anpBC

Nurturing a healthy
Aboriginal non-profit sector

Mentorship & Professional Development
in the Aboriginal non-profit sector

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Executive Summary

Background

In 2012, for the first time, the Aboriginal non-profit sector was awarded funds to undertake the Aboriginal Non-Profit Workforce and Human Resources Strategy (ANP BC Strategy). This initiative came about through a desire on the part of Aboriginal non-profit (ANP) leaders to address common human resource and workforce issues such as low wages and benefits, high worker turnover, and the legacy of residential schools. Overall, the initiative aimed to develop culturally relevant resources for the ANP sector and to promote qualities that would make the sector an attractive career option for Aboriginal people.

The ANP BC Strategy focused on four major topic areas and was structured as four interrelated, coordinated projects carried out by four project teams: a) Employee benefits and pensions, b) Mentorship and professional development, c) Workplace wellness and work-life balance, and d) Cultural and traditional values in the workplace.

The Mentorship and Professional Development Project

This Strategy Paper focuses on Mentoring and Professional Development and presents findings and proposed recommendations that emerged from six regional Sharing Circles (jointly planned and facilitated by the four project teams), 23 key informant interviews, survey results based on 81 respondents, and a focused literature review on Aboriginal mentoring and professional development.

Mentoring and professional development are key approaches to building capacity and strengthening BC's ANP sector. Traditionally, Aboriginal communities gained knowledge and skills through guidance from experienced family and community members. The spirit of hands-on learning continues within ANP organizations. Mentoring and professional development activities help build future capacity and ensure succession planning for the entire ANP sector.

Research Findings on Mentorship

The following key themes emerged from the Sharing Circles, interviews and the survey:

- Mentoring is a key cultural practice
- Mentoring is values-based
- Mentoring is relationship-based and holistic
- Mentoring is about leading by example
- Mentoring has different types, such as cultural, personal, workplace, and healing-related
- Mentoring is strengthened when there is dedicated time and resources set aside and/or a formal mentoring approach or program
- Mentoring can be peer-based
- Mentoring has extreme value to the employee and organization

Research Findings on Professional Development

Research findings showed that ANP employees value professional development as a key ingredient to building capacity both within Aboriginal non-profit agencies and in the communities they serve. Professional development themes that came out of the interviews, Sharing Circles and the survey were as follows:

- Importance of professional development days occurring regularly within the organization and involving all staff
- Professional development goes beyond training and is linked to staff-identified needs, goals, and staff evaluations
- Professional development can focus on personal development as well as job-related skill development
- Cultural experiences count as professional development
- The importance of professional development for boards of directors
- Professional development can be offered through on the job training, laddering, and work placements for youth
- The value of professional development includes enhancing staff motivation, self-confidence, well-being, capacity building, and community development
- Opportunities for professional development are linked to funding availability

Recommendations

Based on the findings of all information-gathering processes, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Enhance awareness of mentoring and professional development 'wise practices'

   a) We recommend that mentoring and professional development wise practices be documented and regularly shared across all ANP organizations.

   b) To this end, we suggest that individual Aboriginal non-profit agencies regularly share and publish stories of their mentoring and professional development practices as part of agency newsletters and on their websites. Provincial ANPs, such as the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, could also play a coordinating role in ensuring that information regarding positive mentoring and professional development practices is shared widely across BC and beyond.

   c) Also to this end, we recommend that this Strategy Paper be published online and made widely available to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-profit organizations, so that all agencies can learn about and from the mentoring and professional development practices that exist.

2. Invest in conceptualizing what mentoring means and looks like on the ground

   a) We recommend that resources be invested in creating an Aboriginal (Non-Profit) Mentoring Framework based on traditional values, practice, and promising workplace practices. The Framework could be developed as a user-friendly tool/handbook for individual ANPs and other community organizations – as well as government and the private sector – to use to initiate and frame discussions around existing approaches to mentoring as well as to 'map out' desired directions.

   b) Once developed, the Aboriginal Non-Profit Mentoring Framework and Handbook could be introduced to BC ANPs as part of the next phase of the Aboriginal Non-Profit Workforce and Human Resources Strategy, via a funded demonstration project, which could be fully evaluated to assess outcomes and lessons learned.

   c) Moreover, all Aboriginal non-profits – i.e., managers, staff, board, youth, Elders, and volunteers - dedicate time to conceptualizing and articulating their organization's approach or framework related to mentoring and how it is practiced within the agency. An Aboriginal Mentoring Framework would be a useful tool for these discussions.

3. Strengthen organizations' mentoring activities and approaches

   a) Aboriginal non-profits would benefit from creating environments that are conducive to and strengthen mentoring practices. Examples of ways to do this include:

- Have regular time set aside for mentorship (i.e., mentor/mentee meetings)
- New hires be appointed (or select) a mentor
- Ensure open-door policy/approach within the organization
- Create agency budgets that reflect the costs of mentoring – i.e., having time for mentor/mentee meetings
- Have the agency show its appreciation of people's time/effort/energy related to mentoring – e.g., via a lunch, card, tickets to an event
- Have mentoring exchanges between organizations as a way to mentor whole agencies, not just individual staff

b) Aboriginal non-profits would benefit from recognizing and accommodating different types of mentoring in the workplace (e.g., cultural, personal, workplace, and healing-related).

c) Aboriginal non-profit managers and executives would benefit from having their own mentors and, when possible, Elder advisors. Not only will this be beneficial to managers and to the organization, but it also signals to all staff that the organization is committed to mentoring and that the leaders are interested in ongoing learning.

d) Where feasible, Aboriginal non-profits could have an Elder Advisory Council that could play a role in mentoring. It is recognized that not all communities will have access to a sufficient number of Elders to support an Elder Advisory Council.

4. Strengthening professional development in Aboriginal non-profits

a) Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from supporting staff in overall skill development and professional development through agency-wide training opportunities. In addition, agency-wide professional development days with a cultural/traditional focus – e.g., wind drying salmon training – may be particularly important.

b) Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from seeking out and/or organizing additional opportunities for managers and staff – as well as for the board and volunteers - to learn about culture and language as part of professional development (and mentoring).

c) Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from seeking out and/or organizing cultural sensitivity/cultural competency training for managers, and making these professional development activities mandatory.

d) Aboriginal non-profit organizations provide for, wherever possible, tuition reimbursement as part of their professional development opportunities.

Introduction

The following report tells a story about the role that mentorship and professional development has played in BC's Aboriginal non-profit (ANP) sector. Recent research with ANPs across the province sought the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal employees, volunteers, board members, youth, and Elders, to better understand how mentorship and professional development can contribute to strengthening the ANP workforce. Whether in coastal, urban, or northern communities, ANP organizations alike shared stories about the strong connection between mentoring and Aboriginal culture and tradition.

From 2012 to 2014, research was conducted with ANP employees and volunteers throughout BC. As a result, four overall recommendations have been made with 14 action steps to help strengthen the role that mentorship and professional development can play for the ANP workforce. This report outlines the findings that went into the recommendations, based on stories shared from ANP employees and volunteers through Sharing Circles, key informant interviews, an online survey, and a focused literature review on Aboriginal mentoring and professional development.

Background

This report emerged out of the Aboriginal Non-Profit Workforce and Human Resources Strategy (ANP BC Strategy). In 2012, for the first time, the Aboriginal non-profit sector was awarded funds to undertake the ANP BC Strategy. Sponsored by the BC Ministry of Jobs and Tourism, and guided by a sector advisory committee with support from the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, the initiative aimed to develop culturally relevant resources for the ANP sector. The ANP BC Strategy focused on four major topic areas and was structured as four interrelated, coordinated projects carried out by four project teams: Employee benefits and pensions; Mentorship and professional development; Workplace wellness and work-life balance; and Cultural and traditional values in the workplace.

The Mentorship and Professional Development project focused on learning about the key approaches to building capacity and strengthening BC's ANP workforce. Traditionally, Aboriginal communities gained knowledge and skills through guidance from

experienced family and community members. The spirit of hands-on learning continues within ANP organizations. Furthermore, mentoring and professional development activities help build future capacity and ensure succession planning for the entire ANP sector.

Historical Context

An historical background of Aboriginal peoples can help to shed light on the context of mentorship and professional development within the ANP sector. Understanding the past, "what once was," aids in comprehending the significant shift to "what is" today. This reflection provides the framework for this research project.

Prior to European contact, common approaches to learning and skill development included use of storytelling, use of Elders imparting knowledge and wisdom, and the passing on of cultural traditions. This created a system of learning that was based upon traditional values of caring, sharing, respect, healing, and a willingness to learn and to teach.

> Men and women understood that as they grew in spirit and wisdom, they had a duty to teach and maintain the wellbeing and continuity of the community. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series 2002-2006).

Aboriginal non-profits offer a range of services that support, heal and strengthen Aboriginal communities that are impacted by colonization. Many of the Aboriginal non-profit programs and services build upon the legacy of strength and resiliency of Aboriginal communities and work to counter the cumulative impacts of residential schools, loss of traditional lands and economies, suppression of traditional spirituality, culture and language, and forced removal of children through the child welfare systems.

Prior to European contact, common approaches to learning and skill development included the use of storytelling, Elders imparting knowledge and wisdom, and cultural traditions.

A Brief History of Residential Schools in Canada

(Taken from CBC archives, 2008) In the 19th century, the Canadian government believed it was responsible for educating and caring for the country's Aboriginal people. It thought their best chance for success was to learn English and adopt Christianity and Canadian customs. Ideally, they would pass their adopted lifestyle on to their children, and Native traditions would diminish, or be completely abolished in a few generations.

The Canadian government developed a policy called "aggressive assimilation" to be taught at church-run, government-funded industrial schools, later called residential schools. The government

felt children were easier to mold than adults, and the concept of a boarding school was the best way to prepare them for life in mainstream society. Residential schools were federally run, under the Department of Indian Affairs. Attendance was mandatory. Agents were employed by the government to ensure all Native children attended.

Residential schools were established with the assumption that Aboriginal culture was unable to adapt to a rapidly modernizing society. It was believed that Native children could be successful if they assimilated into mainstream Canadian society by adopting Christianity and speaking English or French. Students were discouraged from speaking their first language or practicing native traditions. If they were caught, they would experience severe punishment.

