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CANADA

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL PERSONS IN THE WORKFORCE

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Human Resources, Skills and Social Development
and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

**Phil McColeman
Chair**

MAY 2014

41st PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION

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SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE
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**THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

has the honour to present its

FOURTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied the opportunities for Aboriginal persons in the workforce and has agreed to report the following:

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INTRODUCTION

The wave of retirements looming as baby boomers age out of the workforce coupled with the substantial existing need for skilled tradespersons point to current and future vacancies in specific sectors of the economy. There are also a growing number of impact and benefit agreements (IBAs) signed between industry and Aboriginal communities that include a clear target for a number of employment opportunities to be reserved for Aboriginal people.¹ Taken together, this demonstrates that there are significant opportunities for Aboriginal people to improve their economic and social condition.

However, many Aboriginal people face multiple barriers to employment including challenges relating to education, literacy and essential skills, and job readiness. There is often a mismatch between the skills of a vast number of Aboriginal people and the skills required for current and future employment opportunities, primarily in the resource extraction and supporting industries. The report will look at some of the factors that preclude Aboriginal people from taking advantage of opportunities in the workforce and will also make recommendations to improve their participation in post-secondary education and the labour market.

On Tuesday 30 April 2013, 1st Session of the 41st Parliament, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (hereafter, the Committee) adopted the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities undertake a study on opportunities for Aboriginal persons in the workforce, and the supports available to them through the federal government including the Aboriginal Skills, Employment and Training Strategy (ASETS) which is up for renewal in 2015; and that this study begin after the summer adjournment.

On Thursday 7 November 2013, 2nd Session of the 41st Parliament, the Committee adopted a similar motion.

The Committee held a total of nine meetings on this study, and heard from 40 witnesses including Aboriginal organizations, not-for-profit associations and some economic sectors, primarily in the resource extraction industry. As well, the Committee heard from officials from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).² It also received numerous briefs that were taken into consideration in the writing of this report. Members of the

1 Aboriginal people refer to First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

2 The name of the Department changed over the course of the study, and is cited by its earlier name (Human Resources and Skills Development) when citing testimony or documents that were made or published prior to the date of the change.

Committee want to offer their gratitude to all of the witnesses who provided testimony as well as those who submitted briefs. Without their input this study would not have been possible.

The federal government has been offering Aboriginal labour market programming continuously since 1999 when the first Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) was introduced. Since then, progress has been made, but a lot remains to be done to close the education and employment gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of the Canadian population. Members of the Committee recognize that opportunities are knocking on the doors of Aboriginal people, and they want to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to the education, skills development and training and other supports that will allow them to take advantage of these opportunities as employees or as business owners. The pool of working-age Aboriginal people who are either underemployed or out of the labour market is attractive and important to employers, particularly in the natural resource extraction industry.

There are a number of reasons why there is great potential for the Aboriginal population to participate increasingly in the labour market. First, the Aboriginal population is growing rapidly, representing 3.8% of the country's population in 2006 and 4.3% in 2011. As Statistics Canada indicates, "[t]he Aboriginal population increased by 232,385 people, or 20.1% between 2006 and 2011, compared with 5.2% for the non-Aboriginal population."³ That is a growth rate approximately four times that of the non-Aboriginal population during the same period. Although it is possible that these numbers could be influenced by an increase in self-identification as well as changes in methodology between the studies, Statistics Canada scenarios all project that Aboriginal people will continue to form a bigger and bigger percentage of the Canadian population over the coming decades.⁴

Also, Inuit, First Nations and Métis populations are young in comparison with the rest of the Canadian population. According to the National Household Survey (NHS) 2011, their respective median ages were 23, 26 and 31 years old, while the median age for the non-Aboriginal population was 41 years old.⁵

Finally, Aboriginal populations often reside in close proximity to projects with potentially significant employment opportunities, for instance those in the natural resources development sector.

This report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the theme of improving Aboriginal education, including early childhood education. It provides general

3 Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit](#), National Household Survey – Analytical products, 2011, 8 May 2013.

4 Statistics Canada, "[Population projections by Aboriginal identity in Canada](#)," *The Daily*, 7 December 2011.

5 Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit](#), National Household Survey – Analytical products, 2011, 8 May 2013.

statistical information and, based on the testimony, raises issues, presents possible solutions, and highlights key recommendations. The second chapter discusses ways to improve labour market outcomes for Aboriginal people. Based on the testimony, the issues related to barriers to employment, promising solutions, best practices and recommendations are presented. The third chapter explores how to encourage private-sector investment in skills development as well as how to support Aboriginal businesses. Finally, the fourth chapter focuses on testimony related to the renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and examines other Aboriginal labour market training programs. It provides recommendations concerning the next steps moving forward to support Aboriginal people in gaining access to post-secondary education and employment opportunities in proximity to their residence and across the country.

CHAPTER 1 — IMPROVING ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

A number of stakeholders told the Committee that Aboriginal people's labour market participation difficulties were largely due to the challenges they had to face as children, in terms of early childhood education and elementary and secondary schooling. For those who complete primary and secondary education, witnesses identified challenges to entering and completing post-secondary education and made suggestions on how to meet these challenges.

A. General statistical information

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) shows that 87% of the general population aged 25 to 64 graduate from high school. This is significantly higher than high school graduation rates for Métis (74%), First Nations (60%) or Inuit (41%).⁶

The Survey also showed that only 48% of Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 years old had a post-secondary qualification,⁷ compared to 65% of the non-Aboriginal population. Inversely, 29% of Aboriginal people of that age group were without any diploma, in contrast to 12% among the non-Aboriginal population.⁸

However, the educational attainment of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations has increased slowly over the generations. For example, in 2011, both groups saw an increase of about 10 percentage points in high school graduation rates between individuals who were 55 to 64 years old and those who were 35 to 44 years old.⁹ However, in the case of Aboriginal people, individuals often complete their high school education only when they reach their late twenties or their thirties. Among the 20 to 24 age group, 34% were without any kind of diploma in 2011. By comparison, only 10% of non-Aboriginal people of the same age did not have one.¹⁰

Witnesses described the impact of these differences in educational attainment on their businesses, communities and organizations; some proposed specific recommendations.

6 Statistics Canada, [The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada](#), National Household Survey – Analytical products, 2011, released 26 June 2013.

7 The term “postsecondary qualification” includes trades certificates, college diplomas, university certificates below bachelor level and university degrees.

8 Statistics Canada, [The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada](#), National Household Survey – Analytical products, 2011, released 26 June 2013.

9 Ibid.

10 Statistics Canada, [2011 National Household Survey: Data Tables](#), Statistics Canada Catalogue No. [99-012-XWE2011039](#).

B. Issues, promising approaches and recommendations

1. Early childhood education

In describing the importance of increasing the education outcome for Aboriginal students, a witness focussed specifically on early childhood education.¹¹ The federal government currently supports such programs on-reserve and for Inuit people through the First Nations and Inuit Child Care program¹² and through Aboriginal Head Start programs for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children living off-reserve.¹³

In a brief submitted to the Committee, the Métis National Council made the argument that investing in early childhood education would “provide us with the ability to start intervening in the development of our young people and to prepare them for the future well before they ever enter the job market.”¹⁴

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to invest in stable and long-term funding for early childhood education programs for Aboriginal people.

2. K to 12 on-reserve

a. Federal investments in K to 12 on reserve

The Committee heard that greater funding for K to 12 and greater Aboriginal control over on-reserve education are needed to increase training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Committee heard that current funding levels do not match resources provided to off-reserve schools:

[S]trong educational outcomes are the cornerstone upon which all successful economies are built. In the board’s view, a significant contributor to these poor outcomes is funding levels that are not keeping pace with the rapid growth of the Aboriginal population, which

11 Métis National Council, “Aboriginal Labour Market Development,” Brief to the Committee, 25 February 2014, p. 9.

12 House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), James Sutherland, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1715

13 Public Health Agency of Canada, [About Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities](#).

14 Métis National Council, “Aboriginal Labour Market Development,” Brief to the Committee, 25 February 2014, p. 9.

increased by almost 20% between 2006 and 2011, or with education funding levels provided to other Canadians.¹⁵

Dawn Madahbee
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

We believe that the federal government must focus primarily on improving the K to 12 education system for First Nations and Inuit people, implement funding mechanisms that are on par with provincial and territorial education systems, and in time, improve outcomes.¹⁶

Denise Amyot
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Witnesses told the Committee that a high-school diploma from on-reserve schools does not necessarily provide Aboriginal graduates with the basic skills they need to undertake trades training or to enter post-secondary education.¹⁷ According to several witnesses, there is a significant gap in skills between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal job seekers, graduates and non-graduates. As one witness explained,

Aboriginal youth fall behind mainstream youth in graduation rates and often exit the public school system with leaving-school certificates at lower levels of literacy.¹⁸

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

One recommendation was for ASETS programming to cover the costs of remedial training to ready students for further education and training:

ASETS programs should include the student completion of GED or upgrading of high school courses on top of employment and life skills training. The upgrading should reflect requirements of post-secondary training programs.¹⁹

Mary-Pat Campbell
Suncor Energy Inc.

15 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0925.

16 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0855.

17 See, for example, HUMA, Kakivak Association and Suncor Energy Inc.

18 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0850.

19 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0955.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the federal government cover the cost of essential-skills, high-school-equivalency and upgrading programs to facilitate entry into post-secondary education. This funding could be delivered through a post-2015 Aboriginal labour market program such as the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy.

b. Proposed legislation with respect to on-reserve K to 12

When departmental officials briefed the Committee, they described the intention of previously announced but not-yet-introduced legislation with respect to federal funding for K to 12 on reserve:

The proposed legislation would provide First Nations control over First Nations education, allowing them or their education authorities to develop and deliver curricula that reflect their unique linguistic and cultural needs and interests, while ensuring education standards are equivalent in quality to school systems off reserve.²⁰

Chris Rainer
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Committee also heard from witnesses that the anticipated legislation was a welcome initiative that could contribute to the training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

We're actually as a company very excited about the new First Nation Education Act that's coming and we look forward to figuring out how to partner with our local First Nations.²¹

Heather Kennedy
Suncor Energy Inc.

[The Economic Action Plan announcement with respect to the First Nations Education Act] [...] is a step in the right direction toward building more self-confident individuals and youth within our areas. They will become a greater asset within our own communities, building self-assurance, contributing back to the community, and ultimately building a stronger educated nation within our own communities.²²

Charlene Bruno
Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society

20 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1550

21 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1040.

22 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 1005.

c. Proximity of schools

Most witnesses that discussed the issue of geographic proximity to educational institutions for Aboriginal people living on-reserve and/or in isolated communities focused on post-secondary education. However, some witnesses also indicated that even secondary education was not available in all communities, and that students were sometimes required to travel outside their communities for high school. Difficulties encountered by Aboriginal youth in adapting to life outside their communities further contribute to low completion rates. As two witnesses explained,

Not all of [the remote fly-in communities in isolated parts of Northwestern Ontario] have high schools. So they have children that are graduating and going into grade 8 and going into grade 9 and they have to go to a school in Thunder Bay or somewhere else away from their families. It becomes a reluctance.²³

Paul Semple
Noront Resources Limited

[H]ow many of us would want to send our kids, at the age of 12 or 13, two hours away, perhaps for the week, to attend high school? Most of us don't have to deal with that. It's kind of like a perpetuation of residential schools in some way because they have to leave their families if they want to get high school education.²⁴

Pierre Gratton
Mining Association of Canada

Culture shock was one of the challenges witnesses described when relocation is required for education:

A significant factor for many Aboriginal youth, in particular, if they go down to a larger centre or the training program it's often a cultural shock to them and can result in distractions that can impact their success in the programs.²⁵

Jay Fredericks
Rio Tinto

[O]ne of the things that our members have told us is very important, and we've also heard from educators, is the issue of transitional assistance for Aboriginal peoples because many of them do have to leave their home communities to go to high school.²⁶

Susanna Cluff-Clyburne
Canadian Chamber of Commerce

23 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1040.

