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Making a Case for a Labour Market Intermediary:

The Experience of BUILD

By Kirsten Bernas and Shauna MacKinnon

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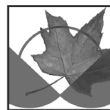
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CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE

Unit 205 – 765 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2W 3N5
TEL 204-927-3200 FAX 204-927-3201
EMAIL ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca



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About the authors

Kirsten Bernas is on staff with the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) as a Research and Policy Manager.

Shauna MacKinnon is Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban and Inner City Studies, University of Winnipeg and author of the book *Decolonizing Employment: Aboriginal Inclusion in Canada's Labour Market*, published by University of Manitoba Press.



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Making a Case for a Labour Market Intermediary: The Experience of BUILD

Background

This report weaves together findings from data gathered through two other research reports published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Manitoba. The purpose is to build upon evidence that demonstrates how and why a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) can address the challenges that Aboriginal people with barriers to employment face when transitioning from training to employment.

An LMI links low-skilled workers with semi-skilled and skilled employment in targeted sectors to create job opportunities for people with barriers to employment. It brokers relationships with employers, education and training institutions, government, funding agencies, unions and community based organizations to help clients find and keep good jobs.

Making employment work: connecting multi-barriered Manitobans to good jobs by Ray Silvius and Shauna MacKinnon (2012) builds on a 2005 study by Loewen and Silver, which showed that an LMI could be an effective model to assist multi-barriered, low-income individuals in accessing good jobs while assisting employers interested in hiring them. In their report, Silvius and MacKinnon seek to determine if a neighbourhood-based LMI would be a useful approach to meet the

needs of employers and workers with barriers to employment when connecting unemployed residents with decent jobs.

Creating opportunities with green jobs: the story of BUILD and BEEP by Kirsten Bernas and Blair Hamilton profiled Building Urban Industries for Local Development (BUILD) and Brandon Energy Efficiency Program (BEEP) — two social enterprises in Manitoba that take a Community Economic Development approach to providing training and employment opportunities to people with barriers to employment. In their report, Bernas and Hamilton demonstrate the social, economic, and environmental benefits created by these social enterprises, while providing an analysis of training-related challenges and ongoing barriers to employment faced by graduates who complete BUILD's six-month training program.

This report will add value to the two noted studies by:

1. Further informing the development of the LMI model proposed by Silvius and MacKinnon.
2. Further demonstrating how such an LMI can address the challenges that Aboriginal people with barriers to employment face when they transition from training to employment.

Summary of the Two Research Reports Under Consideration

1. Making Employment Work: Connecting Multi-Barriered Manitobans to Good Jobs

By Ray Silvius and Shauna MacKinnon

Manitoba has among the highest Aboriginal populations in Canada and it is growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2011, 16.7 percent of Manitobans and 11 percent of Winnipeggers identified as Aboriginal. The Aboriginal population is also much younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, the median age of Manitobans was 39 years, compared with 21 for those who identified as Aboriginal. While the majority of Aboriginal people are fully engaged in employment and/or education pursuits, a sizeable minority is not.

Manitoba's Aboriginal people are not participating in the labour force at the same rate as non-Aboriginal people and when they do, they tend to earn less. Aboriginal people continue to have lower employment and labour market participation rates compared to non-Aboriginal Manitobans and their unemployment rate is more than three and a half times the rate for non-Aboriginal Manitobans (Manitoba Jobs and the Economy 2013). Aboriginal people are a growing source of labour yet many of them have difficulty access-

ing 'good jobs' — those that pay well, include benefits, and provide opportunity for advancement.

A 2005 study, conducted by Loewen & Silver and published by CCPA Manitoba, showed that a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) could effectively assist jobseekers and help employers interested in hiring multi-barriered, low-income individuals. That report showed that LMIs are most successful when they collaborate with community based organizations (CBOs) that provide training; connect jobseekers with 'good' jobs; provide comprehensive and ongoing supports for individuals and employers; and include the full involvement of unions in organized workplaces. The most effective LMIs are:

- Comprehensive — offering a broad array of programming and targeted supports, including basic skills, job readiness skills, counselling, job placement, on-the-job training and on-going assistance;
- Networked — linking marginalized individuals in economically depressed regions and neighbourhoods to employers through local CBOs;
- Interventionist — targeting marginalized groups, tailoring jobs and hiring and

training practices to meet both client group and employer needs.