Throughout the years, students lived in substandard conditions and endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Students at residential schools rarely had opportunities to see examples of normal family life. They were in school 10 months a year, away from their parents. All correspondence from the children was written in English, which many parents couldn't read. Brothers and sisters at the same school rarely saw each other, as all activities were segregated by gender.

When students returned to the reserve, they often found they didn't belong. They didn't have the skills to help their parents, and became ashamed of their native heritage. The skills taught at the schools were generally substandard; many found it hard to function in an urban setting. The aims of assimilation meant devastation for those who were subjected to years of mistreatment. (CBC News article, 2008)

During the peak of residential school operations there were approximately 130 schools located in all Canadian provinces and territories. The last residential school in Canada was closed in 1996. The impact of residential schools continues to affect the abilities and lives of Aboriginal students, parents, grandparents, professionals and educators today.

Resilience of Indigenous Culture and Communities
Service providers working with Aboriginal families who are survivors of residential school experiences may be familiar with a host of social and health conditions such as addictions, violence, suicide, family breakdown and, high rates of chronic disease (Brant Castellano, 2006, Waldram et al 2006; Chansonneuve 2005, BC Provincial Health Officer's Report, 2001). Less obvious to some may be the strength and survival abilities of Aboriginal communities and within Aboriginal families. Even in communities where the impacts of colonization are deeply rooted (as evidenced by things such as high levels of violence, poverty and addiction), threads of cultural knowledge, technology, wisdom and supportive relationships still exist (Chaunsonneuve, 2005). This is testament to the richness and vibrancy of Indigenous peoples and their ways of living. While much of the language and traditions are gone with the passing of each Elder, there is a resurgence of ceremony, dance, songs, storytelling, and traditional activities.

The Research: Mentorship and Professional Development

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to investigate the role of mentoring and professional development in strengthening the ANP workforce, through seeking the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal employees, volunteers, board members, youth, and community members such as Elders.

Methodology

This project was informed by a participatory approach and benefitted from the wisdom and guidance of the Aboriginal Non-Profit Human Resource Strategy's Advisory Council.

Approach

The research project was made possible through a partnership between a non-profit society, Caring For First Nations Children Society, and a subcontracted consulting group, Nota Bene Consulting Group. Members of this partnership came to this project with a wealth of personal and work experience in the Aboriginal non-profit sector.

The project team consisted of: Linda Lucas, a Nuu-chah-nulth woman from the Hesquiaht First Nation on the West Coast of Vancouver Island; Rachelle Dallaire, Mohawk, Ojibway from Temagammi First Nations, and Montagnais Metis; Marilyn Van Bibber, member of the Wolf Clan of the Northern Tutchone people, and a member of the Selkirk First Nation at Pelly Crossing, Yukon; Carol Hubberstey, with cultural roots from England and Scotland, and having grown up in Nanaimo BC; Sharon Hume, a seventh generation Canadian with English, Scottish, Irish, and French heritage, and having grown up in North Vancouver; and Deborah Rutman, of Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Jewish heritage, and having grown up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. All team members are mothers, and three team members are grandmothers. All team members have experience working in and/or participating on boards of directors for non-profit organizations.

Research Tools

The project involved a mixed methods design and included the following methods of information gathering: interviews with key informants (n=21), Sharing Circles (n=124), focus group (n=8), online survey (n=81), and a focused literature review (please see Appendix C).

Key Informant Interviews

A total of 21 key informant interviews were conducted with managers and staff of Aboriginal non-profits. A preliminary group of key informants were initially identified through personal connections by the team leads for each project team. This was done to ensure the teams were not interviewing the same respondents. Following up on this early group, additional respondents were identified through a snowball sample, by word of mouth, and by contacting interviewees representing different sectors and regions. In addition, one focus group was held with agency staff in a provincial organization.

The interviews were semi-structured and primarily carried out in person, although telephone interviews were conducted when meeting face to face was not possible (for a list of interview questions, please see Appendix E). In keeping with Indigenous research methods, the interview notes were sent back to the key informants so that they could have a copy of the notes, and could review the accuracy of the record of their interview and add additional comments or suggestions. The majority of interviews were with staff of child and family-focused Aboriginal non-profits and with staff of multi-service agencies.

Interviews with held with 21 people in the ANP sector:
4 from Child and Family services
1 from Health services
6 from Housing services
1 from Treatment services
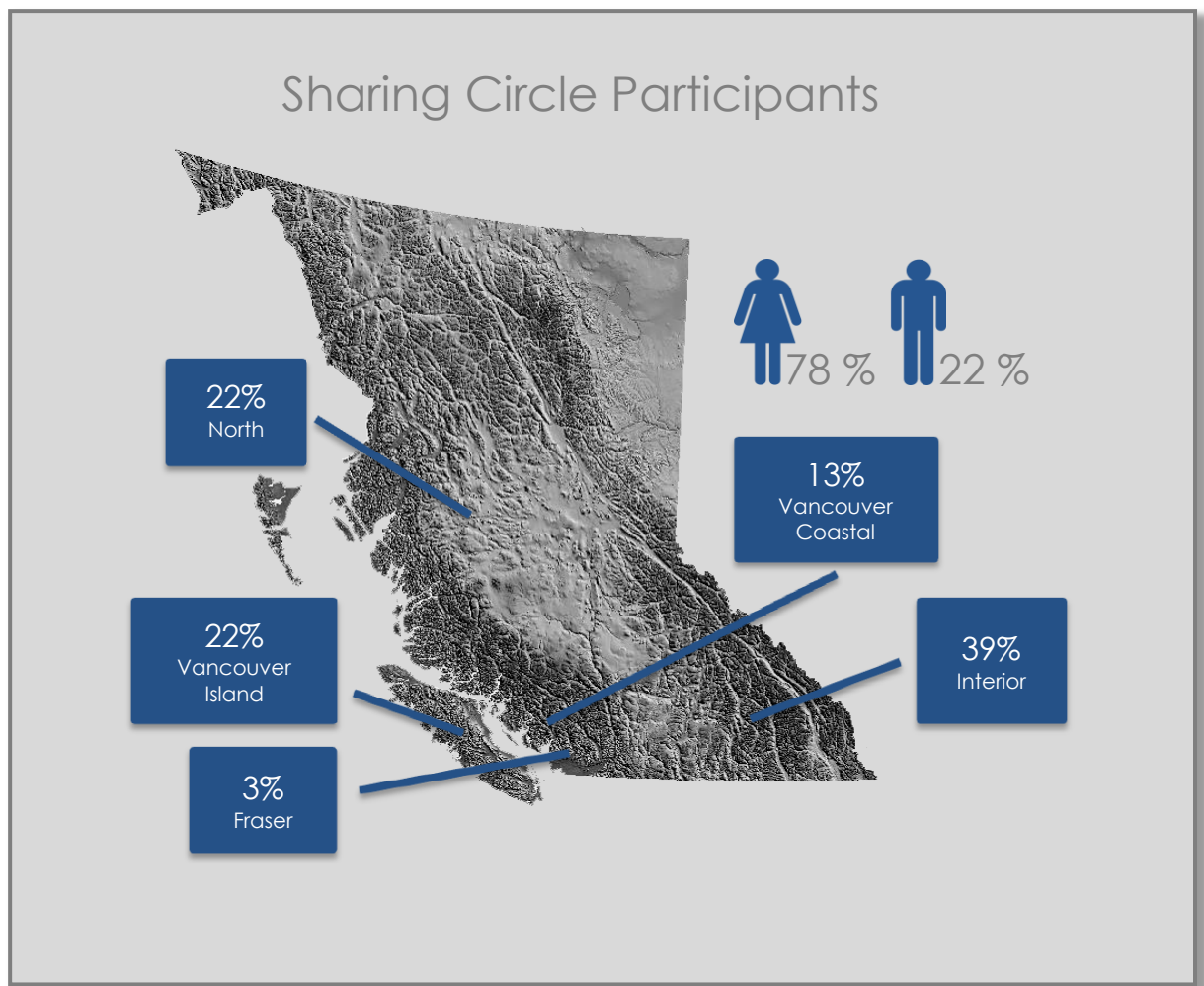5 from Multi-service organizations

Regional Sharing Circles

Sharing Circles were held with ANP employees and volunteers, including Elders and youth, in six regional centres in British Columbia: Victoria, Vancouver, Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George, and Terrace. The mentoring and professional development team worked in collaboration with the other three project teams in planning and facilitating the sessions. Key questions were developed and potential sites selected throughout the province. Selection of the Sharing Circle sites was based on the project leads' interest in capturing regional diversity while maximizing access so that Aboriginal non-profit organizations could easily travel to the meetings.

Sharing Circles were meant to offer an opportunity for two-way learning: The meeting process began with an opening prayer by an Elder from the local community. After a short overview of each

project an open discussion followed. Some sessions followed a World Café style whereby smaller discussions were held and the participants moved from one group to another throughout the day. The final element of the sessions involved seeking recommendations from the group regarding possible strategic actions.

Questions guiding the mentoring and professional development discussions at the Sharing Circles were:

- When I think about mentoring I think of.........
- Does your work place have a mentoring program?
- What difference has that made?
- When I think of professional development I think of.......
- What professional development is offered at your workplace?
- What difference has that made?

Sharing Circle Participants

78 %   22 %

22% North

13% Vancouver Coastal

22% Vancouver Island

39% Interior

3% Fraser

Online Survey

The Mentoring and Professional Development project partnered with the Pensions and Benefits project to co-design and co-administer an online survey, which was available via the ANP website. The survey respondents were recruited through the ANP website, at the Sharing Circles and through word of mouth. Participants in the key informant interviews were encouraged to complete the surveys, and encourage other people in their organizations to complete them as well.