24 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 1010.

25 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0940.

26 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 1010.

3. From high school to post-secondary education and training

a. Non-completion of high school

Witnesses from all sectors identified the low completion rate of secondary education by Aboriginal students, described in the opening section of this chapter, as a significant barrier to employment.

At a 38% [First Nations] graduation rate, that's a lot of missed opportunities for students to be able to participate, to choose the paths that they want to follow. A grade 12 graduation is one of those initial steps to unlocking those opportunities and keys for students, absolutely.²⁷

Chris Rainer
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

About half the population [in northern Saskatchewan] [...] does not have a grade 12 education, and just 25% of the region has post-secondary education. This is a serious challenge because our operations require a highly technical and skilled workforce. Ensuring Aboriginal residents have the required secondary and post-secondary education to work in technical positions is an ongoing challenge for communities, government, and the company.²⁸

Russell Mercredi
Cameco Corporation

In describing the proposed legislation with respect to K to 12, officials described its intent to encourage high school completion and to ensure that high school graduation would equip Aboriginal graduates for further training and education:

[W]e want to ensure that students do have opportunities once they graduate, so they at least have a high school diploma that would be recognized to give them the opportunities to go into the workforce, into post-secondary education, or whatever choice they would like to make. Education is a key; it's an opportunity.²⁹

Chris Rainer
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

b. Raising awareness among and improving outreach to young Aboriginal students in high school

A recurring theme heard from training organizations and employers was the importance of engaging students while still in high school. This would encourage high school completion, provide information about the requirements of nearby employers and

27 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1620.

28 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1005.

29 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1640.

industries, offer exposure to and experience with employers, and provide role models. Providing funds to high schools, hosting conferences, and exposing students to possible employment were some of the ways in which Aboriginal organizations and industry have sought to engage high school students:

[W]e support science and technology programs in high schools. We recently made a donation of \$1 million to help build a new science and technology centre at a high school in Fort McMurray which has 20% Aboriginal participation...³⁰

Kara Flynn
Syncrude Canada Ltd.

We [...] host highly popular Soaring career conferences, motivational sessions for students in high school, industry in the classroom curriculum modules, showing our students what's possible if they stay in school in mining, journalism, oil and gas, and so on, and realizing projects working with communities directly.³¹

Chief Roberta Jamieson
Indspire

What we saw in the diamond mines in the NWT was that high school completion rates were only at about 50% before the diamond mines came in. Once youth had a vision of a career, once they could see how, if they stay in school, what awaited them at the end of that, once we could demonstrate that opportunity, high school completion rates moved to north of 80%.³²

Ryan Montpelier
Mining Industry Human Resources Council

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that federally funded training programs for Aboriginal people encourage early exposure for students in secondary school to industries offering employment opportunities, including the resource extraction and related industries.

Witnesses also noted the importance of role models who could provide information on opportunities and on the education and training needed to benefit from them for students.

30 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 0950.

31 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0950.

32 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 1005.

We actually have to reach the children when they're in junior high and help them figure things out. I think we need to give them more role models. We need to show them what's available because they have absolutely no idea what's out there and what they need.³³

Valerie Bowers
Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat

Those Aboriginal peoples who have made a career in the trades are the best spokespersons. We believe success will breed success.³⁴

Steven Schumann
International Union of Operating Engineers

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that federally funded training programs for Aboriginal people encourage service delivery organizations to include the involvement of successful role models in their training.

33 Ibid., 0955.

34 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0910.

CHAPTER 2 — IMPROVING LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Upon reaching adulthood, Aboriginal people often have to deal with barriers to their education and labour market integration. These obstacles are on various levels; they are often interrelated, and they form a complex problem. But solutions have emerged, sometimes from training organizations, sometimes from the Aboriginal communities themselves, not to mention private sector initiatives, which will be discussed in the next chapter of this report. This chapter provides an overview of some of the difficulties encountered by Aboriginal people with respect to training and labour market integration; it discusses practices that provide solutions to those problems and sets out the Committee's recommendations.

A. Issues at stake, promising approaches and recommendations

1. Lack of essential skills

From the perspective of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), whose officials spoke to the Committee on 5 December 2013, the main barrier standing between First Nations and successful skills development is the lack of essential skills.³⁵

The essential skills often named by witnesses include, for example, interpersonal relationships in the workplace, punctuality and regular attendance, literacy and a command of information technology tools.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the statistics for formal education levels are less than glowing for a large proportion of Aboriginal people, too many of whom do not graduate from high school. The completion of a high school education is considered a minimum standard in Canadian society and usually represents the best assurance that a person will have the essential qualifications for employment. Since many Aboriginal people fail to acquire these essential qualifications through the school system, many alternatives have been developed to help them obtain these competencies.

The representative of the Assembly of First Nations addressed this issue in her testimony before the Committee:

35 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1620.

[U]ntil such time as the First Nations high school graduation rates equal Canadian levels, more resources such as pre-employment essential skills training will be needed for clients who lack high school completion.³⁶

Judy Whiteduck
Assembly of First Nations

The Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association also discussed this matter:

[T]here is an increasing number of youth exiting the high school system with a leaving-school certificate or a diploma who are functioning far below the competency level that is required to be a success in a trade. So we are having to play catch-up and there are additional resources that are required to develop the workplace literacy that is required in addition to providing them with the other types of essential skills and the industry soft skills that are necessary to be successful in maintaining a job.³⁷

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

Various organizations have developed innovative solutions to address the lack of essential skills in the Aboriginal population.

The Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association (AMTA) of British Columbia offers the Pathways to Success program to the majority of its participants:

Every AMTA candidate completes a test of workplace essential skills. In consultation with our industry partners, we've decided to focus on our candidates' reading, numeracy, and document-use levels. Through this assessment we find that about 70% of our candidates need to enter our pathways to success program. In order to improve their essential skills, pathways to success also includes many confidence-building exercises like life skills, coaching, workplace orientation, and getting special licences and tickets that will help our candidates become more aware of the requirements of entering into long-term employment.³⁸

Laurie Sterritt
Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association

AMTA views its approach as innovative and a model that should be followed:

The standard approach within the education setting says everyone should be treated equally. The AMTA model challenges this very assumption, and delivers an innovative model for training and development: a candidate-focused solution. In my opinion, the AMTA model is one that everyone should follow because we've proven that by tackling the issue one person at a time, one by one, we're helping Aboriginal learners achieve

36 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0905.

37 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0915.

38 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 0955.

their potential and make a contribution to their economic health, to their families and their communities, to the province, and to Canada.³⁹

Jeannette Jules
Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association

Similarly, the Ignite Adult Learning Corporation has also developed a successful model for increasing the essential skills of its Aboriginal participants:

[L]ike a business, we are open all year round. Each year we take 30 to 45 at risk young adults from the ages of 19 to 30, and they're hired to work at Ignite. Their job is to learn seven and a half hours a day, five days a week. Wages are deducted for lateness and absenteeism. Poor performance, and chronic absenteeism are causes for dismissal from the program.[...] Our success rate is about 70% - 75% over the many years.⁴⁰

Carlo Bizzarri
Ignite Adult Learning Corporation

It is a highly successful approach that results in lasting positive change in the community — an approach that continues to prove that it is more effective and efficient, socially and economically, to invest in the potential of young adults than it is to finance their incarceration and rehabilitation.⁴¹

Another success story presented to the Committee was that of the Regina and Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centres. The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission described their approach as follows:

They have a formula that should be replicated more. What those two organizations do is, first of all, they offer very short programs. From a pre-employment perspective, they're not 20 weeks long, they're six to eight weeks long.

In those six to eight weeks they do a few things very well. First off, they offer some basic safety training so that the employer knows they're not going to hurt themselves or somebody else on their first day of the job. They give them a basic orientation to the tools so they're going to be somewhat productive. They build that attachment with employers so that at the end of that eight-week period, all of those students are offered a job. The last thing is that they really focus on essential skills. If you don't show up every day for one of the trades and skills centre's courses, they'll fire you, just like what happens in a real job. They focus very hard in those four areas and they've had great success.

They're a wonderful feeder program for the apprenticeship system because students who complete there go on to get jobs.⁴²

Jeff Ritter
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission

39 Ibid., 1000.

40 Ibid., 1015.

41 Ignite Adult Learning Corporation, "Building Strength in People", Presentation to the Committee, 27 March 2014, p. 5 (PowerPoint).

42 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 1025.

For its part, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) says it has “led Employment and Social Development Canada to fund essential skills projects in recent years”⁴³.

[Those projects] have demonstrated the impact of essential skills. For example, findings in 17 pilot projects across Canada indicated that up to 60% of learners and workers tested were below level three literacy, which is what is needed to function in society. After some hours, 24 to 40 hours of essential skills training, students and workers demonstrated learning gains and improved performance.⁴⁴

Denise Amyot
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

The ACCC also believes that, as a general rule, employability or training interventions that are longer and more flexible, and therefore less geared to direct employment, make it possible to more effectively address upgrading and essential skills development needs.⁴⁵

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to support initiatives that provide Aboriginal people with access to high-quality training in essential skills, including individualized training programs where appropriate.

2. Cultural disconnect

The disconnect between Aboriginal culture and the culture of the business community or of learning institutions is another potential barrier to the labour market integration of Aboriginal people.

Several organizations referred to the reciprocal nature of this lack of understanding between cultures.

For example, the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association noted that:

Culture works both ways, of course. We work toward being able to provide awareness to industry and to employers about the Aboriginal culture, but we also work very hard to

43 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0855

44 Ibid..

45 Ibid., 0850.

prepare our young folks for the culture of the industry. Every industry has its own culture, so it's necessary to do that cross-awareness.⁴⁶

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

Along those same lines, the AMTA indicated that:

[I]f you get to the human issue, it's that I assume something about you and you assume something about me. In a workplace that happens no matter what the person's background is. If I assume that First Nations are not interested in natural resource development or extraction or mining, then I might not look to them as a natural workforce. If the First Nations believe that's just a big, bad mining company that wants to come and strip away all of our natural resources, I might not look to them as a potential employer.⁴⁷

Laurie Sterritt
Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association

Chief Bruce Underwood, Program Employability Officer with the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, also made similar statements:

[W]hen we talk about essential skills for employment and about feeling self-pride and self-identity, [...] I think numeracy, literacy, and all of those things are very important. But when you look at where we come from as a people, it's also important to know the language and to have the elders incorporated.

It doesn't mean just culturally. We need to bridge the cultural gap to mainstream society. A lot of our people might figure there's discrimination on the work site when somebody's up there yelling, "Throw these down and get me that cord." [...] but that's the language, and that's the culture on the construction site. We don't have enough of those mechanisms in place to have that cross-cultural bridge....⁴⁸

Chief Bruce Underwood
Coast Salish Employment and Training Society

In their presentation to the Committee, ESDC officials also touched upon this perception of work culture as being somehow discriminatory. "We find that the common work culture is often seen by the Aboriginal employee as being discriminatory. Often that can be overcome simply with better cultural understandings between groups."⁴⁹ The Department's representative cited as a positive example a project with the De Beers mining company, which "actually involves a community representative who works in the company, not as an actual miner but as a liaison between the community, the

46 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0930.

47 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 1035.

48 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 1010.

