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 CANADIAN CENTRE  
 for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
 MANITOBA OFFICE

RESEARCH • ANALYSIS • SOLUTIONS

# FAST FACTS

**March 9, 2012**

## Connecting Aboriginal people to ‘good’ jobs

**M**anitoba has among the highest Aboriginal populations in Canada and it is growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. Fifteen percent of Manitobans and 10 percent of Winnipeggers identify as Aboriginal. While the majority of Aboriginal people are fully engaged in employment and/or education pursuits, statistics tell us that many Aboriginal people are 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. According to Census Canada 2006, in 2005, 59.2 percent of the Aboriginal population compared with 67.3 percent of the total population participated in the labour force. During this same period, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was 15.4% in Manitoba, almost three times the rate for the overall population. On reserve, the unemployment rate was 26% in 2006. Although they make up less than 13% of the work age population, Aboriginal people represent over 30% of the total unemployed in Manitoba. The median annual income for Aboriginal workers aged 15 and over was \$15, 246 —63% of the median income of \$24,194 of the overall population.

The Aboriginal population is much younger and growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, the median age of Manitobans was 37.8 years, compared with 23.9

for those who identified as Aboriginal. Aboriginal people are a growing source of labour yet many Aboriginal people are having difficulty accessing ‘good jobs’— those that pay well, include benefits and provide opportunity for advancement.

A 2005 study Loewen & Silver published by CCPA Manitoba showed that a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) could be an effective model to assist jobseekers access good jobs as well as assist 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) providing training; connect job seekers 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 community-based organizations (CBOs);
- **Interventionist:** targeting marginalized groups, tailoring jobs and hiring and training practices to meet both client group and employer needs.



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## *FAST FACTS continued ...*

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Building on this knowledge, the CCPA 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 — we 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, we conclude that an LMI could be an effective means of filling existing gaps, support the work of CBOs, and build stronger links between employers and multi-barriered job seekers. We also conclude 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 very different. As a start, we propose an LMI be established to specifically serve Aboriginal job seekers, community based organizations serving these individuals, and employers seeking to hire Aboriginal people.

The general thrust of the model proposed by Silvius and MacKinnon (2012) in the report *Making employment work: Connecting multi-barriered Manitobans to good jobs*, is a model developed in collaboration with CBOs and employers. It proposes formation of an LMI led by a consortium of CBOs that provide training to Aboriginal people, employers and other stakeholders. The LMI would have dedicated personnel tasked with providing employers and job seekers with supports and cultural teachings to not only match workers with employers but to also ensure successful transition for both employer and employee. The LMI would not interfere with the good 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 have little or no employment history and other challenges. A successful LMI would respond to this need by:

- Building on the long established relationships between CBOs and the target population(s);
- Simplifying relationships between employers and participating service organizations;
- Simplify 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 human resource personnel;
- 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.

We explore various models in our report and conclude by describing and recommending a ‘community’ focused model. We prioritize establishing an Aboriginal focused model however we 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 participants in our study, we propose that there is a gap in service that must be filled if we are to improve the long-term employment outcomes of multi-barriered job seekers. We propose an LMI is an effective and efficient model to address this gap.

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