Building on this knowledge, Silvius and MacKinnon worked in collaboration with CBOs to explore possibilities for an LMI to meet the needs of employers and residents within the boundaries of three inner-city neighbourhoods — Centennial, West Alexander and Central Park. Given the concentration of poverty in these neighbourhoods — combined with potential employment opportunities in public sector and quasi-public institutions — the researchers wanted to determine if a neighbourhood-based LMI might be a useful approach to connecting unemployed residents with decent jobs.

Through interviews and discussions with key stakeholders and a review of existing literature, the researchers concluded that an LMI could be an effective means of filling existing gaps, supporting the work of CBOs, and building stronger links between employers and multi-barriered job-seekers. They also concluded that while it makes sense to situate an LMI within the boundaries described, it would make most sense to focus an LMI on specific underrepresented groups because their needs are so different from the general population. As a start, they propose an LMI be established to specifically serve Aboriginal jobseekers, community based organizations serving these individuals, and employers seeking to hire Aboriginal people.

The model proposed by Silvius and MacKinnon, is one developed in collaboration with CBOs and employers. It proposes formation of an LMI led by a consortium of employers, CBOs that provide training to Aboriginal people, and other stakeholders. Through personnel specialized in providing support and cultural teachings, the LMI would not only match workers with employers but also work with both parties to ensure a successful transition into the workforce. The LMI would not interfere with the work of existing organizations but would work with them to find

their graduates jobs, provide employers with a direct path to Aboriginal workers, and provide ongoing support.

While the majority of Aboriginal people will successfully find employment without the need of an LMI, CBOs have found that many graduates of their programs face challenges that, without help, prevent them from succeeding in the labour market. A successful LMI would respond by:

- Building on the long established relationships between CBOs and the target population(s).
- Simplifying relationships between employers and participating service organizations.
- Simplifying relationships between government and CBOs by filtering information, reporting and expectations.
- Employing personnel dedicated to managing the multiple referrals and services that any one individual may require.
- Establishing an advisory board with receptive people in a number of institutions. This includes advocates with responsibilities that go beyond traditional human resource practices.
- Dedicating resources to ensure that multiple organizations can offer services in areas in which they have developed expertise.
- Enshrining cooperation and non-competitiveness in the governance structure.

While the researchers explored various LMI models in their report they conclude by describing and recommending a ‘community-focused’ model that would concentrate on the needs of Aboriginal job seekers. They also recognize the need for a similar model to respond to the unique needs of other groups such as multi-barriered immigrants and refugees.

Given the challenges described by study participants, the researchers propose the implementation of an LMI, such as described, to improve the long-term employment outcomes of multi-barriered jobseekers.

2. Creating Opportunities With Green jobs: The Story of BUILD and BEEP

By Kirsten Bernas and Blair Hamilton

The researchers introduce the reader to two Manitoba-based social enterprises — BUILD and BEEP. These businesses were created to hire and train local multi-barriered individuals to perform energy and water efficiency retrofits in housing occupied by low-income people. The goal is to prepare trainees for sustainable employment in the trades sector where there is a high demand for skilled workers.

BUILD has been operating in Winnipeg since 2006. BEEP began operating a year later in Brandon and throughout Southwestern Manitoba. BUILD and BEEP trainees are primarily Aboriginal males living in the inner-city with the exception of a few females and newcomers. They have varying and multiple barriers that make it difficult for them to access and succeed in traditional employment and education/training programs. Many trainees have had contact with the justice system and do not have a high school diploma, a driver's license, a home support system, or access to stable housing. Trainees may also be suffering from the damaging legacy of colonization, which manifests as depressive and/or violent behaviour, alcoholism, and a lack of parenting skills, all of which condemn many to a life of poverty. Some trainees have participated in traditional training programs, or have gained minimal experience as low-skilled workers in the formal labour market, and are looking to improve and broaden their skill set. However, most have been unable to achieve sustainable employment, and most do not have the basic skills, knowledge, and experi-

ence that typical employers seek, and are looking for their first job experience.