49 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1705.

company, and the individuals, to ensure that any issues that arise in the workplace can be resolved.”⁵⁰

The representative of the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle also raised the issue of cultural adaptation:

For our people, to leave the community for the first time is a major issue and definitely a culture shock. There are many of our people who speak their traditional languages. Many of the standard programs and skilled trades or training institutes are not developed to meet the uniqueness of some of our people's training requirements, nor do they have cultural uniqueness attached to them.⁵¹

Steven Williams
Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle

The problem of culture shock is in fact closely related to the distance that Aboriginal people often have to travel in order to gain access to training or job opportunities. The barrier represented by remoteness is discussed in greater detail in other sections of this report. However, one of the solutions put forward to reduce the extent of culture shock also helps in solving the distance problem:

To help in addressing these issues we have located many of our offices either in a First Nation Community or as close to a First Nation as we can. We have established some of our locations so we are in close proximity to a number of other First Nation Communities. Our offices are now well known in our communities and we have grown to know our people and their families...⁵²

Various witnesses also referred to the importance of instituting cultural awareness training in businesses.

The Forest Products Association of Canada was clear on this subject:

Among several foundational steps in building constructive relationships [between industry and Aboriginal communities], one key measure is cultural awareness training, which has the potential to enable more effective relationships with Aboriginal communities.⁵³

Among the industry representatives to have put such cultural awareness training in place, Suncor shared its experience with the Committee:

We have for the last few years put all of the relevant employees through some Aboriginal awareness training, which we think has been very helpful to help them understand some

50 Ibid.

51 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0900.

52 Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, Presentation to the Committee, 6 March 2014, p. 3.

53 Forest Products Association of Canada, Brief to the Committee, 21 March 2014, p. 3.

of the cultural norms and some of the individual traits of the Aboriginal history, and so on. That was an important barrier for us to remove internally...⁵⁴

Heather Kennedy
Suncor

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the federal government encourage industry partners to implement new or enhance existing Aboriginal cultural awareness programs and to foster improved cultural understanding in the workplace.

3. Distance to training or job opportunities from remote communities

As mentioned previously, the fact that many members of the Aboriginal population reside in geographically remote areas constitutes a significant barrier to their participation in training or in the labour market itself. As described by one witness:

Within the Aboriginal community, a large segment of the labour force resides in rural or remote settings. Transportation, living-away-from-home costs, and suitable accommodations can be a major factor if the jobs are located a distance away from an individual's home community.⁵⁵

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

According to another witness, this is often the leading barrier to labour market participation by Aboriginal people:

Perhaps the biggest barrier of all is often the proximity of training to the communities, making transportation and living support in those communities for those individuals of utmost importance.⁵⁶

Ian Anderson
Kinder Morgan

This is in addition to the previously mentioned culture shock associated with having to travel a considerable distance away from one's community in order to work.

54 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1015.

55 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0850.

56 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1000.

More specifically still, the fact that many Aboriginal people do not have driver's licences was mentioned as being one of the key challenges to be addressed by many businesses and organizations.⁵⁷

According to the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, distance makes it more complicated for Aboriginal people on reserve to pursue apprenticeship training.

[I]t's difficult for First Nations people on reserve to continue with their apprenticeship training. This is due to lack of employment in close proximity and a tight attachment to their community. On-reserve training requires additional financial supports, as well as opportunities for paid work experience or employment transition.⁵⁸

Jeff Ritter
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission

To address the distance problem, some stakeholders have started delivering their services directly in the communities, much like the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, which — as noted above — has taken the initiative of establishing offices in or near Aboriginal communities.

For example, the ACCC told the Committee that the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in British Columbia, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and Cambrian College in Ontario all have mobile trades training trailers that provide hands-on training in Aboriginal communities based on the needs identified by community leaders and industry partners.⁵⁹

Similarly, Vale referred to a partnership with post-secondary institutions that resulted in the development of “a mobile classroom ... in a transport truck with walls that move. [...] We bring it out to the First Nations communities where sometimes the youth are reluctant to leave the community to go to school. We bring the classroom to them.”⁶⁰

As well, companies such as Cameco may offer transportation to their employees. The Cameco representative explained that the company operates an air transportation system with 13 stops in northern Saskatchewan, “which addresses the isolation and remoteness of communities.”⁶¹

Also, this company's “work schedule is one week at work and one week off,” which “allows Aboriginal people to reside in their home community and maintain the traditional

57 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, various dates (Cariboo Chilcotin Aboriginal Training Employment Centre, PTI, Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, Suncor).

58 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0955.

59 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0845.

60 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0940.

61 Cameco, Speaking Notes, 4 February 2014, p.6.

lifestyle if they choose.” The company also has “... excellent communication services on site, including cellular service and Internet. This allows employees to remain in contact with family, which is important to Aboriginal people.”⁶²

Lastly, another approach to the problem of distance associated with education or work consists in supporting entrepreneurship in Aboriginal communities.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is among the proponents of this approach: “Funding for self-employment provides financing to individuals to enable them to utilize their skills to provide a product or service and to create jobs. Aboriginal entrepreneurs need support and training to acquire the necessary business and financial skills.”⁶³

One of the organizations working to support Aboriginal entrepreneurship that has achieved a great deal of success in this area is the Kakivak Association in Nunavut.

Our success rate with businesses in the last 10 years has been about 80%. [...] In a lot of cases, we work from the very beginning. [...] We give a grant to assist them with a feasibility study, with a business plan, and that sort of thing. Then we start working with other organizations, Baffin Business Development Corporation — organizations like that — and with Economic Development and Transportation, Government of Nunavut, and we start leveraging funding from other organizations to assist them to either start their business or to purchase a business, for example. Then we would move to the aftercare phase, where our staff would assist them with the operations, with their accounting processes, and that sort of thing.⁶⁴

Scott Wells
Kakivak Association

Hence, the solutions proposed to address the challenges associated with distance and transportation are also very useful in reducing the cultural adaptation problems discussed in the previous section of this report.

4. Systemic psychosocial problems and poor infrastructure

Several witnesses explained that before many Aboriginal people can be ready to start training or accept a job, they must first work to resolve numerous issues of a psychosocial nature.

Some of the personal barriers mentioned in this context include problems associated with housing, addictions, poverty, physical health and low self-esteem.

62 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1010.

63 Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Brief to the Committee, March 2014, p.7.

64 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 1020.

In a brief to the Committee, the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development (CAHRD) described the difficulties confronting its clients and the importance of taking a holistic intervention approach.

Over 80% of the clients that assessed as needing education and training have transfer payments as their income. They have not adopted mainstream culture and are not living Aboriginal culture but rather the culture of poverty with all its debilitating effects, including lack education and training, and/or work ethic. This is one of the major issues in trying to assist Aboriginal people into the workforce. They often are not motivated because they don't have hope and don't believe that they can change their circumstances. This is why it is important that employment programs continue to have resources and flexibly to address the potential job seeker in a holistic manner.⁶⁵

The issue of training individuals is often not a straight-forward matter, particularly among adult clients who are living in poverty and are multi-barriered. For many of CAHRD's clients, issues such as safe and affordable housing, child care, and developing esteem are challenges that they face on a daily basis as they progress through the various programs offered by CAHRD. In order to have as much success for its clients, the centre ensures that as many as possible client needs are being met through a variety of on-site support services....⁶⁶

Among other things, CAHRD operates a housing complex to help its participants stabilize their personal situation.

The Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle described in its brief a similar situation:

Our offices do not only take people that are "work ready" and have decided to get a job or more training. What we often do is work with our people who have decided that they want a "life change". For most parts, our people require several interventions.[...] We accept the young, the addicts, the single parents, the elderly or the person off the street and we start from the beginning. Often times we have to refer to other agencies to help our people overcome a multitude of barriers and [...] to help them prepare for the life change. [...] Fortunately, a lot of them come back to us and then our work begins again.⁶⁷

Others emphasized the importance of in-depth support services that provide assistance to the whole person.

In its presentation, the Métis National Council emphasized the importance of ensuring that future federal Aboriginal employment programs continue to provide broader support and lasting interventions to people who are not ready to work because they have obstacles to overcome.⁶⁸

65 Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development, Brief to the Committee, 6 February 2014, p. 3.

66 Ibid., p. 6.

67 Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, Presentation to the Committee, 6 March 2014, p. 2.

68 Métis National Council, "Aboriginal Labour Market Development," Brief to the Committee, 25 February 2014, p. 8.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in its Aboriginal programs, take into account the importance of comprehensive support services in several areas of the lives of Aboriginal people to allow them to overcome barriers to their success in the labour force.

On a final note, infrastructure problems in Aboriginal communities sometimes add to the systemic problems described above. Apart from transportation infrastructure, which is problematic for several remote communities as noted above, Goldcorp explained to the Committee that the lack of electricity in some communities is also a sizeable obstacle.

One of the challenges we face, particularly with remote communities, is that they don't have things like power.[...] If you don't have things like grid power, it's hard to set up a training institution in order for their communities to attend training courses where they can better themselves and then leapfrog into the industry.⁶⁹

Colin Webster
Goldcorp

5. Gender-specific issues

Similar to the importance of addressing participants' psychosocial difficulties, some witnesses emphasized the need to consider the realities facing women in the context of Aboriginal training and employment.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) referred to the problem of traditionally male and female jobs and the economic difficulties experienced by women.

Although Aboriginal women have higher educational rates [than Aboriginal men], education and health care tend to be the predominant fields of study. This gender bias persists in the broader labour market as well, in which Canadian women are heavily over-represented in areas related to the public sector while men are concentrated in those high growth industries related to resource extraction and construction, industries that have higher levels of income. Among Aboriginal peoples, this gender divide is even more glaring. Females represent 82.3% of Aboriginal employees in health care, education, and public administration, compared with 70.4% among non-Aboriginal employees.⁷⁰

Over the course of the past 20 years, the troubling socio-economic outcomes of Aboriginal women have been well documented. The multiple barriers they face in entering and retaining employment in the labour market are numerous. When comparing

69 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0910.

70 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0845.

non-Aboriginal women with their male counterparts, the statistics all demonstrate that Aboriginal women have lower income levels and work in lower occupational categories.⁷¹

Beverly Blanchard
Native Women's Association of Canada

NWAC provides employment and training interventions including paying for individual training, such as college or individual training leading to a degree, job creation partnerships, assistance to Aboriginal workers to help them create their own small businesses, and targeted wage subsidies. These services are available to all Aboriginal women, regardless of their status.⁷²

Several witnesses referred to the strong presence of single mothers in their services.⁷³ In fact, according to Statistics Canada, about one-third of Aboriginal children (34.4%) lived in a lone-parent family in 2011 compared with 17.4% of non-Aboriginal children. Among these Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children living in a lone-parent family, the majority lived with a female lone parent.⁷⁴

In connection with this phenomenon, one of the recommendations repeated most often during the course of the study concerned the need for participants, who are often women, to have access to child care services in order to start training or accept a job.⁷⁵ It was pointed out that child care services needed to be culturally adapted and flexible in terms of schedule, since some training is given in the evening.

[I]n terms of women as a demographic and part of the workforce, the ability to participate in the workforce often points to the need for child care capacities. Women are a very important part of the First Nations workforce, whether it be in the public or private sectors.⁷⁶

Judy Whiteduck
Assembly of first Nations

More specific recommendations on how the issue of child care services should be addressed by federal programs are presented in Chapter 4 entitled "Renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and Other Programs."

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., 0850.

73 In particular Indspire, the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec and the Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat.