A total of 81 staff, managers, executive directors, and/or board members of ANP organizations in BC completed the survey. As with the key informant interviews, the majority of respondents were from child and family-focused agencies, as well as from multi-service agencies.
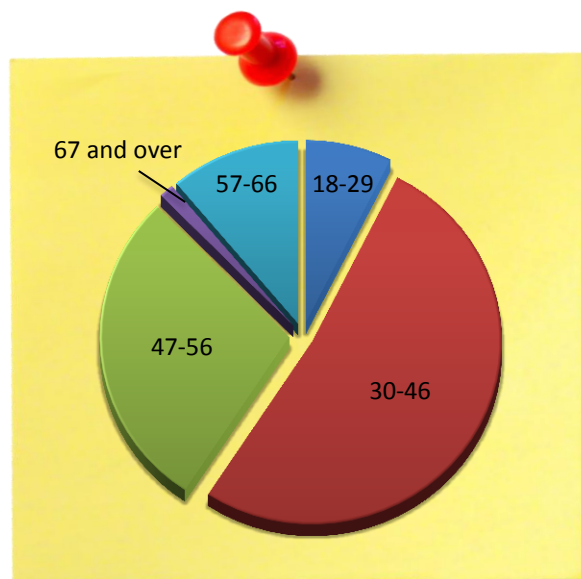
Age of Survey Respondents
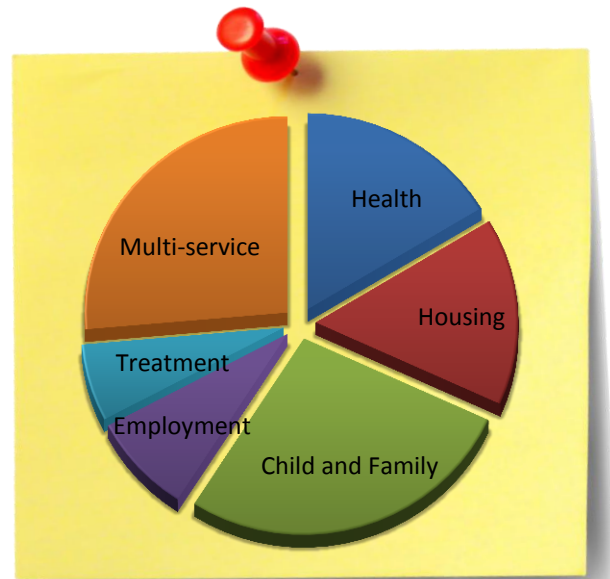
Survey Respondents by sub-sector

Findings

In this section we summarize the themes and findings related to mentoring and professional development that emerged from the Sharing Circles, key informant interviews and survey responses. We begin with presenting findings relating to mentoring. Specifically, we summarize themes related to informants' experiences of mentoring within their workplace and more broadly in their life, the value and benefits of mentoring for the employee, and benefits of mentoring for the ANP organization as a whole. Following this, we present and discuss findings in relation to professional development, including the value of professional development, benefits of professional development for ANP employees, benefits of professional development for the organization, and benefits of professional development for boards of directors.

Research Findings - Mentoring

Survey results provide strong support for a focus on mentoring in the workplace. The majority of survey respondents (82%) reported that that mentoring helped to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Along these lines, over 60% suggested that mentoring fostered an environment of continuous learning. A few respondents also suggested that the learning they garnered through mentorship opportunities also helped them to develop life skills that were useful outside of the workforce.

Mentorship in ANP organizations is an excellent strategy to improve overall human resource capacity, build and strengthen respectful relationships, and increase employee retention.

According to survey respondents, mentoring was a way to improve relationships both within and outside of the work environment. Over 60% of respondents reported that mentoring opportunities had strengthened their connection to other staff, and over 70% reported that mentoring opportunities contributed to a respectful work environment. Interestingly, approximately 40% of participants also reported that mentoring opportunities helped to improve their connections outside of the workplace, including with Elders, family members, and the greater community.

Survey respondents clearly appreciated the benefits that mentoring provided them and, as evidenced in the quote below, they also shared that agencies need to offer more varied kinds of mentoring:

> "I would like to see job shadowing and coaching, as well as the availability of Elders to provide mentoring and guidance, as well as anything that would help employees grow culturally as well as professionally." (Survey respondent)

Survey findings support the use of mentoring as a retention strategy. For example, two-thirds of survey respondents stated that mentoring opportunities had contributed to their choice to stay in an organization. Additionally, 74% of respondents shared that mentoring opportunities contributed to their sense of belonging in their organization.

Mentorship helped to improve connections outside of the workplace, including with Elders, family members, and the greater community.

Themes that emerged from the Sharing Circles, key informant interviews and survey responses help to expand on our understanding of mentoring in general, and from a cultural perspective. In the remainder of this section we summarize related themes from all research gathered:

- Mentoring is a key cultural practice
- Mentoring is values-based
- Mentoring is relationship-based and holistic
- Mentoring is about leading by example
- There are different types of mentoring
- The value of formal mentoring versus informal mentoring
- Mentoring can be peer-based
- Mentoring has extreme value to the employee and organization

Mentoring is a key cultural practice

The traditional role of mentoring emerged as a consistently strong theme across all Sharing Circles, key informant interviews and in the survey data. Much of the discussions linked the practice of mentoring to traditional teachings and active learning. Respondents described their various experiences of learning the traditional teachings from Elders, aunties and uncles, family members and each other through hands-on guidance. While mentoring was not always the word used to describe how they learned from an older relative or community member, this learning is the essence of mentoring. In traditional times people learned from each other, shared knowledge, experience and expertise, and learned protocols, roles and responsibilities.

Mentoring is value-based

Value-based mentoring is foundational to creating a common vision and purpose. Teaching about values and how to do things in a 'good way' is key to building self-confidence and self-determination, and includes sharing knowledge as a way to give back to community and the next generation. Values identified by respondents as being central to mentoring include: believing that everyone has strengths and gifts to offer, and believing that sharing knowledge is a way of giving to the next generation. Along these lines, respondents further identified that the use of a Circle meeting format for meetings and gatherings offers a non-hierarchical structure to promote equality and to recognize that everyone has gifts to offer.

> "Mentoring is valuable and necessary. It blends well into our traditions and passing knowledge to the next generation." (Sharing Circle participant)

> "My leadership beliefs are that we are part of a circle, and we all bring gifts to that circle. As well, we are all equal." – Sharing Circle participant

Mentoring is relationship-based and holistic

A common practice in Aboriginal non-profit organizations is to build good relationships. Opening meetings with prayers or ceremony, working with Elders, gift giving, and acknowledging the traditional territory of the host nation are common protocols. While prayers and protocols vary with territorial and cultural differences, the essence is creating sacred space upon which to build good relationships. Creating space for mentoring is all about having good relationships with staff, management, and the community.

> "Make sure the personal connections and relationships are there."(Key informant)

As well, mentoring in Aboriginal organizations means paying attention to the well-being of workers from a holistic perspective. Thus, mentoring involves actions such as paying attention to staff's personal and emotional needs, debriefing emotionally charged situations, and supporting staff in job-related skills development.

Along with being relationship-based, a number of respondents noted that mentoring is a sacred relationship and responsibility. One respondent spoke of mentoring as "a responsibility we all have, like being an auntie and bringing that role and responsibility of an auntie into the workplace." Mentoring is a relationship founded on respect, tradition, equality and reciprocity.

> "Mentoring is a sacred thing. With the mentors I've been honoured to be around or work with me, I've noticed there is a special bond. You can have an equal mentorship where you work with each other, a reciprocal relationship. We mentor each other."(Sharing Circle participant)

Reciprocity or two-way capacity building is another important part of mentoring. Some organizations are striving for equality where workers learn from each other. A cultural example of reciprocity is "witnessing", where conference goers can give back by acting as a "witness" and sharing the knowledge from the conference with other workers. Encouraging the voice of the employee in organizational decision-making can create a reciprocal relationship where mentoring can occur. Furthermore, respondents observed that being an active partner in a working relationship can help staff better identify their mentoring needs.

> "The deeper the sharing of knowledge, the deeper the responsibility. Mentorship is far greater than just exchanging information. It is about impacting each other's lives."(Sharing Circle participant)

Relationship-based mentoring can be achieved in a number of ways, including: using good listening skills, being open and honest, having regular check-ins, de-briefings and an 'open-door policy', and sharing a common purpose. Quotes from key informants describe relationship-based mentoring:

"Paying attention to a warm, positive work environment through respectful and non-judgmental communication." (Key Informant)

"Being open and honest, transparent, direct, and non-judgmental." (Key informant)

Establishing boundaries is equally important in making sure the personal connections and relationships are there, as described by key informants:

"Employees need to be responsible for being open, honest, direct and voicing their needs." (Key informant)

"Recognize importance of boundaries while developing and strengthening relationships." (Key informant)

Additionally, several respondents observed that the best mentors are often those who challenge people and take them out of their comfort zone.

"Sometimes your mentor is the one you don't like. Never judge those people. You may learn from it. The Creator wastes nothing."(Sharing Circle participant)

Mentoring is about leading by example

Leadership mentoring is leading by example, however, leaders also need mentors. Managers and executives need their own mentors as well as Elder advisors. Leading by example goes beyond the organization to impact the whole community. Several participants spoke about mentoring students through sharing knowledge and giving room for them to learn, as well as by being there to help and support as needed.

"To me, mentoring is about leading by example. You have to be willing to walk the talk." (Key informant)

"Sharing knowledge so that others can do for themselves: I give them room to learn, and I will be there for them if they need help or support. I become like a mom or an auntie to them. This is what [my Executive Director] teaches and models." (Key informant)

There are different types of mentoring

Different types of mentoring play an important role in both personal and professional development. Cultural mentoring can assist in healing, personal growth and traditional practices, which benefits not only the worker but also his or her family and the health of the community. Personal development is a catalyst for growing more mentors within the family, community, and workplace. Role models and mentors assist not only ANP program participants in healing past traumas and effects of colonization, but also help to heal the worker.

The role of culture is foundational to Aboriginal non-profit organizations and mentorship.

Foundational to Aboriginal non-profit organizations is the role of culture. Cultural mentoring offers hands-on learning about cultural practices and traditional knowledge. Many of the program participants that are served by ANPs have experienced the far-reaching impacts of colonization, including the loss of culture. Elders and other local cultural knowledge keepers offer cultural mentoring opportunities for both staff and participants to learn local culture and proper protocols. Most programs utilize a holistic perspective in program delivery. Understanding the values and worldview of Indigenous peoples helps workers to keep the vision and big picture of ANP organizations. Cultural mentoring allows people to "paddle in the same direction" and "build our people up" (Survey respondent).