BUILD and BEEP provide trainees with that first experience. They also provide access (either in-house or through partnerships) to a comprehensive and integrated package of resources and supports. This helps trainees develop hard, soft and life skills so that they can overcome their multi-faceted and inter-connected barriers. Hard skills are the technical skills and knowledge required to succeed in a job. For example, trainees learn how to do energy and water efficiency retrofitting. Trainees also have access to certifiable courses where they learn other trades-related skills. Soft skills include basic employability skills such as time management, good attendance, and productive co-worker relations. Life skills include money management, parenting, making healthy lifestyle choices, cultural awareness, and basic numeracy and literacy.

BUILD and BEEP's training model reflects a Community Economic Development approach to employment development by integrating economic and social objectives. For individuals with multiple barriers to employment, this approach is an improvement over the approach used in a traditional training model, which often focuses more on hard skills training compared to soft skills and life skills. BUILD and BEEP staff members believe their approach has been critical to helping trainees successfully prepare for further education/training and sustainable employment. If the training did not include the soft and life skills components, many trainees would be at risk of falling back into unemployment, poverty and destructive patterns. However, staff members report that it can be difficult to find funders who will support activities that fall outside of a traditional training model (e.g. cultural reclamation programming), despite their importance.

At the time of research, BUILD had a Training and Employment Coordinator who helped trainees match their interests and skills with

suitable education/training programs and job sectors. Trainees were connected with potential education/training institutions or employers and received assistance with application processes, including job references and interview preparation. According to 2011 provincial government data, 91 percent of all BUILD trainees and 86 percent of all BEEP trainees who complete the full six-month training program move on to further education/training or to employment.

However, not all trainees complete the full six-month program. Data from the same year showed that 44 percent of BUILD trainees and 32 percent of BEEP trainees withdrew early, typically as a result of personal/family issues, having moved, or health issues. The researchers suggest that these turnover rates are not surprising given the historical context and socio-economic characteristics of many of the trainees. They point to well-documented evidence revealing the effects of colonization and intergenerational poverty including frequent moves, poor health outcomes, and struggles with personal and family issues related to violence, addictions, and street gang attachment. (Fernandez et al, 2010)

BUILD and BEEP staff members explain that some trainees require more than the allotted six months to be ready to succeed independently in a more traditional employment or education/training setting. Some graduates face ongoing barriers to accessing employment, such as the lack of a high school diploma, driver's license, and clean criminal record. Certain barriers to employment, such as the need for healing, cannot be addressed within a prescribed timeframe. Some graduates have found trades-based employment at equal or higher wages after six months.

However, many have a hard time sustaining that employment without access to ongoing resources and supports, which are typically only provided when trainees are employed by other social enterprises committed to hiring and supporting individuals with barriers to employment.

Instead of seeking employment, some graduates pursue further education/training, such as completing their high school. After six months at BUILD and BEEP, graduates are often only qualified enough to find another minimum wage job, or at best, an entry-level position in the trades. By pursuing further education/training, graduates can move upward along an employment path in the apprenticeship system, for example, where there are opportunities for greater earnings and job stability. However, according to BUILD staff, some graduates fail to succeed in traditional education/training settings that do not provide ongoing access to resources and supports that help address remaining barriers.

BUILD and BEEP staff members suggest that graduates would be much better prepared to acquire necessary qualifications and succeed independently in further education/training or employment if BUILD and BEEP's training period was extended for up to twelve months when needed. Another option would be to help transition trainees into employment with social enterprises that provide an ongoing supportive work environment. However, employment opportunities in the social enterprise sector are limited. The researchers identify the development of a Labour Market Intermediary as a third option to help BUILD graduates and other multi-barriered trainees succeed as they transition into traditional employment or further education/training.

Developing a Labour Market Intermediary to Serve Aboriginal Jobseekers, Employers Who Want to Hire Aboriginal People, and Community-Based Organizations that Serve Aboriginal Clients

Most Aboriginal people will successfully find employment without needing the supports offered by a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI), but many graduates of organizations offering employment development services have little work experience and face ongoing challenges when they transition out of training and into employment. An LMI can help facilitate a successful transition to employment and offer a longer-term return on the initial investment in training.

The Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) model proposed by Silvius and MacKinnon considers the complex and diverse needs of multi-barriered jobseekers, employers, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Central to the proposed model is a governance structure that brings together representatives of participating employers, CBOs, key government departments and other stakeholders who understand the needs of multi-barriered jobseekers. The purpose of the LMI is not to duplicate existing service but rather to ensure a continuum of support for jobseekers and employers beyond the training stage. The LMI can also act as a triage for individuals exploring training and employment options and opportunities. It would support the work of

CBOs, build stronger links between jobseekers and employers, and deploy caseworkers to work with jobseekers and employers during the transition from training to employment. Other jurisdictions have successfully employed similar models for marginalized workers and employers (Elwood 2004).

An effective LMI would be clear about the population it is targeting and its specific needs. In this case, the proposed model would have a mandate to increase the employability of Aboriginal people with barriers to employment. This focus would allow Manitoba's growing and young Aboriginal population to become a significant source of labour. Improving labour market outcomes for Aboriginal people will also improve other economic and social indicators that Aboriginal people do not do as well on. In addition to meeting the needs of Aboriginal jobseekers, the LMI would serve the CBOs who work with Aboriginal jobseekers by providing their graduates with the ongoing transition supports that CBOs are not mandated nor funded to provide. The LMI would also provide much needed supports for employers who want to hire Aboriginal people. These supports are discussed in a later section.

Considering the Need for Comprehensive Supports While Training

As described by Bernas and Hamilton, multi-barriered jobseekers benefit from training that builds multiple skill sets. For example, BUILD trainees develop hard skills, soft skills, and life skills with the help of onsite staff members who teach trainees money management, basic literacy and numeracy, driver's training, and parenting skills.

When BUILD staff members have the required capacity and expertise, they work with trainees to overcome obstacles and setbacks. Staff members help trainees identify issues affecting attendance, punctuality, or work performance and work with them to problem solve. If challenges related to addictions, family crisis, and housing are identified, staff members refer trainees to other CBOs that have the expertise to address those challenges. In some cases, trainees have complex issues standing in their way of succeeding at BUILD and are released and referred to other service providers that can meet their needs and prepare them for re-entry. While they do their best to support all who walk through their doors, BUILD staff members are not mandated, and therefore do not have the capacity, to follow up with trainees who leave to ensure that they get the help they need. Without ongoing guidance, some trainees will fall off their path toward employment.

An LMI could support the work of CBOs that serve Aboriginal job seekers like BUILD by deploying caseworkers to develop long-term relationships with staff and trainees. For example, a caseworker would work with BUILD staff and trainees to identify training and development needs and ensure that they can access and manage the multiple supports they need. The caseworker will be in a strong position to make appropriate referrals because the LMI will be aware of, and connected to, other CBOs who play a role in moving disadvantaged workers into good jobs. The caseworker will also be able to maintain a

relationship with trainees whether they access services within or outside of BUILD. This will ensure that trainees have ongoing access to the guidance that can encourage them to stay on their path toward employment when they can no longer be supported by BUILD staff.

BUILD had a Relations Coordinator at one point with some capacity to cultivate relationships between BUILD and potential employers in the trades and help connect graduates to jobs. During the last month of training, BUILD staff members work with trainees to develop a resume as well as job-search and interview skills. Trainees are given time to seek employment with the assistance of BUILD staff. In the past, BUILD had the financial capacity to employ graduates who couldn't immediately find a job, but this is no longer the case. Once trainees graduate, they lose access to the full range of job-search supports offered at BUILD. As a result, those graduates who exit the program without having found employment are on their own, not only to find employment, but to adapt to the work environment should they find a job on their own. For many the work world is an entirely new and intimidating experience, and graduates report not knowing where else to go to access the supports they need. An LMI, with which trainees will have already established a relationship, would offer those supports, ensuring a more seamless transition from training to job search and ultimately employment.

Considering the Need for Ongoing Supports When Transitioning From Training to Employment or Further Education/Training

While some BUILD graduates find and sustain employment without further help, most graduates who find jobs or enter into further education/training have a hard time succeeding, even at entry-level positions, without ongoing support. Many trainees require more than six

months to overcome all their barriers to employment and meet their training and development goals. Graduates who become employed by social enterprises are in a better position to succeed because social enterprises provide another supportive work environment. Graduates who move into BUILD's apprenticeship program are also better prepared to succeed after they leave BUILD because they benefit from an additional year of supports. However the majority of BUILD graduates will seek work in the traditional labour market.