74 Statistics Canada, [Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit](#), National Household Survey 2011.

75 In particular Syncrude, Suncor, the Assembly of First Nations, Acosys, the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, the Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat, Indspire, the National Association of Friendship Centres, the Métis National Council, the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, the Kakivak Association, First Peoples Development Inc., and the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association.

76 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0940.

Concerning promising practices, Suncor told the Committee that it paid special attention to hiring women and to the availability of child care services.

At Suncor, 23% of our workforce is female. Considering the mining and resource nature of our business, that's pretty high. We target a lot of female employees. We offer child care at our head office in Calgary. We don't offer it at our various sites, but we do, through our community arm, support local child care. In Fort McMurray and Fort McKay, 15 years ago there was a child care crisis in those communities, and we actually were a leader in working with the community—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in the case of Fort McMurray—to find the right people to provide that child care and to support it.⁷⁷

Heather Kennedy
Suncor

In addition, the Aboriginal Internship Program (AIP) developed by Acosys Consulting Services Inc., an Aboriginal company, is a model that seems to work well with Aboriginal women. The AIP has already proven successful in helping Aboriginal people find professional employment and management-level careers within top-tier private sector employers through working with businesses, mentoring and job shadowing, and enabling Aboriginal people and interns to obtain certification through university programs while working on live project delivery on client sites. The whole idea behind this program is that, over the years, Aboriginal people who have been hired to management positions in private businesses will be in a better position to hire more Aboriginal people, thereby creating a multiplying effect. Acosys told the Committee that the vast majority of the program participants were Aboriginal women who often were going back to university in order to start a second or third career. Acosys proposed to collaborate with the federal government to expand the AIP into a three-year national pilot program that would provide financial support to 10 participants per year.⁷⁸

Programs that facilitate Aboriginal people's access to professional and management positions in the private sector remain scarce, as evidenced by the testimony presented in the following section.

6. Marginalization of a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population in subordinate jobs

Some witnesses decried the fact that the labour market participation of Aboriginal people was confined almost exclusively to entry-level positions.

For example, Syncrude told the Committee that:

Clearly, one of our challenges, which I think is true for the entire industry, is that we are extraordinarily successful at attracting employees in the more occupational and trades aspects of our business, and we all continue to seek opportunities to move Aboriginal

77 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 1010.

78 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 0905.

people across all aspects of our business into the more professional, technical, and engineering and sciences aspects of our operations.⁷⁹

Kara Flynn
Syncrude

Suncor alluded to the same difficulty:

As for the management level, the representation [of Aboriginal people] is predominantly more in the unionized workforce, but we do have some at the management level. But [...] it starts to get smaller as you go up into the leadership programs, so that is one area of focus for us.⁸⁰

Mary-Pat Campbell
Suncor

Acosys said much the same thing:

[T]here's no [Aboriginal] management layer in corporate Canada. By this I mean an operational management layer, not the vapour trails that we see right now with the appointment of Aboriginal leadership to the boardrooms. It seems that the influence has always been down at the entry-level position skill level. At the management level, where the buying and hiring is being made, there's no Aboriginal representation there.⁸¹

David Acco
Acosys

Apart from Acosys' AIP, described in the previous section, there are several other promising practices in place.

For example, the Cameco and Rio Tinto companies both have programs to facilitate the advancement of Aboriginal persons within their organizations.

[At Cameco,] we have several programs to allow people to move up within the company. Typically most Aboriginal people are hired at the entry levels, so it's very important to move them into those supervisory roles that come with experience. We have some formal programs such as our career transition program whereby we pay employees' wages while they return to university to obtain a degree and perhaps move to a more professional role.⁸²

Russel Mercredi
Cameco

[A]ctivities for Rio Tinto include things like providing on-the-job training as part of the skill process, and operating the in-house educational upgrades so that an individual who may

79 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 0950.

80 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1015.

81 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 0910.

82 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1040.

come in at an entry level doesn't need to stay at an entry level. They can work towards entry into things like trades, education, development of supervisory skills, or other activities.⁸³

Jay Fredericks
Rio Tinto

This leads us to examine the role of the private sector in Aboriginal skills development.

83 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0915.

CHAPTER 3 — PRIVATE-SECTOR INVESTMENT IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT — ISSUES, PROMISING APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Activity on traditional lands: impact and benefit agreements

The Committee heard from witnesses that impact and benefit agreements (IBAs) form the basis of many resource exploration and extraction projects. These agreements are between the First Nation on whose traditional lands the economic activity will take place and the company that will undertake the activity:

The Voisey's Bay deposits are located on the traditional lands of the Innu and Inuit of Labrador. Given their rights over these lands, Vale entered into impacts and benefits agreements, IBAs, that set out how the land would be used and the benefits that would accrue to the Innu and the Inuit.⁸⁴

Corey McPhee
Vale

Cameco has negotiated impact management and collaboration agreements with the handful of communities most impacted by our sites. These agreements are the foundation of our corporate responsibility commitments to the region. They form the basis of our employment and training initiatives.⁸⁵

According to the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, there are approximately 100 active agreements:

These are agreements signed between mining companies and Aboriginal communities. Most of those impact and benefit agreements — our socio-economic, our partnership agreements — have an employment component to them. The employment component often has targets around either a total number of Aboriginal people employed or a percentage of the work force coming from Aboriginal communities.⁸⁶

Ryan Montpellier
Mining Industry Human Resources Council

This Council, which had studied a number of IBAs, also testified that employment targets are often missed, for a variety of reasons:

We [...] looked at a number of challenges around why companies and communities were struggling to reach their employment targets. A number of factors came, for example, the lack of trust and lack of knowledge about the project and careers. There were a number

84 Ibid., 0845.

85 Cameco, Speaking Notes, 4 February 2014, p.3.

86 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 0900.

of barriers as to why employment targets were not met. One of the key ones was the lack of education, and in particular, essential skills and work readiness skills. Mining companies often underestimated what level of essential skills were in the community and how much of that early training was required to even get the individual employable in the sector.⁸⁷

Ryan Montpellier
Mining Industry Human Resources Council

In response to these findings, the mining industry and the Assembly of First Nations created the Mining Essentials Program.⁸⁸

In addition to employment and training targets, IBAs and other agreements may include commitments related to Aboriginal businesses providing related services. Several employers identified the importance of Aboriginal businesses to their overall operations:

Both Syncrude and Suncor, as well as many of the other oil sands companies working in our region, do business, large sums of business, with both the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. The Fort McKay Group of Companies is obviously right on our doorstep and has a significant number of businesses providing services to the oil sands. All of us are using the services from those First Nations.⁸⁹

Karen Flynn
Syncrude Canada, Ltd.

Under the provisions of [our IBA], a large number of Cree-owned and operated businesses are providing us with a wide range of construction-related and site support services, including large civil works, road construction, and camp services.⁹⁰

Colin Webster
Goldcorp Inc.

The Committee heard from federal officials that the “whole of government” approach to supporting Aboriginal participation in the economy includes a commitment to procure goods and services from Aboriginal businesses:

87 Ibid.

88 The Mining Essentials Program is described in greater detail in the section below on multi-sectoral partnerships.

89 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1020.

90 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0855.

We have a number of examples around procurement, including the \$1.17 billion Canadian air force 5Wing Goose Bay project in Labrador, and the \$33 billion national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Through projects like these, with 20- to 30-year life spans, Aboriginal businesses and individuals will now have access to millions of dollars' worth of procurement opportunities and employment opportunities.⁹¹

Sheilagh Murphy
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

B. Private-sector investment

In addition to employment and procurement, the Committee heard that the private sector invests in Aboriginal business development, training and post-secondary programs in partnership with existing institutions, community-based training programs and on-the-job and other workplace training programs.

The Committee heard of private-sector support for business “incubators” in Aboriginal communities:

Suncor is [...] proud of our involvement in business incubators, resource centres to foster entrepreneurs within the community, which in turn help to eliminate the need for social income support. The first of these incubators was in Fort McKay and the second is currently at the Tsuu T'ina First Nation near Calgary. [...] Each model is slightly different, reflecting the needs of the community. In addition to funding, Suncor employees volunteer their time, sharing their expertise in areas such as building business plans, marketing, proposal building, and even certification programs.⁹²

Mary-Pat Campbell
Suncor Energy Inc.

The Committee also heard that major employers offered direct support to the development of specific Aboriginal businesses:

We've [...] been working with Aboriginal contractors directly for their procurement bidding expertise to assist them in understanding how and through what vehicles they should be looking for procurement opportunities. The practice has proven to be very successful as a way for these contractors to [...] get their foot in the door. Once they have a proven track record, then they can bid for more work with my company and others.⁹³

Ian Anderson
Kinder Morgan Canada

Training-associated work placements have been particularly successful in small and medium-sized Aboriginal businesses:

91 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1550.

92 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0955.

93 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1000.

The one learning that I'd like to stress from our experience [...] is the success of clients who were placed with small to mid-sized local Aboriginal businesses working at Suncor. Suncor offered subsidies to these small businesses to take on the students for the work experience part of the program. This arrangement provided the greatest program success rates and the clients thrived. Local Aboriginal businesses understood the challenges the clients were facing, they could provide individualized care and nurturing, and provided a bridge between Aboriginal culture and work culture.⁹⁴

Mary-Pat Campbell
Suncor Energy Inc.

Federal tax credits were recommended by witnesses to encourage larger companies to support such small businesses in more remote areas:

[The Canadian Chamber of Commerce] suggested that the government offer businesses tax credits to make it more attractive for companies to assist new small businesses in remote areas, many of which are often Aboriginal businesses.⁹⁵

Susanna Cluff-Clyburne
Canadian Chamber of Commerce

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the government consider offering business tax credits and/or other incentives to companies assisting new Aboriginal small businesses in remote areas.

C. Training and post-secondary programs

Many witnesses have formal partnerships with colleges to provide training for existing and potential recruits, primarily Aboriginal people. Some examples are provided below:

In 2009, we started a community industry educational initiative which we called the Ring of Fire Training Alliance. [An agreement] was signed in 2012 among us: Noront Resources, Confederation College and [...] the training arm of the Matawa Tribal Council.⁹⁶

Paul Semple
Noront Resources Ltd.

94 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 0955

95 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 0910.

96 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1005.

Nunavut Arctic College provides great in-kind contributions, classroom and other space, and greatly reduced rates in accommodation and meals.⁹⁷

Elizabeth Cayen
Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium

One of our landmark programs is something known as the Aboriginal trades prep program with our community college.⁹⁸

Karen Flynn
Syncrude Canada, Ltd.

D. Training programs in Aboriginal communities and in workplaces

The Committee heard that local training is needed to overcome the barriers and challenges caused by relocation, as was discussed in the chapters “Improving Aboriginal Education” and “Improving Labour Market Outcomes for Aboriginal People”.

In some cases, rather than requiring employees to relocate for training, employers support existing employees with training in the workplace:

At two of our operations, we have full-time workplace educators who work in partnership with the regional college, Northlands College. The workplace educators provide GED and grade 12 upgrading and skills training to Cameco employees and contractors.⁹⁹

Russel Mercredi
Cameco Corporation

... we've also worked with our employers on major projects to develop on-site training through project labour agreements.¹⁰⁰

Steven Schumann
International Union of Operating Engineers

The Committee recognizes the valuable contribution made by employers and other stakeholders to the formal and informal apprenticeship programs that contribute to employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. The next chapter in this report, “Renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and Other Programs”, includes a discussion of these programs.

97 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0950.

98 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 0950.

99 Ibid., 1005.

100 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0910.