Mentoring in the workplace goes beyond orientation. Mentoring is about providing ongoing guidance in the workplace rather than a one-time event. Survey findings demonstrate that mentoring is practiced in a variety of ways across ANPs. For example, of the survey respondents who described the mentoring opportunities in their organizations:

- 62% reported that there were organized group discussions with other staff in the same area
- 46% reported the availability of Elders (as mentors)
- 46% reported that there were job shadowing opportunities
- 35% reported having access to staff in other organizations (as mentors)
- 32% reported having one-to-one matching of staff with more experienced workers
- 32% reported having access to job coaching
- 29% reported having regular mentor/mentee check-ins.

Moreover, informants noted that tailoring mentoring to match the learning style of individual staff reflects and respects the diverse learning styles and abilities of mentors and mentees in relation to mentoring, training and support. Examples of mentoring in ANPs that are tailored to the needs of the workers include: job shadowing for new employees, focusing mentoring on specific areas of skills development such as writing, and giving opportunities to younger staff to chair meetings or events.

In discussing the importance of tailoring mentoring to meet the needs of staff, respondents who were involved in mentoring staff in their organizations offered specific ideas, such as:

"I always ask: What do you need from me for your own learning?" (Key informant)

"I ask staff who come to me: Is this a complaint? Are you just wanting to vent? Or do you want some ideas about how to handle the situation?"(Key informant)

The role of mentoring in succession planning was noted by a number of respondents. Mentoring helps to teach employees about other roles in the organization and allows for career advancement where a co-worker is groomed to take over a more senior position. This may be combined with professional development training. Teaching all employees about the range of responsibilities within an organization can improve consistency of service to the community, no matter who is in the role. That is, mentoring co-workers about specific jobs in the organization creates a workplace where others can cover when one worker is off on vacation or on leave. Understanding other jobs in the organization helps to provide consistent and collaborative service to ANP program participants.

The value of formal mentoring versus informal mentoring

The majority of research respondents recognized that although mentoring takes place within their organizations, it is often on an informal basis rather than through a formal program. In keeping with this point, less than one third of survey respondents (29%) said that they had regular mentor/mentee check-ins, and similarly, less than one third of survey respondents (32%) reported having one-to-one matching with more experienced workers.

Respondents noted that "informal mentoring" often carried the risk of creating challenges, as mentoring can take time and resources away from already stretched finances. Furthermore, a consistent theme was that mentoring is strengthened by the existence of dedicated time and resources, including regularly scheduled meetings between the mentor and the mentee, an open-door environment that encourages regular, open communication within the organization, and time for job-shadowing.

Additionally, some Aboriginal non-profits have developed a deliberate strategy of providing mentoring opportunities for staff. In these situations, mentoring was a part of the leadership strategy of senior management. As well, in some organizations, written policy and procedural information are used to provide additional information and guidance/mentoring especially for newer employees.

> "Informal mentoring" often carries the risk of creating challenges in an organization: mentoring can take time and resources away from already stretched finances.

Otherwise, formal mentor programs tend to focus on mentoring youth and developing pathways to further education and careers as well as learning culture. Mentors for youth can include peer mentors as well as more senior staff in the workplace. Elders are valuable mentors for learning about roles and responsibilities and cultural protocols. Positive experiences and exposure to a variety of activities are some of the aspects of youth-focused mentoring programs. Work experience, job shadowing, and volunteering at community and cultural events are also important in youth mentor programming.

Mentoring can be peer-based

Interestingly, only eight percent of survey respondents indicated that they experienced mentorship through a secondment (leaving your own place of work to take on a temporary assignment elsewhere) to another agency (see examples below). Yet, another prominent theme emerging from the community sharing sessions and the key informant interviews was that mentoring between and amongst ANP agencies helps less developed agencies gain skills, new knowledge, and efficiencies from more mature agencies, and enhances collaboration amongst organizations serving Aboriginal communities. Staff-exchange opportunities, such as having staff from two similar organizations do a work exchange for a period of time, such as six months, is an example of peer-based mentoring. Examples of cross-agency mentorship that emerged during the key informant interviews included:

> Mentoring between ANPs helps less developed agencies gain skills and efficiencies from more mature organizations, and enhances collaboration amongst ANPs.

- One agency had plans to do a six-month exchange with the Government of Western Australia (GWA), involving social workers and/or supervisors. The exchange was designed to help the ANP agency to deepen its knowledge of a practice approach used by the agency and to enable the GWA to deepen its understanding of how the approach is applied within an Aboriginal setting.
- One program coordinator of a multi-service program described having more experienced coordinators spend time with less experienced agencies, or those experiencing difficulties, to mentor them to get the program properly set up. Program success overall was dependent on successful implementation at the community level so this approach benefited everyone.
- One person was seconded to work for the North American Indigenous Games. The agency manager supported the secondment, saying, "Go away and see what you can learn". The experience gained while working for the Indigenous Games was considered to be beneficial to the individual and to the agency that supported the leave of absence. Some the skills gained and brought back included budgeting, managing a large complement of staff and volunteers, learning

about protocols for high officials such as politicians and royalty, and how to insert Aboriginal cultural traditions into western protocol.

Mentoring has extreme value to the employee and organization

Finally, respondents shared their thoughts on the value of mentoring. The following research themes illustrate the range of benefits that can result from workplace mentoring. These findings are also seen to demonstrate the importance and depth of commitment towards mentoring in the workplace.

- Mentoring results in tangible knowledge, skills and confidence to carry out the work
- Mentoring helps employees to feel supported, valued, and nurtured, and improves their sense of belonging and feeling that they are being cared for
- Mentoring builds reciprocal relationships in the work place where responsibilities are shared; mentoring promotes equality amongst workers
- Mentoring contributes to a healthier and more respectful working environment
- Mentoring promotes employee retention
- Mentoring contributes to capacity building and succession planning
- Mentoring facilitates consistency of service when workers learn from each other about the different programs, which in turn benefits the client, their family and community
- Mentoring upholds cultural and traditional skills, knowledge, and practice. Connections are made and strengthened with Elders, family, and community.

Survey responses illustrate the ways that ANP employees believe mentoring benefits themselves and/or their organization. The following two tables present the survey results regarding the value of mentoring to individual employees, and to the ANP organization.

"What difference has workplace mentoring made to your organization?" (n=57)

Mentoring has…	Agree…
Contributed to a respectful work environment	70%
Fostered environment of continuous learning	61%
Contributed to improved succession planning	54%
Helped us to "paddle in the same direction"	54%
Strengthened cultural connections/practices	44%

"What difference has workplace mentoring made to you *personally*?" (n=57)

Mentoring has…	Agree…
Improved my professional knowledge/skills	82%
Improved sense of belonging to organization	74%
Improved my connection with other staff	68%
Contributed to my staying on as an employee	65%
Improved my connection to culture	46%
Improved my connection to Elders	40%
Improved knowledge/skills in other areas of life	39%
Improved relationships w/ family & community	35%
Helped to get a promotion/preferred position	28%

Research Findings - Professional Development

In this section we summarize the themes related to professional development emerging from the Sharing Circles, key informant interviews, and survey responses. Research findings show that professional development is valued and recognized as an essential mechanism for self-development and organizational capacity building. Interestingly, more survey respondents were satisfied with the professional development opportunities at their workplace compared to the workplace mentoring opportunities. That is, 64% of survey respondents were "absolutely satisfied" or "quite satisfied" with professional development opportunities, compared to only 49% of respondents being absolutely or quite satisfied with mentoring opportunities.

The following overall research themes emerged from the Sharing Circles, key informant interviews, and survey responses with regards to professional development:

- Importance of professional development days occurring regularly within the organization and involving all staff
- Professional development goes beyond training and is linked to staff-identified needs, goals, and staff evaluations
- Professional development can focus on personal development as well as job-related skill development
- Cultural experiences count as professional development

82% of surveyed ANP employees believed that professional development was essential or quite important in the workplace.

- The importance of professional development for boards of directors
- Professional development can be offered through on the job training, laddering, and work placements for youth
- The value of professional development includes enhancing staff motivation, self-confidence, well-being, capacity building, and community development
- Opportunities for professional development are linked to funding availability

Importance of professional development days occurring regularly within the organization and involving all staff

Several key informants emphasized the importance of their organization providing training on an agency-wide basis, that is, where all staff were included in regularly scheduled training or professional development sessions. In some Aboriginal non-profit agencies (e.g., in the housing, multi-service, and the children and family service sub-sectors), these sessions were offered annually, monthly, or quarterly, and at some agencies the sessions lasted for 3-5 days, with monthly sessions usually lasting one half-day to one day. Generally, the topics of the training sessions were determined by canvassing the staff and managers to identify priorities.

> "We have team-building days quarterly, which involve all staff. In the mornings, we always have some sort of training, and in the afternoons we have a fun, team-building activity, such as medicine horses, go-carting, or the spa. The team-building days are planned by teams of staff each year; each team is responsible for organizing one of the team days. Recently, all staff were involved in a training on conflict resolution." (Key informant)

"Our organization goes to great lengths to get everyone participating in certain professional development and training opportunities. That stuck with me, and showed me the importance of professional development." (Key informant).

Professional development goes beyond training and is linked to staff-identified need, goals, and staff evaluations

Job-related courses and workshop were the most frequently reported type of professional development opportunity. 86% of respondents checked off "Job-related courses/workshops" as a professional development opportunity that was available to them through their agency. As well, 80% of survey respondents reported they had attended conferences and 62% reported participating in job-related cultural training or events as professional development opportunities accessible through their organization.

At the same time, several respondents made the distinction between training and professional development. That is, training can be about a topic that may not have been self-selected by staff and may be organization-wide. By contrast, professional development was seen as being tailored to the individual.

Examples of diverse and highly personalized professional development activities that respondents had accessed included: courses on trapping, writing, job-related training, and courses designed to acquire specific credentials (e.g., financial, office management). Another theme related to this point was the need for flexibility.

> "You can get very policy-heavy about professional development. The positive aspect of our approach is that it's very flexible, in recognition that everyone has their own needs. The only concern, or possible downside, is in terms of ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunities – that is, that there's no favouritism. But I believe we've demonstrated a commitment to being fair and to being flexible." (Key informant)

Professional development can focus on personal development as well as job-related skill development

Respondents noted that in contrast with training, professional development may or may not be directly related to the individual's specific job or position. Many agencies, where funds permitted, supported training and education opportunities that promoted personal growth and development, such as language courses. Along these lines, 19% of survey respondents reported being able to access "non-job related courses/workshops".