One of the central roles of the LMI caseworker would be to work with employers and jobseekers, such as BUILD graduates, to ease the transition into employment or further education/training. The caseworker role would shift to the workplace or education/training environment so the graduate could continue receiving support if needed. Having already established a relationship with graduates while training, the caseworker would provide continuity and create a sense of stability for graduates when they transition into a new setting. As a result, they will be less likely to quit their jobs or drop out of school if overwhelmed.

BUILD staff and graduates indicate that it can be difficult to adjust to being on their own after leaving BUILD's supportive environment after only six months. For those who have never worked, adapting to the culture of the workplace can be intimidating and overwhelming. Some lack the life skills employers are looking for and need ongoing support to access housing, health care, childcare, money management training, driver's license training, justice system supports, addictions supports and other services. For example, without strong money management skills, graduates may not be able to keep a cell phone active to hear from a potential employer, purchase the tools they need for work, or pay off fines, secure a license, and insure a vehicle — all of which is often required to work in the trades sector. BUILD staff also point out how underdeveloped life skills can lead to poor soft skills. For

example, if you are unable to access childcare or housing that provides a stable home life, your attendance may suffer and threaten your ongoing employment or ability to succeed in further education/training.

BUILD staff members report that many graduates moving into further education/training have not completed high school and have been out of school for many years. Many struggle outside of BUILD's supportive environment. For example, graduates who have gone to Red River College's apprenticeship program report having had trouble with curriculum, particularly the math components, and have failed to graduate, with many lasting less than a month.

In response, a pilot project was developed that changed the approach for graduates who had spent up to a year and a half in BUILD's apprenticeship program before going to Red River College. These graduates were enrolled in a cohort consisting of other BUILD graduates, rather than integrating into regular programming. While at BUILD, they participated in a tutoring program that progressively simulated a classroom environment to help prepare them for the experience. At Red River, the cohort was given extra time to complete the program, and access to an Aboriginal cultural component where students could meet with elders once a week, participate in sweats, and learn about their culture and the history of colonization.

Success rates jumped dramatically, with 75% of students graduating. Graduates reported that they felt more comfortable working through challenges with the curriculum alongside classmates they had already established relationships with while they were at BUILD. Despite the success of this pilot, it has not been replicated and BUILD graduates who move on to further education/training continue to have limited access to the ongoing supports they require.

One reason BUILD graduates cannot access the resources they need when they leave BUILD is simply that they don't know where resources

are offered. BUILD staff members try to stay connected to graduates and encourage them to return if they need additional supports, but this is not part of their mandate and they do not receive financial resources to provide continued support to graduates. Many graduates return for help in accessing housing, childcare, addictions supports, tutoring etc. They return because they are comfortable there. While staff members assist as much as they can, they are limited in what they can do. Staff members report finding it hard to maneuver through the various systems they encounter while assisting graduates. They suggest that it would be very difficult for some graduates to do it on their own after only six months. Connecting trainees with an LMI mandated to support them beyond the training period would reduce the number of graduates returning to BUILD and other CBOs for non-training related supports.

BUILD staff members are fully occupied with enrolled trainees. They do not have the time to assist returning graduates or to proactively track down and check in with other graduates to ensure that they are successfully transitioning into employment. As a result, many graduates fall through the cracks. An LMI caseworker would be much better positioned to stay connected and to proactively and regularly check in with graduates from BUILD and other CBOs. Caseworkers would work with graduates to identify their ongoing needs and to help them access and manage multiple resources, appointments, and systems. This might mean going to the graduate's home to help fill out a childcare subsidy application or to arrange addictions support services. With LMI caseworkers available to assist graduates, staff at BUILD and other CBOs would be left to do what they do best — deliver training.

Another reason BUILD graduates are not accessing the resources they need is that appointments are often scheduled during work hours. While at BUILD, trainees can attend appointments and participate in life skills training dur-

ing work hours, but not all employers are open to this. As a result, many graduates don't access the resources they need because they don't want to expose their barriers to employers or get in trouble for missing work. Some graduates will be sufficiently motivated to schedule and attend appointments and training outside of work hours when possible, but others won't. An LMI caseworker would provide the additional encouragement and support that these graduates need to make the extra effort. The caseworker could also approach employers to facilitate arrangements for enabling graduates to attend appointments that cannot be scheduled outside work hours. Beyond this, BUILD staff members suggest a broader need to explore options that would enable graduates to schedule appointments outside of normal working hours, including changing the hours of operation of certain services so that they are available in the evenings or on weekends.