E. Multi-sectoral partnerships

As described by federal officials,

[The Government of Canada's] federal framework for Aboriginal economic development [is] opportunity driven and puts emphasis on building partnerships with Aboriginal groups, the private sector, and the provinces and territories.¹⁰¹

Allan Clarke
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

Partnerships, as described above, have been embraced as the most effective way to increase training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. In addition to bilateral partnerships, e.g., between industry and post-secondary institutions, or between industry and Aboriginal organizations, the Committee heard of the importance of bringing all the stakeholders to the table to explore and agree upon solutions. One such example, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is the Mining Essentials program:

Mining Essentials is a pre-employment work readiness training program geared for Aboriginal people. It was developed between the mining industry and the Assembly of First Nations [AFN]. It's a partnership between both the industry and the AFN but it was developed in partnership with the Metis, with the Inuit, with essential skills experts in Canada, with a number of educational institutions.¹⁰²

Ryan Montpellier
Mining Industry Human Resources Council

Federal officials told the Committee about recent initiatives to bring similar groups of stakeholders together to share what they have learned:

[The Strategic Partnerships Initiative] SPI funded two forums for Aboriginal groups to improve knowledge about the energy sector in B.C. These events brought together First Nations leadership, government, and industry partners to improve understanding and knowledge about the complexities, risks, and opportunities of major resource projects.¹⁰³

Allan Clarke
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Committee heard from mining industry officials that the federal government plays a critical convening role in giving all partners equal status and importance:

I can tell you, having sat on the board [of the then-B.C. Aboriginal Mine Training Association], that what the federal government does by bringing itself to the table with

101 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1550.

102 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 0900.

103 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1550.

financial support is level the playing field and it puts industry and Aboriginal communities on an equal playing field around the table.¹⁰⁴

Pierre Gratton
Mining Association of Canada

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the federal government work with industry to encourage the creation of a forum for Aboriginal communities, government and industry to share best practices about successful training, employment and procurement initiatives to improve Aboriginal training and employment outcomes.

104 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 0850

CHAPTER 4 — RENEWAL OF THE ABORIGINAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING STRATEGY AND OTHER PROGRAMS

A. Renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy program

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) and the Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) are scheduled to end in March 2015. The government has been consulting with ASETS holders and SPF service delivery organizations, national Aboriginal organizations, provinces and territories, major employers, and other stakeholders, on the future of Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC's) Aboriginal labour market programming beyond 2015. The Committee also heard of other ways in which ESDC seeks input in relation to Aboriginal labour market programming:

ESDC also formally partners with national Aboriginal organizations to collaborate on joint policy priorities and seek feedback on how to improve Aboriginal labour market programming, among other things. This work will help inform the future direction of Aboriginal labour market programming. These partnership agreements are with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Native Women's Association of Canada, and the National Association of Friendship Centres, the last three of which represent off-reserve First Nations as part of their membership base.¹⁰⁵

James Sutherland
Department of Human Resources and Skills Development

The Committee's study complements the results of ESDC's consultations and provides a very important point of view from diverse witnesses on the future of Aboriginal labour market programming, particularly on ASETS. This chapter will provide their testimony and recommendations. It will also present some facts about ASETS as well as other programs such as the SPF, the First Nations Job Fund (FNJF) and apprenticeship grants.

1. History: The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership

The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) was introduced in 1999 for a five-year period. Under this strategy, Aboriginal organizations received funding to design and deliver labour market programs that helped Aboriginal people prepare for, obtain and/or maintain employment. While improving Aboriginal people's skills was one of AHRDS' objectives, other components included assisting Aboriginal youth to make a successful transition from school to work, and increasing the supply and quality of child care services in First Nations and Inuit communities. In Budget 2009, the federal

105 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1540.

government allocated \$25 million to maintain the AHRDS until a new strategy was put in place in April 2010.¹⁰⁶

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership's (ASEP) program was launched in 2003 as a five-year, \$85-million initiative designed to provide Aboriginal people with the skills needed to participate in major economic development projects across the country, e.g., northern mining, oil and gas projects. To be eligible for federal funding, the private sector, the relevant provincial/territorial government and local Aboriginal communities were required to establish a collaborative partnership. These partnerships had to include in their training plans an Aboriginal training continuum from basic skills and literacy training to academic improvement to job-specific training and apprenticeships. ASEP supported multi-year training and employment strategies that were developed and managed by formalized partnerships to train individuals for targeted jobs. In addition to a training plan, each partnership had to commit to provide at least 50 sustainable jobs for Aboriginal people.

In July 2007, the federal government announced that it was investing an additional \$105 million over the next five years on an estimated 15 to 20 new ASEP projects, which were to allow 9,000 Aboriginal people to receive training and another 6,500 to obtain long-term skilled jobs.¹⁰⁷ Budget 2009 invested an additional \$100 million over three years in ASEP,¹⁰⁸ and announced the creation of a new Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund which would support short-term and targeted initiatives. The government invested \$75 million over two years in this fund.¹⁰⁹

ASEP ended on 31 March 2012. As of 10 July 2012, results indicated that 24,416 Aboriginal persons were trained and that 8,887 were placed in long-term jobs.¹¹⁰ Table 1 presents the expenditures on Aboriginal skills development and training for fiscal years 2007–2008 to 2011–2012.

106 Department of Finance Canada, [Canada's Economic Action Plan – Budget 2009](#), 27 January 2009, p. 104.

107 Human Resources and Social Development Canada, "[Canada's New Government invests in Partnerships between Industry and Aboriginal People](#)," News release, 13 July 2007.

108 Department of Finance Canada, [Canada's Economic Action Plan – Budget 2009](#), 27 January 2009, p. 104.

109 Ibid.

110 Human Resources and Social Development Canada, [2011–12 Estimates – Departmental Performance Report](#), Supplementary Information Tables, Table 3, 2012.

Table 1 — Expenditures on Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships, 2007–2008 to 2011–2012 (\$ millions)

	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012
Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy	266.0	257.2	257.0	91,928.0	nil
Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships	16.1	23.9	31.5	49.2	67.6

Source: Table prepared by analysts using data obtained from Human Resources and Social Development Canada, [Departmental Performance Reports](#) from 2007–2008 to 2011–2012.

B. Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy

1. Description of ASETS

In April 2010, the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership were replaced by ASETS. One of the goals of the new strategy remained to assist First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in securing meaningful employment in the Canadian labour market. ASETS aims to improve labour market outcomes by supporting demand-driven skills development, fostering partnerships with the private sector and provinces and territories, and emphasizing increased accountability and results.

As of December 2013, ASETS supported a network of over 85 Aboriginal agreement holders, with over 600 points of service. Under ASETS, Aboriginal agreement holders must oversee the development and delivery of programs and services to help Aboriginal clients with multiple employment barriers, including Aboriginal persons with disabilities return to school and/or find employment. ASETS provides five-year funding to Aboriginal agreement holders with the intent to give Aboriginal service delivery organizations the ability to tailor the programs to the unique needs of their clients and offer interventions that will lead to employment. ASETS also includes funding for child care for First Nations and Inuit communities. An official from ESDC told the Committee that, “[u]nder ASETS, \$55 million per year under the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative supports a network of 8,500 child care spaces in over 450 sites in First Nations and Inuit communities across Canada.”¹¹¹

Table 2 outlines funding for ASETS from 2010–2011 to 2014–2015.

111 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1535.

**Table 2 — Federal Spending on ASETS, 2010–2011 to 2014–2015
(\$ millions)**

	2010–2011 Actual Spending	2011–2012 Actual Spending	2012–2013 Actual Spending	2013–2014 Forecast Spending	2014–2015 Planned Spending
Total Contributions	254.5	254.6	254.5	246.1	249.7

Source: Employment and Social Development Canada, [Departmental Performance Report 2012–13](#), Supplementary Information Tables, Table 1, 2013. Employment and Social Development Canada, [Report on Plans and Priorities – 2014-15](#), Details on Transfer Payment Programs, Table 1, 2014.

ASETS offers non-repayable contributions expected to result in skills development and training programs that will lead to an increase of between 14,000 and 16,500 Aboriginal people joining the labour force annually. ASETS contributed to the employment of 16,195 Aboriginal people who participated in its programs in 2012–2013.¹¹² As well, a response provided to the Committee by ESDC following the appearance of its officials indicates that 51,086 clients completed programs or made use of services to help them find employment or return to school that same year.¹¹³

One departmental official provided further information relating to how many Aboriginal persons have benefitted from ASETS:

ASETS is demonstrating increased employment and return-to-school outcomes. Since 2010, ASETS has seen approximately 48,000 clients become employed, 22,000 clients return to school, 128,000 clients complete one or more interventions, and over 50% of clients either employed or returned to school.¹¹⁴

James Sutherland
Department of Human Resources and Skills Development

2. ASETS: A Success Story

a. Relevance of ASETS

The majority of witnesses offered positive feedback on ASETS. They found the programs under this strategy to be relevant and effective in preparing and training

112 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, [Departmental Performance Report 2012–13](#), Supplementary Information Tables, Table 1, 2013.

113 Employment and Social Development Canada, Follow-up Response from the Appearance of ESDC Officials before the Committee, Study of the Opportunities for Aboriginal Persons in the Workforce, 5 December 2013, p. 3.

114 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1535.

Aboriginal people for post-secondary education and employment, as well as developing Aboriginal businesses. For example, the Métis National Council told the Committee that:

Employment remains the ultimate objective as the key measure of program success. Since the beginning of ASETS in 2010 to December 31, 2013, we have together served 9,945 clients of whom 2,221 were still in the process of completing their interventions as of December 31. Of the remaining 7,724 who completed what is known as an action plan, approximately 58% had found employment within 12 weeks and 22% had returned to school, which translates into an 80% success rate. That is not failure, my friends, but success.¹¹⁵

David Chartrand
Métis National Council

Other witnesses and stakeholders were also enthusiastic about ASETS.

The ASETS program is one of the key programs in addressing the labour market shortage and has proven to be one of the best returns on investment programs. The program has contributed to building an on-reserve economic base by building a stronger First Nation workforce. ASETS sub-agreement holders have designed programs that meet the needs of the communities and the regional labor market.¹¹⁶

We are also strong advocates of ASETS. The approximately 83 agreement holders throughout Canada have built the capacity to find solutions to Aboriginal human resource issues. They must continue to receive and have authority to spend the budgets as well as the authority to design and develop labour market programs to meet Aboriginal individual and community needs.¹¹⁷

Steven Schumann
International Union of Operating Engineers

Some witnesses told the Committee that they were able to leverage valuable resources, both financial and in goods or services, through ASETS. Partnerships were created among ASETS agreements holders, Aboriginal businesses, industry, educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations and different levels of government. These partnerships ensure that training programs prepare Aboriginal people for existing and future jobs in different sectors of the economy, particularly in the natural resource extraction industry that often exists in close proximity to Aboriginal communities. Some witnesses praised ASETS for its flexibility in terms of working with a broad cross-section of industries and partners. For example, the president of Kinder Morgan Canada told the Committee that the tight connection between the needs of industry and

115 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0910.

116 Chiefs of Treaty No. 6, Treaty No. 7 and Treaty No. 8 (Alberta), "Letter to Mr. James Sutherland, Director General Aboriginal Affairs Directorate Skills and Employment Branch, Employment and Social Development Canada", 4 March 2014.