"We've never denied a person a training request, but it has to be either related to the job or personal growth." (Sharing Circle participant)

Cultural experiences are professional development

Cultural experiences, such as attending cultural camps, or going berry picking as a staff activity, were considered to be an important component of professional development. One third of survey respondents reported being able to access "non-job related cultural training/events" as part of the professional development opportunities offered by their agency.

Cultural competency training was identified as a professional development activity of great interest to many research participants. Additionally, there was an interest amongst research participants in learning not only about their own culture and traditions but also those of their fellow workers, and of the traditional lands on which their agency was located.

The importance of professional development for boards of directors

Several respondents thought that not only should staff have access to and participate in professional development, but that these opportunities should be available to boards of directors and managers "to ensure competency". This theme emerged from both a few key informant interviews and at two of the Sharing Circles.

Professional development can be offered through on-the-job training, laddering, and work placements for youth

Another important theme regarding professional development was related to on-the-job training or "laddering", wherein a person is hired for an entry-level position and then with training and experience can progress to higher levels of responsibility. Several respondents to the survey gave examples of how this occurred in their agencies.
For example:

> "Started off and reception trained me into admin assistant position." (Survey respondent)

> "When I was first employed with this Society, the person that trained me was very thorough, and it was very easy to transition into my role. The patience from the Executive Director and the staff made it successful for me." (Survey respondent)

"We provide work placements for youth who have a hard time getting meaningful employment on their own." (Survey respondent)

Job shadowing along with close and frequent supervision, on-line training combined with strong supervision, staff meetings and practice-focused meetings, and practicum and intern placements were all identified as important ways in which staff received training in a supportive way that could lead to career progression.

Lastly, hiring staff in "underfill" positions was identified as an important aspect of professional development. Underfill positions occur when the candidate doesn't necessarily have the credentials or experience to do the job in the beginning but is interested, has the skills, and is committed to completing the necessary combination of on-the-job training and education to bring their knowledge, skills, and abilities up to the required level.

The value of professional development includes staff motivation, self-confidence and well-being, capacity building, and community development

Respondents spoke of the benefits of professional development at many levels, that is, for the employee, the organization, the individuals served by the organization, and for the community. Aboriginal non-profits' flexibility and willingness to listen to staff's interest in and requests for professional development paid dividends in terms of staff drive and confidence:

"I started at my current job two months ago. Within a few weeks, I got an e-mail from [the manager] about professional development, asking what I was interested in. I wanted more knowledge about my history and culture and about typing. I was really excited about that e-mail." (Sharing Circle participant)

"The Executive Director gives me confidence to further myself in the organization and to continually seek further education." (Survey respondent)

In addition, key informants identified the benefits of an inclusive, agency-wide training/professional development approach as:

- Contributing to team building, staff cohesion, and workplace relationships
- Building capacity and excellence: clients/service recipients need all staff to be well trained and to understand the work of the agency
- Contributing to community development as the skills and knowledge gained in the training sessions can trickle out into the community. An example provided by one key informant included a receptionist who, after agency-wide training on suicide prevention, learned some skills and was out in the community and able talk with family, friends, and neighbours about suicide prevention in a manner that was knowledgeable and health promoting
- Contributing to healing from effects of historical oppression and colonization: through inclusive training, staff gain confidence and see themselves as valued members of the agency and community.

Professional development for the whole agency helps to enhance staff morale and motivation.

Opportunities for professional development are linked to funding availability

As important as professional development budgets are, many respondents in this project acknowledged that professional development is often one of the first items to be cut when agencies are faced with financial pressures. Moreover, some respondents reported that their agencies had no formalized professional development program or plan. Further to this point, the overriding theme related to funding of professional development was that "there is never enough money for professional development". Respondents from some of the larger Aboriginal non-profits (e.g., in the housing, multi-service, and the children and family's service sub-sectors) identified that they had specific budgets for training and staff development, often a percentage of staff salaries (e.g., 3%) but that they often exceeded the annual budgeted amount and had to find money from elsewhere to cover the overruns. Included in these professional development budgets is an understanding that training and professional development often requires travel dollars.

Sharing professional development expertise and funding was suggested as one way to address the overriding shortage of money for training and professional development either through cross/inter-agency training or "by getting creative and finding alternative sources of funding".

Recommendations

Those who participated in the Sharing Circles commented on how exciting it was to hear each other's stories about mentoring and professional development. This enthusiasm, combined with the lack of published literature about mentoring and professional development, has contributed to the formulation of the following four overall recommendations and action steps.

Enhance awareness of mentoring and professional development wise practices

Summary

Documenting positive practices in mentoring and professional development and exchanging this knowledge across Aboriginal non-profits and non-Aboriginal organizations would serve to both recognize and celebrate organizations' good practices. Documentation and knowledge exchange regarding positive mentoring practices would also provide direction to Aboriginal non-profits that seek to further develop their mentoring and professional development activities.

Action Steps

1. We recommend that mentoring and professional development wise practices be documented and shared across all Aboriginal non-profit organizations.

2. To this end, we suggest that individual Aboriginal non-profit agencies regularly share and publish stories of their mentoring and professional development practices as part of agency newsletters and on their websites. Provincial Aboriginal non-profits, such as the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, could also play a coordinating role in ensuring that information regarding positive mentoring and professional development practices is shared widely across BC and beyond.

3. Also to this end, we recommend that this Strategy paper be published online and made widely available to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal non-profit organizations, so that all agencies can learn about and learn from the mentoring and professional development practices that exist.

Invest in conceptualizing what mentoring means and looks like on the ground

Summary

Through this project, we learned that mentoring goes beyond orientation to the job and that it can be ongoing. Aboriginal non-profits also emphasized that mentoring takes time and resources, so this needed to be planned for in agencies' budgeting process.

At the same time, we heard from Aboriginal non-profits that there are a variety of ways that mentoring can be understood and practiced. For example, 'formal' mentoring is deliberate, intentional, and structured, whereas 'informal mentoring' can be ongoing or not, and the structure is entirely up to the individuals involved.

There can also be different types of mentoring in the workplace, including cultural, personal, workplace, and mentoring associated with healing; indeed, mentoring in Aboriginal non-profit organizations can often overlap – or dovetail - with healing strategies. Staff exchanges between agencies, an additional type of mentoring, were identified as a way to mentor whole agencies, not just individual staff.

Action Steps

1. Invest resources in creating an Aboriginal (Non-Profit) Mentoring Framework based on traditional values, practice, and promising workplace practices. The Framework could be developed as a user-friendly tool/ handbook for individual ANPs and other community organizations – as well as government and the private sector – to use to initiate and frame discussions around existing approaches to mentoring as well as to 'map out' desired directions. (Sources of examples for such a framework are included in the literature review in the Appendix C and in the *Mentoring Toolkit Samples* in Appendix D)

2. Once developed, the Aboriginal Non-Profit Mentoring Framework and Handbook could be introduced to BC ANPs as part of the next phase of the Aboriginal Non-Profit Workforce and Human Resources Strategy, via a funded demonstration project, which would benefit from a full evaluation process to assess outcomes and lessons learned.

3. Moreover, all Aboriginal non-profit organizations, including staff and volunteers (managers, staff, board, youth, Elders) would benefit from dedicating time towards conceptualizing and articulating their organization's approach or framework related to mentoring and how it is practiced within the agency. An Aboriginal Mentoring Framework would be a useful tool for these discussions.

Strengthen organizations' mentoring activities and approaches

Summary

Through this project we learned that some staff of Aboriginal non-profits wanted organizations to both demonstrate heightened awareness of the importance of mentorship and to offer additional mentorship opportunities. Along these lines, one respondent stated:

> "[Mentoring] is a key benefit and should be advertised in job postings - the type of people who see this as a value when choosing to apply for a job are the type of people who are open to learning/growing through the position. These are the types of employees you want!" (Survey respondent)

Respondents also emphasized the importance of ANPs creating environments that are conducive to mentoring practices, and they identified a number of ways to support and strengthen mentoring, such as having Elder Advisory Councils, which can be seen as important for mentoring and guidance within an organization and doing "business" in a good way.

Action Steps

1. Aboriginal non-profits would benefit from creating environments that strengthen and are conducive to mentoring practices. Examples of ways to do this include: setting regular time aside for mentorship (i.e., mentor/mentee meetings); appointing (or self-selecting) mentors for new hires; ensuring an open-door policy/approach within the organization; ensuring agency budgets reflect the true costs of mentoring; having agency leaders and staff show appreciation of people's time, effort, and energy related to mentoring such as providing lunch, thank you cards, or tickets to an event; and host mentoring exchanges between organizations as a way to mentor whole agencies, not just individual staff.

2. Aboriginal non-profits would benefit from recognizing and accommodating different types of mentoring in the workplace (such as cultural, personal, workplace, and/or healing-related).

3. Aboriginal non-profit managers and executives would benefit from having their own mentors and, when possible, Elder advisors. Not only will this be beneficial to managers and to the organization, but it also signals to all staff that the organization is committed to mentoring and that the leaders are interested in ongoing learning, or "walking the talk".

4. Where feasible, Aboriginal non-profits could have an Elder Advisory Council that could play a role in mentoring. It is recognized that not all communities will have access to a sufficient number of Elders to support an Elder Advisory Council. To address this resource limitation, there may be other options such as the inclusion of natural leaders in the community to assist in supporting mentoring, or perhaps an Elders' program that continuously focuses on the wellness of Elders in the community and the participating Elders then give back by spending time on a council.

Strengthen Professional Development in Aboriginal Non-Profits

Summary

Through this project, we learned that staff and managers of BC Aboriginal non-profits value professional development and appreciate its many benefits. However, many Aboriginal non-profit agencies are challenged by budget realities that have limited their capacity to adequately fund professional development activities. Respondents expressed a need for additional funding for both mentoring and especially for professional development. Some research participants suggested that funding partnerships be explored between the ANP and corporate sectors.

