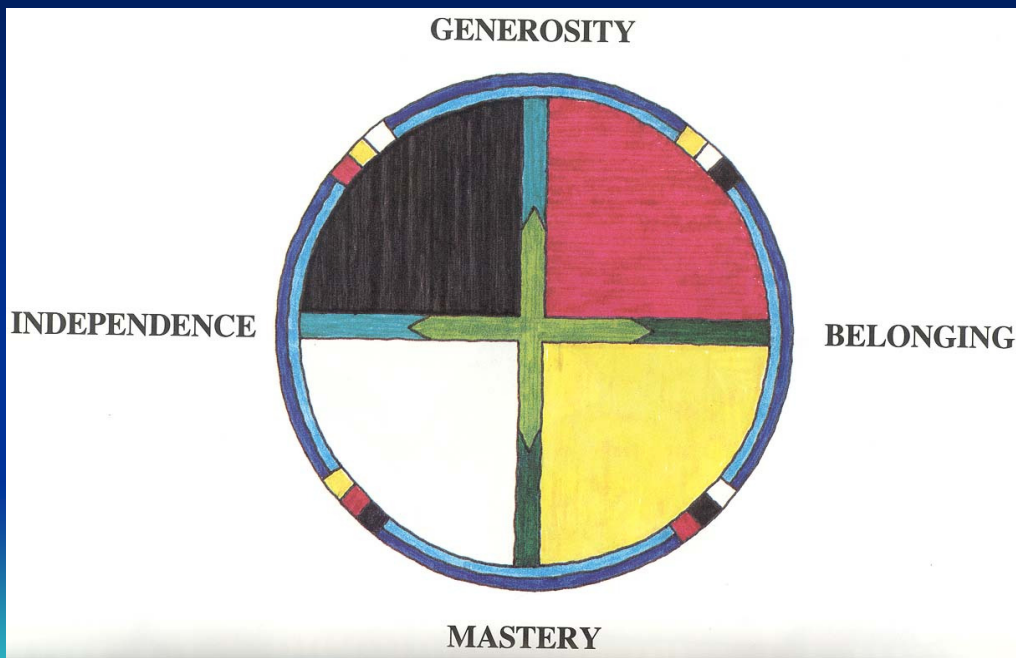
- Policies and standards which are specific to supporting Aboriginal people, their values and norms.
- Demonstrate support for policies and standards, which are communicated throughout the organization.
- Representation of Aboriginal people in leadership roles. Many organizations lack sufficient numbers of Aboriginal people in leadership positions to fully support mentoring programs or in-house role models (Dwyer, 2003)



Success from Aboriginal executives perspective, important for retention of Aboriginal people and career advancement (Dwyer, 2003)

- Leadership experience
- Flexible educational systems which are adaptive, responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people (knowledge acquisition)
- Training centers (application of skill development linked directly to employment) re-developed or created to serve the needs of Aboriginal people which are culturally sensitive before entering the workforce (Anaquod, November 15, 1994)
- The ability to network with other Aboriginal employees during work hours to develop, encourage and instill confidence to realize their full potential (Anaquod, November 15, 1994).
- Increased positive work place experience: an environment sensitive to cultural diversity; a well developed extended orientation with ongoing support; access to an elder; and the ability to be involved in collaborative community projects which has meaning.
- Acquire a mentor to bridge the cultural differences experienced by Aboriginal people in organizations which are steeped in western cultural values and norms. Nurture the 'desire to be'.
- The organizational culture of intentionality.

What creates success for Aboriginal youth involved with the Just Say Y.E.S. Program



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