117 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0915.

available training programs was important to the success of ASETS.¹¹⁸ In addition, the Committee heard that:

[T]he First Nations ASETS agreement holders are also building relationships with the business community at large. This network has become a critical mechanism to supporting First Nations citizens in accessing the work force, and we can't emphasize enough how important this strategy is to our community.¹¹⁹

Judy Whiteduck,
Assembly of First Nation

Some witnesses also mentioned how ASETS is cost-effective:

Together with all services provided by our association, in the past four years of a five-year ASETS agreement, we have secured 2,708 job placements. In terms of the impact to federal and provincial social programs, that represents in excess of \$800,000 in savings to the Employment Insurance Fund. It is in excess of \$2 million in savings to both the federal and provincial social income fund. An estimated \$30 million in wages has been invested into the economy.¹²⁰

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

Another key factor in the success of ASETS is the development of customized training plans that allow service delivery agents to meet the specific needs of a particular Aboriginal individual looking to pursue his or her education or wanting to join the labour force. Many witnesses also talked about how training funds are spent through local Aboriginal organizations that are the most aware of the specific needs of their community and the local labour markets.

I would like to highlight that the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board considers that ASETS is a successful program.

The delivery mechanism is locally driven by Aboriginal organizations, which allows for customized and tailored interventions that can target special needs and focus on the specificity of local labour markets. The board considers the guidelines of the ASETS program to be efficient and appropriate. In fact, Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band in British Columbia — who is also the chair of our board — has decided to spend and administer his community's training funds through the local ASETS program. This is a testament to the program's value.¹²¹

Dawn Madahbee
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board

118 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1035.

119 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0900.

120 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0845.

121 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0930.

With respect to the national level, Canada's Economic Action Plan ensures training reflects labour market needs. ASETS is best suited and equipped to align skills of the unemployed to those required by employers. We have trained, qualified experts at our ASETS offices, who are working directly with clients to determine needs, assessments, training requirements, to address barriers to employment, to set clients up in training programs that are individualized, to match the needs of the demand driven with industry, and to get clients trained and ready for employment.¹²²

Charlene Bruno
Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society

Across the board, witnesses decisively endorsed ASETS as a successful strategy and asked that it be renewed.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the federal government renew the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, or a similar program, for a minimum of five years, determine the terms and conditions of the new program, and communicate that decision expeditiously to all parties involved to avoid gaps in programming and cuts to personnel.

b. Challenges

While witnesses universally endorsed the renewal of ASETS, that is not to say that ASETS cannot be improved. During its hearings, the Committee learned about some of the challenges relating to ASETS. Many witnesses mentioned that the reporting requirements are too labour intensive and difficult to meet. Some witnesses stated that too little money was available to support the reporting requirements. As a result, training funds were sometimes spent on reporting. A number of witnesses indicated that their organizations need an increase in funding for administrative purposes.

One thing that's quite clear is that there is still a heavy reporting burden without a lot of clarity. In our opinion, it needs to be simplified and a uniform reporting platform needs to come into place.¹²³

Jeffrey Cyr
National Association of Friendship Centres

An increase in our administration allocation could help develop updated technology; such as on line applications, improved outreach services, increase access to our clients and other much needed services. Although a lot of work still needs to be done directly in our

122 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 1005.

123 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0920.

communities and directly with our people, the ability to upgrade and update our systems would assist us in a more efficient and effective program in terms of services to our people.¹²⁴

An official from ESDC told the Committee that the Department has set up a working group with ASETS agreement holders that is actively looking into solutions to reduce the reporting burden.¹²⁵

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee recommends that Employment and Social Development Canada continue its efforts through the working group to find solutions to the reporting problem related to the agreements under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. All options should be considered in the discussions surrounding the potential renewal of the Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that the federal government encourage multiple agreement holders who cover areas in proximity to each other to work collaboratively on administrative matters, which could allow for savings to be made and reinvested in additional technology or training opportunities.

In addition, witnesses mentioned that the growth in the Aboriginal population is not reflected in the amount of funding provided for skills development and training through ASETS. They told the Committee that funding has not been increased since the beginning of the program even though the population of Aboriginal young people is growing rapidly, as is the demand for labour by industry. Indeed, witnesses told the Committee about the growing opportunities in the natural resource sectors and the demand for more Aboriginal skills development and training programs like those offered through ASETS. Furthermore, many witnesses told the Committee that more funding is needed for child care to allow parents to participate in training and employment opportunities. For example,

124 Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, Presentation to the Committee, 6 March 2014, p. 3.

125 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1645.

But I think when it comes down to it, it's the lack of funding for support services in our communities. When we're struggling with the timeframes and all of these other things coming at us through the ASETS agreements, it goes to the question. I hear the word about the growth in our communities and that is what we're struggling with today. Our funding hasn't increased. Our child care is increasing; our child care funding hasn't increased.¹²⁶

Chief Bruce Underwood
Coast Salish Employment and Training Society

Many of our people rely on day care funding in order to have a reliable, dependable, professional, and culturally appropriate environment for their children while they're on training or at work. One of our day cares is funded strictly by ASETS funding and closing the day care will be detrimental to working and training classes for the First Nations community. Therefore, continuation of the funding of the day care is vital.¹²⁷

Steven Williams
Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle

[First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative] FNICCI has also evolved from a program that supported daycare operations on reserves and northern Inuit communities into one that is specifically designed to provide child care services to ASETS clients while in training. It makes less and less sense to exclude Métis from this program.¹²⁸

The Métis National Council pointed out to the Committee that Métis people are not entitled to this funding. In their opinion, there is no longer any rationale for not supporting child care for Métis clients receiving services under ASETS.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to make quality and safe child care an integral part of the skills development and training component under the recommended renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. The government should also consider offering child care dollars to all Aboriginal people taking part in skills and training programming under the Strategy.

Furthermore, some witnesses expressed their concerns about the lack of predictability and flexibility of funding under ASETS. Witnesses also expressed a need for more flexibility and longer term funding to better support Aboriginal people with multiple barriers to employment. For example:

126 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 1005.

127 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0900.

128 Métis National Council, "Aboriginal Labour Market Development", Brief to the Committee, 25 February 2014, p. 8.

[I]nterventions are sometimes too short and are geared to direct employment. Many Aboriginal learners require upgrading because they have low literacy levels, did not graduate from high school, or have been out of school for a long time. If funding were approved for longer periods and criteria were more flexible, ASETS could more effectively address the upgrading and essential skills development needs.¹²⁹

Denise Amyot
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Committee recommends that the federal government examine, through consultations with Aboriginal agreement holders and the upcoming evaluation of the Strategy, whether there is a need to allocate predictable and flexible funding under the recommended new Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy.

During its hearings, the Committee also heard testimony relating to differences in delivering Aboriginal labour market programming in urban areas compared to rural or remote Aboriginal communities. As an official from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada told the Committee, “it costs a lot less per student to fund in an urban area than it does in a rural area.”¹³⁰

What we would expect from an urban community with plenty of opportunity isn't necessarily the same as what we might see from an isolated community that does not have those same opportunities.¹³¹

James Sutherland
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

The friendship centre network has the partnerships, wraparound services, infrastructure, and experience necessary to enhance existing programming and expand opportunities for urban Aboriginal Canadians to develop the tools, skills, and resiliency for meaningful engagement with the labour market.¹³²

Jeffrey Cyr
National Association of Friendship Centres

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is a strong supporter of a single funding system for skills development and training and social supports for urban Aboriginal people and told the Committee that it has asked the federal government to consider signing a separate contribution with its organization. The NAFC argued that it “... would allow for the harmonization of existing wraparound services provided by

129 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0850.

130 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1620.

131 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1655.

132 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0900.

friendship centres ... [and] provide a unified program and reporting structure that can reach 85 communities from coast to coast ...”¹³³

The Committee also heard how ASETS delivery mechanisms should reflect the particular needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations:

If you want Aboriginal people to participate in labour market programs, two major conditions have to be met: first, delivery mechanisms have to be specific to each of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis; and second, they must reach them in the communities where they live. Programs must be delivered by institutions with which the community is familiar and consider their own.¹³⁴

David Chartrand
Métis National Council

Some witnesses told the Committee that all Aboriginal people can receive services under ASETS no matter where they live or what Aboriginal population group they are from:

Our ASETS programming primarily provides funding to assist all Aboriginal women, and when I say all, I mean that we are status blind. We work with Métis, First Nations, non-status, and Inuit in employment and training initiatives. It is based on individual needs as well as the community needs reflecting regional realities.¹³⁵

Beverly Blanchard
Native Women's Association of Canada

Our primary services are resourced through the Aboriginal skills and employment training agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada. The region we serve encompasses 17 First Nation communities, one city, and seven rural municipalities. We serve all Aboriginal citizens on and off reserve, status and non-status, and Inuit people residing in a rural or urban setting. This is regardless of place of origin. As long as you're Aboriginal and you live in the region we serve, you have access to our services.¹³⁶

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Committee recommends that the federal government ensure that future programming under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy be responsive to and inclusive of all Aboriginal constituencies where feasible.

133 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0900.

134 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 26 February 2014, 0905.

135 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 February 2014, 0850.

136 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0845.

Notwithstanding the large number of very successful partnerships with ASETS agreement holders, some witnesses indicated that there is a need to raise awareness about Aboriginal labour market programming, particularly ASETS, with the business community.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Committee recommends that the federal government increase its activities to promote the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy to the business community and that it encourage industry groups to make investments in skills development and training programs.

C. Other federal programs

1. Skills and Partnership Fund

The Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF), launched in 2010, shares the ASETS' objective of increasing Aboriginal people's participation in the Canadian labour market and ensuring that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are engaged in sustainable, meaningful employment. The SPF is a separate, yet complementary program to ASETS with a budget of \$210 million over five years. It supports 80 projects that encourage innovation, partnerships and new approaches for the delivery of employment services. The vast majority of the projects are training-to-employment initiatives.

The SPF is a contribution-based program. Aboriginal organizations, including those who are not current ASETS agreement holders, may submit an application for funding following a call for proposals. According to James Sutherland, Director General of the Aboriginal Affairs Directorate at ESDC, there have been three calls for proposals to date. The first two were broad in nature offering up to \$3 million in funding and the third was targeted to specific projects in the natural resources extraction industry. The first two calls for proposals resulted in the delivery of numerous skills development and training programs in small and medium-sized businesses. The last call for proposals, in addition to targeting sectors with high demand for labour, required contributions from partners, e.g., private sector, provincial and territorial governments, educational institutions, of a minimum of 50%. The Committee was told that all the funding has now been allocated. As mentioned earlier, the SPF is scheduled to end on 31 March 2015. It is expected that more than 8,000 Aboriginal people will have benefitted from this program and gained employment.¹³⁷ Table 3 presents federal spending over the life of the program.

137 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1535 and 1540.

**Table 3 — Federal Spending on the Skills and Partnership Fund,
2010–1011 to 2014–2015 (\$ millions)**

	2010–2011 Actual Spending	2011–2012 Actual Spending	2012–2013 Actual Spending	2013–2014 Forecast Spending	2014–2015 Planned Spending
Total Contributions	0.1	14.6	44.8	84.5	45.6

Source: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Departmental Performance Report 2012–13*, Supplementary Information Tables, Table 2, 2013. Employment and Social Development Canada, *Report on Plans and Priorities – 2014–15*, Details on Transfer Payment Programs, Table 2, 2014.

A number of witnesses praised the unique opportunities offered by the SPF model and its success and/or asked that it be renewed. For example,

Some colleges and institutes are training providers for ASETS organizations and are involved in partnerships funded by the SPF. The ASETS and SPF are important and successful programs that enable Aboriginal organizations to meet local training needs tied to employment opportunities. These programs are needed to provide targeted upgrading, essential skills development, and pre-employment skills training.¹³⁸

Denise Amyot
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

The largest of these SPF programs is the Nova Scotia Aboriginal Employment Partnership [NSAEP]. This program expires at the end of the 2015 fiscal year as well. NSAEP focuses specifically on employment opportunities within the \$25-billion Irving Shipbuilding contract and the resulting spinoff opportunities.