Through this project we also learned that agency-wide training is characteristic of many Aboriginal organizations and reflects the traditional value of recognizing and supporting the development of individuals' inner gifts and abilities, regardless of their position within the organization.
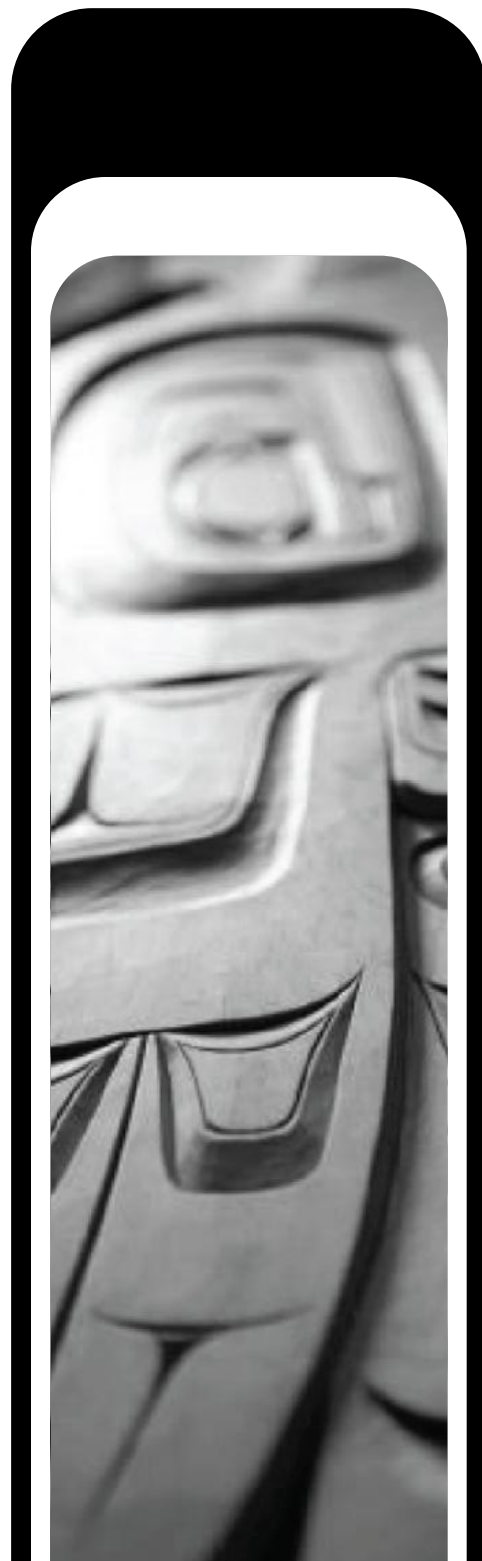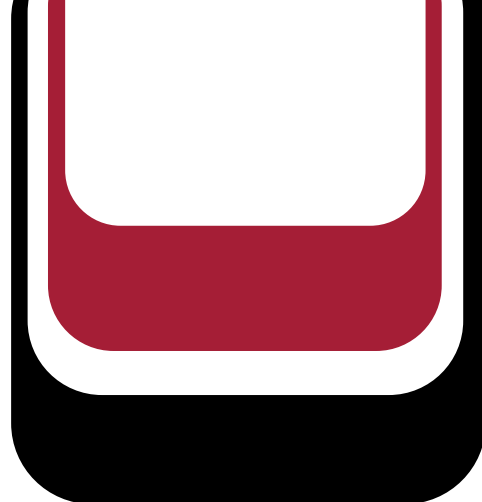
Action Steps

1. Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from supporting staff in overall skill development and professional development through agency-wide training opportunities. In addition, agency-wide professional development days with a cultural/traditional focus, such as wind drying salmon training, may be particularly important.

2. Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from seeking out and/or organizing additional opportunities for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal managers and staff, as well as for the board and volunteers, to learn about culture and language as part of professional development (and mentoring). The knowledge and skills of any individuals within organizations who may be cultural teachers could be utilized in planning and implementing this aspect of professional development and mentoring.

3. Aboriginal non-profit organizations would benefit from seeking out and/or organizing cultural sensitivity and cultural competency training for managers, and making these professional development activities mandatory.

4. Aboriginal non-profit organizations provide for, whenever possible, tuition reimbursement as part of their professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

The Aboriginal non-profit sector has a proud and lengthy history of providing a range of services that support First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal families and communities. The current study investigated the role of mentoring and professional development in strengthening the sector by seeking the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal employees, board members, youth, and community members such as Elders. The strong connection between mentoring and the cultural roots of Aboriginal communities was evident in survey responses, interviews, and discussions. Whether coastal, urban, or northern communities, traditional practices were common in mentoring activities in many Aboriginal non-profit organizations. However, few agencies had formal mentoring programs, although they frequently provided access to professional development activities.

At the same time, the findings from this project also demonstrated that there is a need for the BC Aboriginal non-profit sector to enhance organizations' awareness of the positive mentoring and professional development practices that exist. Formal mentoring programs can add focus and structure and can help build capacity within subsectors as well as across subsectors. They can also contribute to staff growth and development, and employee retention. The study showed that there is an appetite for increased and/or improved mentoring and professional development opportunities. Results from the study also suggest that agencies could benefit from clarification as to what is meant by mentoring and the development of specific programs and resources that could be easily and readily accessed by all agencies regardless of their size, budget, and geographic location.

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Appendix B – Glossary of Terms

Mentoring

A mentor is frequently described as a wise, experienced and faithful advisor to an aspiring professional.

> "[Mentoring is a process] to help and support people to manage their own learning in order to maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance, and become the person they want to be" (Parsloe, 1992, cited in Simkins et al., 2006, p. 323).

> "Mentoring is a development process, including elements of coaching, facilitating and counselling, aimed at sharing knowledge and encouraging individual development. It has a longer-term focus designed to foster personal growth and to help an individual place their creative, personal and professional development in a wider cultural, social and educational context (e.g. Why am I doing what I do? How do I perceive my identity? In what ways does this impact on my professional life and work? Where am I going? What determines my long-term goals?)" (Renshaw, 2008, p. 11).

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Professional Development

Professional development is a process to increase staff's capacity, skills, and knowledge through education, training, and on-the-job observation and practice. It applies to both personal and career advancement. Professional development can include a variety of approach, such as consultation, coaching, communities of practice, formal education and training, mentoring, reflective supervision, and technical assistance.

Wise practices

The term "wise practices" arose from a critique of the more mainstream notions of "best practices" which did not take into account local contexts and history. The concept of "best practices" assumes that the practices can be and should replicated anywhere and with fidelity, which "is not often achievable or desirable" (UNESCO, 2000). The term "wise practices", on the other hand, is commonly used in the context of Aboriginal policy and program development and, is "best being defined as locally-appropriate actions, tools, principles, or decisions that contribute significantly to the development of sustainable and equitable social conditions (Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010, p.19).

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Appendix C – Literature Review

Overview

This review of literature related to mentoring and professional development, as one mechanism for strengthening Aboriginal non-profit organizations, has endeavoured to utilize materials, resources, and studies that were grounded in an Aboriginal perspective and by Aboriginal authors. A case study of management in Aboriginal organizations in Canada (Chapman et al, 1991) confirmed that Aboriginal organizations that operated according to traditional Aboriginal values were managed differently than mainstream organizations. Of interest to the current review of mentoring and professional development is the emphasis in the literature on holistic employee development and Elder involvement. Employees were seen holistically, that is, as having a life beyond the organization, and cultural understanding and practice were as important as academic and professional qualifications. Similarly, Elders acted as guides, advisors, healers, and conveyors of values and customs. This is relevant because it speaks to the fact that mentoring and professional development approaches are not always generic; they may also need to reflect certain values. As it happens, much of what is written on both topics is not from an Aboriginal viewpoint thus it was difficult to find relevant literature.

For "mentoring", the literature search used the following key descriptive words: *Aboriginal/First Nations mentoring, mentoring in the workplace, Aboriginal mentoring and the workplace, Aboriginal mentoring programs, Aboriginal youth leadership, Aboriginal youth leadership programs.* In addition, to round out the literature, particularly where we perceived gaps to do with Aboriginal examples and experiences of mentoring and professional development approaches and strategies, we also included information from two key informant interviews that were conducted as "oral literature". Thus in some places we have enhanced the literature with specific examples from those interviews.

Much of what was found in the literature as it pertained to Aboriginal mentoring had to do with mentoring programs that was intended to help guide non-Aboriginal workplaces in becoming more inclusive and welcoming of Aboriginal employees. Not as much has been written by and about Aboriginal mentoring programs or approaches designed for Aboriginal-run organizations and workplaces. There may be a number of reasons for this, including that there are relatively few mentoring programs in existence that are designed specifically by and for Aboriginal organizations. As well, very few if any evaluations of existing Aboriginal mentoring programs have been undertaken, therefore there are few journal articles and reports from which to draw.

Introduction

The Aboriginal population in Canada is both growing and is relatively young: in the 2011 National Household survey, 18% of the Aboriginal population was age 15 - 24, as compared with 13% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2011). As well, the National Survey found that the Canadian Aboriginal population grew 20% between 2006 and 2011. According to the Canadian Council For Aboriginal Business, as of 2006 British Columbia has the second largest Aboriginal

population in Canada after Ontario, and has a median age of 28 (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business). According to the same study, the majority of Aboriginal people live in urban settings (60%). Labour characteristics of Aboriginal people living off-reserve indicate that unemployment is highest amongst 25-64 year olds and is higher in regions outside large metropolitan areas (BC Stats, nd). In other words, this is a growing and vital segment of Canadian society and represents a rich resource for employers in all sectors.