Considering the Needs of Employers

Employers report that some of the BUILD graduates they have hired do not have all of the skills they need to succeed in the workplace, even in entry-level positions. This is not surprising given the very short-term duration of training at BUILD. Some graduates arrive without the tools they need on the job, and while some employers indicate they will cover the costs, they suggest that most would not. Employers have also noticed that some graduates struggle with attendance and low self-esteem, and lack the hard skills and/or motivation to consistently get work done quickly and correctly. This can negatively affect the productivity and moral of other team members, which ultimately has an impact on the business.

Certain employers, particularly non-profits and social enterprises that are committed to hiring people with multiple barriers, are more patient than other employers and work with employees to

address attendance and other issues. But even the most patient of employers will, in the long-term, expect staff to comply with workplace policies.

Social enterprises most often do not have sufficient resources to hire human resources staff to provide the kind of individual attention some BUILD graduates need. While private sector employers may have human resources staff members in place, they do not necessarily have the expertise to work with multi-barriered Aboriginal employees nor do they have a social mandate to hire such workers. As a result, they are less likely to take the time to work with multi-barriered employees to help them successfully adapt to the work environment.

It is highly unlikely that employers will hire staff to take on this role. However it is possible that many employers would be open to working with an LMI to provide social supports to both employer and employees. An LMI with an experienced caseworker would be in a better position to offer these supports because it will already have a trusting relationship with employees.

In addition to working with employees, the caseworker would be available to address employer concerns. For example, employers suggest that the LMI caseworker could teach BUILD graduates how to budget for the purchase of the tools and supplies required on jobsites. The caseworker could also work with employers and graduates to identify skills that may need to be further developed and then work with graduates to access training in those areas.

Employers noted that it would be useful to have a caseworker available to address issues around attendance and work ethic. This issue was also raised by employers in a Conference Board of Canada study titled *Understanding the Values, Challenges, and opportunities of engaging Metis, Inuit and First Nations Workers* (Howard, Edge and Watt, 2012). While some attendance issues can be resolved by addressing the need for childcare or access to reliable transportation, employers have expressed concern that

some hires simply do not see the importance of good attendance or the value of employment and a good work ethic. They suggest that some graduates don't connect employment to having greater choice, more independence, or the means to take care of themselves and their families. It should be noted that some employers attribute poor attendance and lack of work ethic to "being Aboriginal." To the extent that these issues occur, they are a function of intergenerational poverty, dependence, and the absence of workforce attachment — factors that can lead to a disconnection to workplace culture (MacKinnon 2014). Nonetheless, the LMI caseworker can work with graduates to better understand the expectations of employers and co-workers.

BUILD staff and graduates talk about the importance of mentorship and this type of support is provided to trainees. Staff members help trainees create a vision for what they want to achieve personally and professionally, and then encourage them to develop and stick to an action plan to achieve that vision. Graduates note that BUILD staff members have helped them start to see what they are capable of and to believe that they can achieve more on their own than they once thought. This builds confidence and improves self-esteem.

But fundamental shifts in self-perceptions and attitudes do not happen overnight. Despite the progress made, employers have noticed that, in some cases, poor attendance and work ethic seem to be linked to low self-esteem and a lack of motivation. They suggest that the LMI caseworker could play an ongoing mentorship role for graduates so that they continue to develop confidence and the motivation toward achieving a goal. Graduates also suggest that they may be more motivated if they are accountable to someone, like an LMI caseworker, who will regularly check in and offer these supports.

Employers open to hiring multi-barriered people have the right to understand the challenges that these employees can come with. The

LMI could play a role in educating employers about the clientele that BUILD and other CBOs work with. This means ensuring employers are aware of the set of skills this clientele will have as well as the skills that may need to be further developed. Employers will need to be confident that the LMI and its caseworkers will be there to provide ongoing access to supports that will ease the transition into employment and minimize the challenges for both employer and employee.