We have been working in partnerships with NSAEP to understand the needs and to promote, recruit and train individuals so they have the skills to succeed despite the first deal for these ships not being cut until 2015. This SPF project will receive approximately

\$5 million over a two-and-a-half year period. Continued resources will be needed to resume this work effectively and increase Aboriginal participation on all stages of this project. It is estimated that, at its peak, between 2020 and 2021, there will be 2,000 to 2,500 people employed at this site.¹³⁹

Karen Pictou
Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat

138 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0845.

139 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 1 April 2014, 0920.

What we have created is an education and training model developed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. It challenges the assumptions about Aboriginal workers and about how to prepare them for success and meaningful employment...

Once the needs of our community and industry partners are clear, we can focus on preparing our candidates for the opportunities that exist. We do this by developing individualized education plans, one candidate at a time. Anyone on the AMTA team will tell you that the individualized learning plans are a must-have, not a nice-to-have. We offer flexible entry, clear pathways, and continuous coaching, to ensure successful completion and ultimately consistent job placement.¹⁴⁰

Laurie Sterritt
Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association

This past year we had approximately 300 course participants in some 35 different courses. Our course completion rate is up to about 95%. [...]We actually have to turn students away now. For every 12 seats, we get 40 to 50 applications. Are there jobs for our trainees? The answer is a resounding yes. Our industry needs crew for their vessels. In one of our last courses, all 12 students went to sea; that's 12 positions taken by Inuit crew on various fishing vessels. The last few years have seen huge increases in the number of young Inuit going into the offshore industry. This past fishing season was our best so far with 100 Inuit on the various offshore fishing vessels. In the past, we had maybe 20 or 30, so that's a huge increase. The whole mindset is changing. Our students, having gained successful employment on the vessels, are becoming role models in the communities....

From my perspective, under the SPF program that we are currently funded by, which will end at the end of March [2015], [...] we have a very flexible arrangement. [...] We currently have no age limits attached to our funding. It's not youth funding; it's just training money, which is very important. We need to continue having flexibility in the amount that we are allowed to spend per person.¹⁴¹

Elisabeth Cayen
Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium

[W]e received the SPF funding through our Aboriginal partner in August of last year. We went out to the communities and we started recruiting and doing the assessments. There were 330 people who came forward in the first round and we were immediately able to put 160 people into training. I think this is a tremendous success and, [...] with an 83% success rate, so community members do want to participate.¹⁴²

Leanne Hall
Noront Resources Ltd.

Other witnesses told the Committee that they thought the SPF duplicated some programming offered under ASETS:

140 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 0950 and 1000.

141 Ibid., 0950, 1020.

142 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 25 March 2014, 1020.

The SPFs are also ending on March 2015. Especially in the northern areas you can see where those SPF projects have actually become duplicates of the ASETS delivery. There are comments from the delivery agents in the northern areas that they are doing essentially what the ASETS agreement holders are doing.¹⁴³

Colleen Wassegijig-Migwans
Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve

We encourage Canada to prioritize increased investments within the ASETS delivery mechanism, rather than introducing new and often similar federal programs, assign additional resources to support the work of the ASETS.¹⁴⁴

Karin Hunt
Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association

Among the things we see that are not working is the federal government contracting with other groups under the Skills [and] Partnership Fund that are in essence duplicating the work of the ASETS agreement holder. This creates a lot of confusion for the clients and employers.¹⁴⁵

Rhonda LaBelle
Cariboo Chilcotin Aboriginal Training Employment Centre

Finally, some witnesses suggested that all funding for Aboriginal skills development and training programs should be streamlined and funnelled into one program only. Their preference was to see SPF funding combined with the recommended new ASETS programming:

If the perfect conditions were in place, the department would at least match the inflation rate. It would streamline all funding through the ASETS, and it would implement a single comprehensive accountability system for all federal funding. If the department is set on not increasing the global funding of all ASETS while continuing to centralize all extra funding, at the very least it should keep those funds generic.¹⁴⁶

Cheryl McDonald
First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec

The Skills [and] Partnership Fund and programs like this could be funnelled through the ASETS holders thereby creating a forum in which the “partners” work directly with the ASETS holders and their people and their communities.¹⁴⁷

143 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 March 2014, 0955.

144 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0855.

145 *Ibid.*, 0950.

146 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 February 2014, 0915.

147 Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle, Presentation to the Committee, 6 March 2014, p. 6.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Committee recommends that the federal government review the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and the Skills and Partnership Fund delivery models with respect to employment outcomes, possible overlap and mandates.

2. First Nations Job Fund

In Budget 2013, the federal government announced the introduction of a new First Nations Job Fund (FNJF) with an investment of \$241 million over four years. Part of the funding for this initiative comes from a reform of the on-reserve Income Assistance System, which will allow \$109 million to be invested in the FNJF. The FNJF supports the same type of projects, training-to-employment activities, as those eligible under ASETS; however, it focuses on First Nations youth aged 18 to 24. The goal is to ensure that personalized job training and coaching will be available to First Nations youth receiving social assistance, which should help them secure employment. The skills development and job training services will be delivered by ASETS agreement holders. ESDC administers the FNJF in partnership with on-reserve First Nations communities.¹⁴⁸

What the First Nations job fund does, similar to what is already available through the ASETS network, is reserve funding for individuals who will be identified for training. The job fund is basically the same programming that's already available through ASETS, but it makes sure that income assistance recipients have access to that on reserve.¹⁴⁹

Sheilagh Murphy
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

The Committee received little testimony in relation to this program during its study. Nonetheless, some concerns were raised regarding funding and training available to Aboriginal youth who were dependent on social assistance. As discussed earlier in this report, many of these youth face multiple barriers to employment and may need longer term interventions than what is currently available through the FNJF.

The First Nation Job Fund, which is a new initiative on behalf of the government, targets the 18 to 24-year-olds transitioning off income support, completing an assessment that will work for them, and getting them trained and into employment, or returning to school.

148 Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, "[Backgrounder – First Nations Job Fund](#)," News release, 12 June 2013.

149 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 5 December 2013, 1600.

This initiative has high expectations, and some of our concerns at the community level is that it may be moving too fast for the individual, which then could result in poor results.¹⁵⁰

Charlene Bruno
Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society

3. Apprenticeship Programs

The Apprenticeship Grants program supports access to apprenticeships in the designated trades by encouraging the progression of apprentices from the early years of their apprenticeship program to the completion of their training and the presentation of their journeyman qualification and the Red Seal certification.¹⁵¹ The program provides an incentive for Canadians, including Aboriginal people, to complete apprenticeship programs and find full-time jobs with good wages.

Aboriginal journeymen can take advantage of the employment opportunities in the resource extraction industry and offer their expertise to meet the current and future need for skilled trade workers. Closing the skills gap and the need for skilled trade labour is crucial to sustaining the growth of the Canadian economy.

The Apprenticeship Incentive Grant offers up to \$2,000 to apprentices in a designated Red Seal trade. The grant is taxable and supports registered apprentices who have successfully completed their first or second year of training. The federal government also offers an Apprenticeship Completion Grant worth \$2,000 to apprentices who have obtained the journeyman qualification in a designated Red Seal trade.

In addition, apprentices can also receive Employment Insurance (EI) benefits while they are learning in an educational setting to reduce some of the costs associated with training. In 2011–2012, 40,110 new apprenticeship claims were made for a total of \$167.8 million in EI benefits paid to apprentices.¹⁵²

The majority of apprentices are registered in an approved apprenticeship program leading to a journeyman qualification in a Red Seal designated skilled trade. The Committee also heard how less formal apprenticeship programs are offered by businesses.

Witnesses indicated that one of the biggest barriers to apprenticeship is finding an employer that will accept to employ and sponsor an apprentice. And a concern for small- and medium-sized businesses, who are the ones primarily sponsoring apprentices, is that once apprentices reach the journeyman level, they are often offered a salary

150 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 1005.

151 Red Seal, "[Industry's Standard of Excellence since 1959](#)" "[T]radespersons are able to obtain a Red Seal endorsement on their provincial/territorial certificates by successfully completing an interprovincial Red Seal examination. The Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program acknowledges their competence and ensures recognition of their certification throughout Canada without further examination."

152 Canada Employment Insurance Commission, [2012 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report](#), p. 32.

and incentives by larger companies that their current employer cannot match. When apprentices leave to work for a larger company, the sponsor's investment in the apprentice is lost. This explains in part why some employers are reluctant to continue participating in the apprenticeship system.

Below is some of the testimony of witnesses who explained the importance of apprenticeship for Aboriginal people:

[A] lot of our nations are undertaking this initiative every year to get our First Nation people through first, second year, all the way through Red Seal. First Nations recognize the need for these skilled tradesmen within our own communities and how it benefits the employment gap within industry. So we provide entrepreneurship as well, training on reserve once a year for those interested in this field, and what it's resulted in, in our own communities, is that we're building a stronger economic base on-reserve and then expanding going out off-reserve.¹⁵³

Charlene Bruno
Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society

From a training perspective, we have our own in-house apprenticeship support programs that we put our employees through. We also rely heavily on our local community college, Keyano, as well as NAIT, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, in Edmonton. We provide all support for funds and training for our employees to go through any type of trade and technical employment.¹⁵⁴

Kara Flynn
Syncrude Canada Ltd.

The [Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission] SATCC's mandate is not pre-employment training. However, the commission recognizes the need for increasing Aboriginal employment in the skilled trades, and our organization provides

\$400,000 in funding each year to the Aboriginal apprenticeship initiatives. These are initiatives that are proposed to the SATCC, and often include pre-apprenticeship training or part of apprenticeship training, which is usually done on reserve or in a First Nation community.¹⁵⁵

Jeff Ritter
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission

153 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 27 March 2014, 1005.

154 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 4 February 2014, 1030.

155 HUMA, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 41st Parliament, 6 March 2014, 0955.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, review the possibility of expanding the eligibility for apprenticeship grants to younger apprentices who are beginning their program in the last year of their high school education, and assess whether there is a need to increase the amount of financial support or modify its delivery.

CONCLUSION

Witnesses appearing before the Committee were consistent in their view about the benefits flowing from the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) program. Based on the strong support from a broad spectrum of witnesses, the Committee recommends that the federal government renew the ASETS for at least another five years at the end of its current term. The skills development and training offered under this strategy have helped Aboriginal people to prepare for, find and maintain employment. Programs offered under ASETS assist in upgrading the skills of Aboriginal people and in providing high-quality training that can help them overcome barriers to meaningful employment.

The majority of witnesses who appeared before the Committee shared many success stories with us. A common theme among them is that Aboriginal people have a better chance at success when programming is offered near or in their own communities, by Aboriginal trainers and service delivery organizations.

Witnesses also spoke to the Committee about barriers that many Aboriginal people must overcome before they can contemplate seeking employment. The main hurdle, we were told, remains addressing the education gap between Aboriginal people and their non-Aboriginal counterparts. While the completion rates of secondary education are persistently low, equally troubling is that many Aboriginal people who do graduate from high school still often lack the necessary essential skills to successfully integrate into the labour market or successfully pursue post-secondary education. For this reason, the Committee recommends that a portion of ASETS funding cover the cost of developing essential skills and upgrading to high-school-equivalency to facilitate entry to post-secondary education or employment.

The Committee heard about the importance of providing Aboriginal youth with role models. Awareness and outreach campaigns can represent a positive avenue for industry to encourage Aboriginal youth to participate in key employment opportunities, such as in the natural resource development sector. Industry-led outreach activities can provide an early opportunity to engage with and educate Aboriginal youth in the employment possibilities occurring near their communities and in various sectors of the economy. This provides youth with a chance to prepare for their careers and find gainful employment, and also helps to ensure the skilled labour being produced reflects the needs of industry.