In terms of Aboriginal organizations working to serve (predominantly) Aboriginal people and communities in British Columbia, the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation's Guide to Aboriginal Organizations and Services lists 800 community-based services and organizations in 1,100 entries. Many of these services and organizations operate as non-profits and cover a wide range of fields including (Aboriginal Non-Profit Sector Report, 2011):

- Arts and Culture
- Business and Economic Development
- Urban Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies
- Communications and Media
- Education
- Employment, Job Search and Placement
- Aboriginal Community Careers Employment (ACCESS) Offices
- Family, Child and Youth Services
- Friendship Centres
- Mental and Physical Health Services
- Housing Services
- Language Revitalization
- Legal Services
- Native Court worker and Counseling Services
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Healing Services
- Non-Residential and Residential Women's Organizations
- Youth Organizations and Resources

Hence, the Aboriginal Non-Profit (ANP) sector represents a potentially significant source of employment for a demographically young and growing Aboriginal population. At the same time, the Aboriginal Non-Profit sector faces several challenges, identified as (BC Association of Friendship Centres, 2011):

- Low wages and poor or non-existent benefits
- Difficulty with recruitment, particularly in areas outside of the urban centres
- Challenges associated with worker retention due to heavy workloads, low wages, and inconsistent funding of programs

- Correspondingly high turnover of staff
- Limitations to developing Human Resources strategies as a result of uncertain and inconsistent funding
- Lack of operational funding, which constrains human resources and operational planning

Mentoring and professional development practices are seen as one way of addressing some of the above noted challenges within the overall non-profit sector and for capacity building. Indeed, in many industries and public service sectors, mentoring programs – along with professional development - function as important human resource tools in recruiting and retaining current and future Aboriginal employees (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007; Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006). Both serve important and complementary functions in employee development and employer human resources practices. Understanding, acknowledging, and recognizing the impact of history and issues for Aboriginal people are also important considerations in human resources practices, and inform mentoring and professional development activities. In the words of R. Rice (personal communication, November 13, 2012):

> If you can get employees to their first anniversary, they will likely stay for a longer period of time. There is a shared understanding of the Aboriginal context and the effects of the residential schools within their communities and within their families. In addition to this sense of belonging, which contributes to staff retention, is the sense that the work is meaningful, that it is making a difference for the community and the individuals with whom they are working.

Mentoring Overview

Generally speaking, the mentoring relationship can be described as a reciprocal, meaningful relationship formed between two people that is based on mutual trust and accountability and for the purpose of supporting successful knowledge, work, or skills transition (Cuerrier, 2004). A mentor is someone who has many roles: teacher, friend, advisor, supporter, and senior family member (e.g., uncle or auntie) within three different spheres: personal, academic, and workplace or career (Klinck et al. 2005).

From an Aboriginal perspective (i.e., as described by Aboriginal authors), the act and concept of mentoring has long been associated with developing shared societal values and has a long history as an informal and ongoing activity that is strongly rooted in teaching and learning from the whole community (Bisanz et al., 2003). Prior to contact, everyone in First Nations societies had a role in raising children and youth and shared a responsibility for their upbringing – including helping them acquire traditional knowledge and customs and achieve personal goals (Klinck et al, 2005). Consequently, mentoring evolves from community obligation and a holistic approach; young people are mentored in "unlocking their innate skills" and helped to gain knowledge of their roles and attributes by a mentor, who works from a position of respect, affinity, and knowledge of that young

person (Weinburger[1], 2006, p. 3). The mentoring relationship provides an opportunity for the mentor to share personal stories, life lessons, past experiences, and to pass along traditional cultural teachings (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007, p. 14). Mentoring thus helps young people to "know where they came from" by learning stories, talking with Elders, and attending cultural ceremonies (Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007, p. 15). From the perspective of Elders, the act of mentoring is both a way of giving back to the community and passing along important knowledge. In this sense the mentoring relationship is about providing support, teaching, guidance, and learning in the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual quadrants, and the mentor's role can be described as being akin to that of kinship. In Ojibwe culture, this type of guidance is known as *skaabewis* - a helper who helps to instill values and pride and achievement of personal goals (Adams, 2008).

For example, a Cherokee study on "being influenced", which is aligned with mentoring, describes the ways in which male study participants gained self-reliance – a valued marker of adulthood for Cherokees (Lowe, 2005). In Cherokee culture self-reliance means being responsible, disciplined, and confident. Being disciplined includes setting goals; being responsible includes caring for self (i.e. earning income); and being confident includes being proud of one's heritage and culture (Lowe, 2005, p. 40). The study participants identified influencers as grandparents, uncles, teachers, tribal leaders, and others not of Cherokee heritage. Similar to mentors, they supported, instructed, and sponsored individuals in ways that helped them to achieve self-reliance.

Mentoring in an Aboriginal context is often thought of as involving youth/young people in so far as it is concerned with the passing of important traditional and cultural knowledge to help the person achieve his/her role and potential within the community. It is reflective of a holistic approach wherein the aim is to balance mind, body, spirit and emotions, and where personal life and professional life are interconnected realities (Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006).

Mentoring definitions, key characteristics, and benefits

From an Aboriginal worldview, mentoring is a natural system of passing on knowledge of traditions, spirituality, and social responsibility (Weinburger, 2006).

> Mentoring was part of the natural systems found in communal life to awaken the sleeping gifts in our most precious resource – our children. Upon awakening, these gifts would be given to the community so that it would thrive and the children would once again remind us that they are the heartbeat in our lives (Weinburger, 2006, p. 3).

One definition of mentoring that reflects the focus on helping young people acquire the knowledge they need to transition towards adulthood states that: "mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee" (Weinburger, 2006, p. 11). Most often this type of mentoring (or influencing as it is called by Cherokees) takes

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[1] Dr. Weinburger is not Aboriginal. This material builds on a previously development mentoring guidebook and then adapted for Aboriginal communities in North America; Ya'TaUwhet (Anne Latimer), former Executive Director of the Association for Native American Children of Alcoholics, acted as a consultant for the project.

place in a variety of settings, for example, home and community such as in the workplace, at school, or through ceremonial events and involves passing on customary knowledge, experience, and good interpersonal skills (Lowe, 2005). Aboriginal youth attending a provincial gathering[2] for youth sponsored by the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (2013) were asked their thoughts about mentoring and professional development. Two youth offered the following analogy (M. Tyler, personal communication, March 26, 2013):

> With experience of mentorship in sports and cultural activities the youth understand the need for mentorship and professional development. An excellent example came from two Gitxsan youth who shared their experience dancing; they begin as youth (staff) who watch and learn from the main dancers (management and executives). Everyone stays in sync following the drummers (policy). Meanwhile the Elders (board and stakeholders) watch and provide guidance and support. For the youth an ideal job means the best-fit possible utilizing their various skill sets, the opportunity for growth and some control over it, and consideration of different barriers such as learning challenges. The youth want strong leadership at work as well as mentorship from outside their organization, just as an uncle would teach his nephew rather than his son.

From a non-Aboriginal perspective, mentoring is characterized by a set of principles or ingredients that typically include (Lord et al, 2008):

- Providing a sounding board and a critical friend
- A teaching-learning process that is centred on and driven by the learner
- Providing information and support rather than advice
- Posing challenges within a safe environment
- Problem solving
- Being reflective
- Creating a partnership wherein both the mentor and mentee are engaged and motivated

Typically, mentoring relationships fall into two types: formal and informal (McCluskey et al, 2004). Informal mentoring is a natural process in which both parties come together naturally and of their own accord.

Formal mentoring is carried out through a program and usually involves a specific purpose or set of objectives. It is often undertaken in the context of career or workplace, with the purpose of improving access, retaining employees, career transitions, succession management, employment maintenance, and supporting ongoing learning (Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006; Grace et al, 2011; Cuerrier, 2004). There are many terms associated with mentoring as it pertains to the workplace, including coaching, mutual learning, peer support, peer learning, co-mentoring, coach mentoring, discussion groups, and supervision (Lord et al, 2008, p. 10). Regardless of the terminology used, formation of a trusting relationship is a key element.

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[2] See page 9 for a summary of the number of workshop sessions and youth attending.

Since mentoring is central to Aboriginal family and social relationships and organizations, involving family members and/or community is seen as a natural model for engaging Aboriginal workers in both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal workplace settings (Aboriginal Construction Careers, nd):

> Family and relationship are central to social organization, and entire families may mentor one another's children. In the workplace, research has shown that engagement and retention of new employees are enhanced by effective mentoring practices. For First Nations, Métis and Inuit workers in particular, a mentor can provide important support for addressing the additional challenges of balancing their culture and traditions with the demands of a structured work environment and/or an urban living environment, often at a considerable distance from their home community.

In the context of the workplace and career support, mentoring is concerned with 'growing an individual' both professionally and personally. A mentor has a personal and broad commitment to the individual.

As it pertains to the workplace, mentoring has been described as having the following characteristics (Canadian Construction Association – Aboriginals in Construction, nd):

- Mentoring is an ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time.
- The relationship can be more informal; meetings can take place as and when the learner needs some advice, guidance or support.
- Is more long term; takes a broader view of the person.
- Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the learner. Often is a senior person in the organization who can pass on knowledge and experience and can open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities.
- The focus is on career <u>and</u> personal development.
- The learning agenda is set by the learner, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare the learner for future roles.
- Mentoring revolves more around developing the learner overall.

A review of the (non-Aboriginal) research evidence on workplace mentoring and coaching concluded that there are several models that encompass any combination of the following activities (Lord et al, 2008):

- One to one support
- Group support (typically participants from a similar field are supported by an external facilitator who has more experience and knowledge)
- Peer to peer support (i.e. co-learning)
- Expert to novice support (i.e. someone more experienced supporting someone less experienced)
- Same sector approaches

- Cross sector approaches (i.e. with the specific purpose of learning from another sector's experience and can be achieved within or across organizations)

Coaching is distinct from mentoring, and, in contrast to mentoring is generally thought of as developing a person's skills and knowledge so that his or her job performance improves and, ideally, leads to the achievement of organizational objectives (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009; International Institute of Coaching, nd). The Aboriginals in Construction Toolkit (Canadian Construction Association, nd) describes coaching as having the following characteristics:

- The focus is generally on development and/or issues at work
- The agenda focuses on achieving specific, immediate goals
- The coaching revolves around specific development areas or issues.
- The relationship has a set duration; typically relative short-term
- Generally more structured in nature with meetings scheduled on a regular basis
- The coach does not generally need to have direct experience of the client's formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused

The advantage of formal mentoring programs is that they can help build the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities. Some benefits found in the literature include (Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006; Lord et al, 2008; Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, 2010):

Benefits of being a Mentor	Benefits of being a Mentee	Benefits for the Program/Organization
Enhanced self-fulfillment; Increased job satisfaction and feeling of value; Increased learning, personal growth and leadership skills; Motivation for new ideas; Greater self-awareness of own practice; Potential for career advancement; Leadership development; Insight in times of uncertainty; Increased knowledge through sharing; Encouragement.	Encouragement and support; Expanded networks; Enhanced problem-solving skills; Guidance and support; Honesty; Candid information /advice; "Big picture" view; Honest appraisal of person's abilities; Assistance in making good choices; Idea stimulation.	Increased staff retention; Team building amongst peers; Succession planning; Creation of more positive learning environment; Recruitment tool; Strengthened community and family bonds; Creation of a culture of learning reflection and collaboration; In situations of cross-sector mentoring and group working approaches, cross fertilization of learning and wider impacts on relationships, and sharing of practice.