Employers willing to take the chance on hiring multi-barriered Aboriginal people must be well supported to ensure that they do not regret their decision and that they remain committed to working with the LMI over the long term. To help provide a positive experience for employers, caseworkers may need to be flexible with their time and approach in order to accommodate employers' needs. This might mean working with graduates outside of work hours as much as possible so as not to interfere with their ability to get their job done.

An LMI can also act as a vehicle for building relationships and strengthening lines of communication between employers and CBOs. For example, Manitoba Green Retrofit, a social enterprise that has hired many BUILD graduates, worked with BUILD to create a curriculum that would ensure graduates developed the specific skills that Manitoba Green Retrofit needed to expand its work in a particular area. If the two organizations did not have a strong relationship, this shift in training would not necessarily have occurred, and fewer BUILD graduates would be prepared to go work at Manitoba Green Retrofit.

An LMI would facilitate these efficiencies by providing a vehicle through which employers can inform multiple CBOs about the specific skills they need in their workforce so that training is offered in those areas. The LMI would also enable employers to inform CBOs about the skills that tend to be underdeveloped in their labour pool so that more focus can be put into those areas. For example, one employer wanted BUILD

to be aware of the need to prepare trainees for a faster work pace and a lower level of supervision in the workplace. This information sharing through the LMI should occur in a way that accommodates employers and ensures they see the value of participating.

The LMI can also simplify relationships between employers and CBOs by acting as a single point of contact for employers who are looking for Aboriginal employees (MacKinnon 2014). This will prevent employers from potentially having to reach out to multiple CBOs before finding the workers they need. Furthermore, it will enable CBOs to free up limited resources because they will no longer have to develop relationships with employers to get them to hire their graduates.

Considering the Needs of the Aboriginal Jobseeker

BUILD staff members suggest that it can be very difficult to find an employer willing to hire graduates even though they have become stable and skilled workers with a strong work ethic. Staff members who have spent time on construction sites suggest that racial discrimination prevents some Aboriginal graduates from accessing and succeeding in employment in the trades sector. They have attended job interviews with Aboriginal graduates and observed employers make assumptions around alcohol consumption and work ethic. Staff members also report knowing that Aboriginal graduates have left jobs because of racism in the workplace. While employers are clear that racial discrimination is not present in their workplace, some acknowledge its presence within the trades sector and labour market more broadly. BUILD staff members also suggest that racial discrimination creates a barrier for graduates who pursue further education and training. For them, the discrimination is not necessarily overt, but rather manifested in the expectation of failure on the part of instructors and/or classmates.

Aboriginal graduates report a range of experiences with racial discrimination. Some describe it as a feeling that has always been present in their lives. Others describe feeling like people look at them differently. Some graduates report having seen Aboriginal employees being put down by other employees on the worksite. Others fear they won't get hired, despite having become accredited, because they are Aboriginal. *"We're as good as anybody else. We all have our Level 1. What's the difference?"* Aboriginal graduates with a history of criminal charges report experiencing even greater barriers accessing employment. One graduate distributed over 200 resumes without getting hired. *"Sometimes it feels like if you ain't got a clean record then you ain't worth nothing anywhere."*

Given the realities of racial discrimination within the workplace the LMI could offer courses and workshops for management and staff to raise awareness and seek solutions. Improving relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will require that non-Aboriginal people better understand the historical context. They must also understand how systemic racism is perpetuated by our lack of understanding of the complex issues that have led to a deep divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. There is much that can be done in the workplace to increase awareness of the effects of colonization and to be more receptive to Aboriginal workers (MacKinnon 2014). The LMI could take on this role. It is important that employers not be compelled to participate in training, but rather be encouraged to doing so. Most employers indicated that they would be open to cultural awareness training, but were not necessarily aware of how it might influence the way they operated in the workplace.

In addition to the need to educate employers, Aboriginal jobseekers can also benefit from learning more about their culture and history. Many Aboriginal people are disconnected from their cultural heritage as a result of colonial poli-

cies purposely designed to assimilate them into a culture based in western European values. The deep and damaging intergenerational effects have been well documented through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. It is increasingly being recognized that reversing some of the damage that has been done will require a process of decolonization including cultural reclamation that is fully integrated into programs such as those that train Aboriginal people for employment (MacKinnon, forthcoming 2015).