The success of ASETS is possible because of the support and the partnerships between the private sector and Aboriginal communities and organizations. In sectors with a high demand for workers, such as the resource-based industries, some employers are investing in training and post-secondary programs in partnership with existing local institutions, to develop community-based and on-the-job training programs. Other employers are investing in Aboriginal business development. The Committee acknowledges the importance of the private sector's participation, and encourages employers to continue to support skills development and training for Aboriginal people.

A recurring theme was the need to continue to provide child care support in order to allow parents, primarily women, to pursue training and/or employment opportunities. Accordingly, the Committee also recommends that the federal government consider expanding the child care program to include all Aboriginal people participating in training under ASETS.

The Committee also recognizes the need for cultural awareness training in post-secondary institutions and in the workplace. Aboriginal people face a major barrier to post-secondary education and employment when they have to leave their communities. Many witnesses described the culture shock resulting from relocation and suggested that supports must be available to facilitate this transition.

A young and rapidly growing population, Aboriginal people are a potentially significant domestic source of labour that could offset some of the demographic pressures of Canada's ageing labour market. Given that education is a principal driver of employment and labour force participation, improving skills training and education outcomes will be critical for young Aboriginal people entering the labour market as well as for Canadian productivity generally as the Aboriginal share of the labour force grows.

Aboriginal people face many unique challenges and there is no one-size-fits-all program. ASETS agreement holders must ensure that service delivery organizations have the ability to tailor the programs to the unique needs of each Aboriginal person.

ASETS is a success story. The Committee also recognizes that there is still a lot to be done to ensure that Aboriginal people can take advantage of emerging employment opportunities. The Committee is hopeful that its recommendations will be considered in the development of a renewed strategy for Aboriginal employment and training, in order to ensure that we continue to build on the progress that has been made under ASETS.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to invest in stable and long-term funding for early childhood education programs for Aboriginal people..... 6

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends that the federal government cover the cost of essential-skills, high-school-equivalency and upgrading programs to facilitate entry into post-secondary education. This funding could be delivered through a post-2015 Aboriginal labour market program such as the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy..... 8

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that federally funded training programs for Aboriginal people encourage early exposure for students in secondary school to industries offering employment opportunities, including the resource extraction and related industries..... 11

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that federally funded training programs for Aboriginal people encourage service delivery organizations to include the involvement of successful role models in their training..... 12

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to support initiatives that provide Aboriginal people with access to high-quality training in essential skills, including individualized training programs where appropriate..... 16

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Committee recommends that the federal government encourage industry partners to implement new or enhance existing Aboriginal cultural awareness programs and to foster improved cultural understanding in the workplace..... 19

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in its Aboriginal programs, take into account the importance of comprehensive support services in several areas of the lives of Aboriginal people to allow them to overcome barriers to their success in the labour force. 23

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the government consider offering business tax credits and/or other incentives to companies assisting new Aboriginal small businesses in remote areas. 32

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Committee recommends that the federal government work with industry to encourage the creation of a forum for Aboriginal communities, government and industry to share best practices about successful training, employment and procurement initiatives to improve Aboriginal training and employment outcomes. 35

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Committee recommends that the federal government renew the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, or a similar program, for a minimum of five years, determine the terms and conditions of the new program, and communicate that decision expeditiously to all parties involved to avoid gaps in programming and cuts to personnel. 43

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Committee recommends that Employment and Social Development Canada continue its efforts through the working group to find solutions to the reporting problem related to the agreements under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. All options should be considered in the discussions surrounding the potential renewal of the Strategy. 44

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Committee recommends that the federal government encourage multiple agreement holders who cover areas in proximity to each other to work collaboratively on administrative matters, which could allow for savings to be made and reinvested in additional technology or training opportunities. 44

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to make quality and safe child care an integral part of the skills development and training component under the recommended renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. The government should also consider offering child care dollars to all Aboriginal people taking part in skills and training programming under the Strategy..... 45

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Committee recommends that the federal government examine, through consultations with Aboriginal agreement holders and the upcoming evaluation of the Strategy, whether there is a need to allocate predictable and flexible funding under the recommended new Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. 46

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Committee recommends that the federal government ensure that future programming under the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy be responsive to and inclusive of all Aboriginal constituencies where feasible..... 47

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Committee recommends that the federal government increase its activities to promote the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy to the business community and that it encourage industry groups to make investments in skills development and training programs..... 48

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Committee recommends that the federal government review the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and the Skills and Partnership Fund delivery models with respect to employment outcomes, possible overlap and mandates. 52

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, review the possibility of expanding the eligibility for apprenticeship grants to younger apprentices who are beginning their program in the last year of their high school education, and assess whether there is a need to increase the amount of financial support or modify its delivery..... 55

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Department of Employment and Social Development James Sutherland, Director General, Aboriginal Affairs Directorate</p>	2013/12/05	8
<p>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Allan Clarke, Director General, Policy and Coordination Branch, Lands and Economic Development Sector Sheilagh Murphy, Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch Chris Rainer, Director, Strategic Policy and Planning Directorate</p>		
<p>Cameco Corporation Russel Mercredi, Senior Specialist, Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition</p>	2014/02/04	9
<p>Kinder Morgan Canada Ian Anderson, President, Calgary Martha Matthew, Consultant, Training and Employment, Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project</p>		
<p>Syncrude Canada Ltd. Kara Flynn, Vice-President, Government and Public Affairs</p>		
<p>Assembly of First Nations Judy Whiteduck, Director, Safe, Secure and Sustainable Communities</p>	2014/02/06	10
<p>Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Inc. Marileen Bartlett, Executive Director</p>		
<p>Coast Salish Employment and Training Society Marlene Rice, Executive Director Bruce Underwood, Chief, Program Employability Officer</p>		
<p>First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec Cheryl McDonald, Director, Support Services</p>		
<p>Indspire Roberta Jamieson, President and Chief Executive Officer</p>		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
National Aboriginal Economic Development Board Dawn Madahbee, Vice-Chair	2014/02/06	10
Kakivak Association Scott Wells, Acting Chief Executive Officer and Manager of Finance	2014/02/25	13
Kitikmeot Inuit Association Charlie Evalik, President		
Métis National Council David Boisvert, Senior Policy Advisor David Chartrand, Vice-President		
National Association of Friendship Centres Jeffrey Cyr, Executive Director Sonya Howard, Policy Analyst		
Native Women's Association of Canada Beverly Blanchard, Acting Director, Labour Market Development Dan Peters, Coordinator, Partnership and Outreach		
PTI Group Inc. Stephen Crocker, Director, Aboriginal Employment Strategies		
Association of Canadian Community Colleges Denise Amyot, President and Chief Executive Officer Anna Toneguzzo, Manager, Government Relations and Policy Research, Public Policy and Canadian Partnerships	2014/03/04	14
Canadian Electricity Association Jim R. Burpee, President and Chief Executive Officer Joe Heil, Director, First Nations and Métis Relations, Ontario Power Generation Inc.		
First Peoples Development Inc. Joan Harris, Program Manager		
Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium Elisabeth Cayen, Executive Director		
YMCA-YWCA - Winnipeg Kent Paterson, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle Steven Williams, Chair	2014/03/06	15

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p>Cariboo Chilcotin Aboriginal Training Employment Centre</p> <p>Rhonda LaBelle, Executive Director Heather McKenzie, President</p> <p>International Union of Operating Engineers</p> <p>Brian Pelletier, Aboriginal Coordinator, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 793 Steven Schumann, Canadian Government Affairs Director</p> <p>Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association</p> <p>Karin Hunt, Executive Director</p> <p>Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission</p> <p>Jeff Ritter, Chief Executive Officer</p>	2014/03/06	15
<p>Goldcorp Inc.</p> <p>Colin Webster, Director, Aboriginal, Government & Community Relations, Canada and United States</p> <p>Noront Resources Ltd.</p> <p>Leanne Hall, Vice-President, Human Resources Paul Semple, Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Rio Tinto</p> <p>Jay Fredericks, Director of Environment, Communities and Regulatory Affairs</p> <p>Suncor Energy Inc.</p> <p>Mary-Pat Campbell, Manager, Stakeholder and Aboriginal Relations, Business Services Heather Kennedy, Vice-President, Government Relations, Business Services</p> <p>Vale</p> <p>Bob Carter, Manager, Corporate Affairs Cory McPhee, Vice-President, Corporate Affairs</p>	2014/03/25	16
<p>Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association</p> <p>Jeanette Jules, Councillor, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Laurie Sterritt, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Acosys Consulting Services Inc.</p> <p>David Acco, President Jerry Peltier, Vice-President, Government and Indigenous Relations</p>	2014/03/27	17

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Ignite Adult Learning Corporation Carlo Bizzarri, Program Manager Mona Hill, Facilitator, Apprentice Support Services	2014/03/27	17
Six Independent Alberta First Nations Society Charlene Bruno, Executive Director		
Wiwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve Colleen Wassegijig-Migwans, Coordinator, Aboriginal Skills Employment and Training Agreement (ASETA), Enaadmaagehjik Development Commission		
Canadian Chamber of Commerce Susanna Cluff-Clyburne, Director, Parliamentary Affairs	2014/04/01	18
Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat Valerie Bowers, Executive Director Karen Pictou, Partnership Liaison Officer		
Mining Association of Canada Pierre Gratton, President and Chief Executive Officer		
Mining Industry Human Resources Council Ryan Montpellier, Executive Director		

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle
Aboriginal Mentoring and Training Association
Acosys Consulting Services Inc.
Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Inc.
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
First Peoples Development Inc.
Forest Products Association of Canada
Ignite Adult Learning Corporation
Kakivak Association
Métis National Council
Mining Association of Canada
Mining Industry Human Resources Council
National Association of Friendship Centres
Noront Resources Ltd.
Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 8 to 10 and 13 to 18](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil McColeman

Chair

Supplementary Report by Members of the NDP

New Democratic Party members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recognize that the best training opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples are culturally-relevant and regionally-based, and that the federal government should focus its support on partnerships that help ASETS holders develop strong programs to fit regional needs.

Recommendation 1: The federal government should consider culturally-specific programming in its plans for the distribution of ASETS funding.

New Democrats recognize that streamlining the funding mechanisms for ASETS may provide administrative savings. But we also recognize that many witnesses called for culturally-specific programming to better serve clients. The federal government should take that into account when renewing ASETS funding and considering the mechanisms for distributing money to different groups.

Recommendation 2: Given the importance of diverse and comprehensive support services in the lives of Aboriginal people to allow them to overcome barriers in the labour market, federal government training support should include the funding of those support services.

Currently, most training programs cannot fund extra interventions such as support services because these do not fit the parameters of existing funding agreements. New Democrats recognize that to ensure the effectiveness of such programming, the federal government should exercise flexibility in terms of what kinds of services can be funded under the agreements.

Recommendation 3: In its commitment to making safe childcare an integral part of the skills development training component of the renewal of the ASETS program, the federal government should add “regardless of status” to help ensure child care dollars are available to all Aboriginal people taking part in ASETS programming

New Democrats recognize that the need for safe, accessible child care is not limited to on-reserve clients, and the addition of “regardless of status” would provide clarity as to the scope of the government’s commitment.

Recommendation 4: The federal government must streamline its processes so that both training providers and participants are informed of eligibility with an ample amount of time to prepare, and so that there is no disruption of service due to process delays.

New Democrats recognize that for ASETS funded programming to function as successfully as possible, funding must flow smoothly.