BUILD offers trainees access to some cultural reclamation programming including cultural awareness workshops and sweat lodge ceremonies every two months where trainees can meet with elders, participate in healing ceremonies, and learn more about Indigenous cultures and history. But it isn't enough. According to BUILD staff, many trainees come from dysfunctional family environments and have experienced significant trauma as a result of policies and programs such as residential schools and "the sixties scoop." Their experience is similar to that of trainees in many other CBOs (MacKinnon, forthcoming 2015). For these individuals, success is more likely if the effects of colonization are tackled head on and fully integrated into training programs. For example, a graduate of Urban Circle Training Centre, an organization known for integrating cultural reclamation into its programming described her experience this way: "learning about my culture and colonization was as important to me as the technical training I received. It helped me to understand why I had so much difficulty in the past...I needed to do that before I could move forward" (MacKinnon, forthcoming 2015).

While BUILD hopes to acquire additional resources so it can more fully integrate cultural reclamation into its programming, experience from other organizations suggest that this will be difficult. Funding for cultural reclamation and healing from the effects of colonization is not provided to training agencies. Those that

do integrate this into their programming have found ways to do so without specific funding. An LMI could however make a case to funders to provide such training. The LMI could contract with experienced organizations like Urban Circle Training Centre to ensure that cultural reclamation is fully integrated into its programming and available to all Aboriginal jobseekers at time of entry and throughout their transition into the workplace.

While some employers expressed a willingness to create space for Aboriginal employees to participate in Aboriginal cultural training, they had questions about whether or not this training would interfere with business operations or be of interest to Aboriginal employees. These concerns would need to be considered by the LMI to ensure that programming is accessible but not disruptive of the workplace.

There was also some questioning around how Aboriginal cultural training would make a dif-

ference, noting that at the end of the day, people still need to go to work and get the job done. There was a concern that exposure to some of the negative realities around Aboriginal culture and history may actually be detrimental to Aboriginal employees. The concern was that it would encourage Aboriginal people to focus more on their past and on the wrongdoings they have experienced without anything productive coming out of that process.

These concerns are indicative of the lack of knowledge and understanding about decolonizing programming and suggest that work will be required to inform employers and workers of the benefits for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to understand the damaging effects of colonial policies. The LMI could work with employers to answer questions and respond to concerns about decolonizing programs to assure them that the intent is to provide participants with an opportunity to learn, heal and move forward.

Conclusion

Given the poor labour market outcomes of a growing Aboriginal population it is important to consider how an LMI can help ensure that Aboriginal people with barriers to employment can access and sustain jobs that pay well, offer benefit programs, and provide opportunity for advancement. It is proposed that a community-based LMI be established to specifically serve multi-barriered Aboriginal jobseekers, CBOs serving these individuals, and employers who wish to hire Aboriginal people.

An Aboriginal-focused LMI would deploy caseworkers to multiple CBOs who would develop long-term relationships with jobseekers to help them access comprehensive supports while training, as well as when transitioning from training to employment. This will alleviate some of the pressures felt by CBOs who are not resourced sufficiently to provide their clients with supports when they graduate or exit their programs. Jobseekers will benefit from the opportunity to develop a relationship with a single caseworker who can create a sense of stability during periods of transition and provide guidance while also facilitating access to ongoing supports over a flexible time period.

The LMI would also meet the needs of employers who want to hire Aboriginal people by developing strong relationships with them and by simplifying their interactions with CBOs. The LMI would act as a liaison between employers and multiple CBOs to help employers access Aboriginal workers. The ongoing supports offered by the LMI caseworker are critical to providing employers with a positive experience when they choose to work with the LMI to access workers.

Given the challenge of racial discrimination within the workplace, the LMI would offer cultural reclamation, decolonization, and anti-racism training to employers and their workplaces. This would increase awareness of the effects of colonization and the role that cultural reclamation can play in the lives of Aboriginal people while encouraging greater understanding and receptivity to Aboriginal workers.

Given the important role that cultural reclamation plays in providing Aboriginal people with the ability to succeed in training and in the workplace, the LMI would ensure that it is fully integrated into its programming.

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CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE

Unit 205 – 765 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2W 3N5
TEL 204-927-3200 FAX 204-927-3201
EMAIL ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca
WEBSITE www.policyalternatives.ca