Characteristics of successful workplace mentoring programs

Mentoring frameworks create the opportunity for staff to identify key career or job goals, and to be matched with individuals who can help identify the opportunities for movement within an organization. Within an Aboriginal organization this could involve matching employees with Elders, community members, peers, supervisors, or staff from other organizations for mentorship (The Canadian Construction Association - First Nations in Construction, nd).

To further illustrate the above, following are some of the ways that multi-service Aboriginal agencies have found to support and enhance staff learning and retention (E. Coles, personal communication, December 3, 2012; R. Rice, personal communication, November 13, 2012):

Education and experience
If staff have the education but not the experience to move up or move around, then we will help them gain the experience. If employees don't have the education we will look for ways to support them in accessing and completing the education.

Volunteers and Volunteerism
Encouraging volunteerism amongst employees is another way to support mentoring or professional development. Staff are permitted to take time off for volunteer activities, e.g., longer lunches or leaving early to attend meetings. Everyone benefits because employees bring what they have learned in other non-profits back to our agency.

Youth internships
Youth can be involved through summer positions and term positions. In this way we provide opportunities for youth to gain valuable leadership and work experience. Summer programs are also a good way to engage youth – to start them off as soon as possible with experience working in Aboriginal non-profits.

Peer mentoring
Without funding we look for low-cost ways to provide professional development and mentoring. As an example, we have set up a system where the provincial association links up executive directors or managers, within the same region, with a more experienced executive director. They are encouraged to maintain regular contact, at least once every two weeks to talk about issues they may be facing in the day-to- day running of their agencies.

Exchange between organizations
An exchange with a government department in another country will be set up to provide for a 6 month exchange so that staff from both organizations can deepen their understanding and knowledge of the work they are both involved in.

Curriculum development

Being involved in curriculum development with the local college to contribute knowledge and information that will be useful for current and future staff.

There are a number of elements that contribute to the creation of a successful formal mentoring program. Literature on Aboriginal workplace mentoring programs suggests that some or all of the following need to be present (Science & Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006; Grace et al, 2011; Sinclair & Pooyak, 2007; Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, 2010):

- Planning
    - A well defined mission statement and established operating principles including a holistic approach, respect for culture, cultural differences, and cross-cultural relationships
    - Integration of mentoring into workplace planning and strategic development, for example with a clearly stated commitment within the agency or organization towards the mentoring practice and process
    - A proposal that outlines the operating principles of the program, the eligibility criteria for mentors and mentees, and the type of mentoring the program will offer
    - Financial plan and resources
    - Involvement of stakeholders (i.e., employees, Elders, community, family) in creation of the mentoring program

- Structure
    - Administrative and management strategies, policies, and procedures that address: voluntary participation; confidentiality; eligibility for the program; ongoing support, supervision and monitoring of mentoring relationships
    - Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
    - A degree of flexibility within the workplace that enables people to develop at their own pace and for trust to develop;

- Implementation
    - A program plan that has input from stakeholders
    - Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
    - Support and training for mentors
    - Conflict resolution process

- Evaluation
    - Evaluation and ongoing assessment of the mentoring program

Ensuring the right match between mentor and mentee is also important and should take into consideration the following (Science & Health Aboriginal Success Strategy, 2006; Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, 2010; Grace et al, 2011):

- cultural knowledge;
- personality and interests;
- relevant experience of the mentor in relation to the needs or goals of the mentee;
- preferences of the mentee, including age and gender issues and preferences;
- availability of the mentor in relation to the needs of the mentee;
- goals of the mentee;
- geographic location of participants; and
- access to necessary technology if an e-mentoring relationship is being considered

Support from agency leadership for the concept and implementation of a mentoring program, and a willingness or ability to commit resources, are also key factors.

Size of the agency may shape the overall approach to mentoring. Williams (2005) suggests that large non-profit agencies may be better able to offer a variety of approaches such as peer support groups, social events, conference calls, ongoing evaluation of the experience, cross-divisional mentoring, and cross-agency mentoring, whereas mid-size and small non-profit agencies may take a more straightforward approach based on one to one mentoring (Williams, 2005).

Finally, additional insights into the nuances and challenges for Aboriginal agencies providing mentoring and professional development opportunities was provided by one key information, along with some ideas for addressing them (R. Rice, personal communication, November 13, 2012):

> The organization has a mandate to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal Communities. Considerable time and resources are spent on training and professional development for employees who often leave the organization but the training nonetheless contributes to that capacity building. One way to address this turnover of trained staff is through:
>
> - flexibility in job placements,
> - offering opportunities for laddering into different positions, i.e., being trained on the job for a position that is beyond the current qualifications of the employee, for promotion,
> - offering a greater range of benefits e.g., cultural leave, gym memberships

Examples of mentoring programs

The literature, web based searches and interviews revealed several examples of programs that are intended to improve hiring and retention of Aboriginal employees in a variety of sectors, such as government services, health care, law, mining, and construction. In some sectors apprenticeship programs are part of the mentoring process. Many programs have been created jointly with Aboriginal leaders. Few if any have been evaluated for their effectiveness. Some examples of mentoring programs involving Aboriginal employees follow:

International (Australia): Grace et al (2011) provide case studies of several cross-cultural mentoring programs, all of which are designed to support and increase the number of Aboriginal

employees working in a variety of sectors. Grace and colleagues' literature review found that without a supportive organizational environment, mentoring relationships had difficulty taking hold and mentoring, as a two-way relationship in which non-Aboriginals learn from their Aboriginal counterparts, was also less likely. Further, the case studies highlighted the importance of creating an environment that is flexible and allows for, and encourages family support.

National (Canada): The First Nations National Building Officers Association is a professional organization that represents people in First Nations communities who have a range of technical responsibilities to do with all aspects of residential, commercial and institutional construction and renovations. The Association offers a mentorship program that is designed to help individuals develop and to provide support. The program's objectives are to (FNNBOA, nd):

- Promote the personal and professional well-being of the new apprentice building officer
- Develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by the apprentice building officer to be successful
- Provide an opportunity for analysis of their skills and knowledge through coaching from mentor building resource officers
- Improve the skill sets of both the mentee and the mentor

The Association mentoring guidebook lays out roles and responsibilities for mentors and mentees along with specific requirements, for example, that they will each commit to: one year of mentoring; at least one contact per month; meeting once a week for the first month; four on-site inspections or review inspection reports; and taking part in an evaluation of the program.

Provincial: Saskatchewan: The Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy - Steps to Success Mentorship Program Guide (2006) is the product of a provincial initiative to foster a representative workforce in Saskatchewan. A number of organizations signed a partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan government's Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs to work together with Aboriginal people to achieve this. As part of this overall initiative, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, developed the Science and Health Aboriginal Success Strategy. Designed to address recruitment and retention of Aboriginal employees in a range of health care services, the provincial strategy contains a number of components including a formal mentorship program.

Two levels of mentorship were created: student-to-student mentoring that pairs new students with students who have already demonstrated success in the same or a related program (i.e., are in the second or third year of their program or are recent graduates), and; student to Science/Health care worker that matches students who have completed at least one full year of their program with an experienced health care professional. The two levels reflect important transition points that student's experience. The Guide describes expectations for mentors and mentees. For example, mentors are expected to work with the mentee to identify specific goals and help the mentee work towards achieving those goals. In turn mentees are expected to be goal oriented and interested in learning from others (p. 11). The program is overseen and supported by an advisor.

The Mentorship Guide contains application forms, a sample mentorship contract, and feedback forms.

Provincial: British Columbia: The "Mentoring Our Rising Executives" program (nd), a six-month group-based mentoring initiative, was piloted in Victoria in 2012/2013. The program provided an opportunity for emerging leaders (i.e. protégés) from both the non-profit and government sectors to be mentored by experienced leaders from these sectors. The protégés job-shadowed at each other's workplace so that they could develop a better and more profound understanding of their respective leadership challenges. An important feature of the program was its focus on creating a deeper understanding of culture as a fundamental dimension of leadership. Learning was facilitated through the use of storytelling and other traditional cultural practices. The guiding metaphor for the program was the Story of Jumping Mouse (First People – The Legends, nd), which was used to introduce the concept of mentorship. The idea behind this metaphor is to look for where are the teachers are – to go beyond the comfort zone with mentors to recognize that there are others (who may cause some discomfort or challenge thinking) who might be mentors. The story became the template for the program. The shared experiences reportedly led to strong connections between protégés (W. Speck, personal communication, May 21, 2013). This program was unique in its integration of culture and the use of a group-based format (a summary review of the program along with recommendations for further development is forthcoming).

The "Aboriginal Youth Internship Program"(nd) was created by the BC Public Service Agency in partnership with the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. The program is 12 months long, starting annually in September; up to 40 interns annually 9 months placed in a government ministry and 3 months placed in an Aboriginal organization. The program provides professional experience, leadership development, cultural support and a professional, cultural, and social network through the intern cohort. Mentoring is a component of the program; interns are "mentored through the year and have opportunities to attend workshops and conferences, take courses, and receive career coaching". When Aboriginal agencies apply to be part of the program and to receive an intern, they must identify both a supervisor AND a mentor. In other words, interns must have one of each and they cannot be the same person.

Professional Development

As stated at the outset, an attempt was made to include Aboriginal perspectives and experiences, which was more readily achieved when it came to mentoring. With respect to professional development, however, it was difficult to find literature that spoke to Aboriginal experiences or a conceptualization of professional development as it is practised within Aboriginal organizations. On the other hand, there is a considerable amount of material on the subject that is not culturally specific. However, given the intent of this brief literature review is to focus as much as possible on what professional development means from an Aboriginal point of view and how it is practiced in Aboriginal organizations, this section is considerably briefer than the discussion on mentoring.

"Professional development" (Business Dictionary.com http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/professional-development.html . nd) can be described as a process of improving and increasing staff capabilities through access to education and training opportunities. These can occur in the workplace, through outside organizations, (i.e., attending workshops and conferences) or through watching others perform the job. Ideally professional development isn't a one-time kind of activity but rather a continuous part of career development.

Traditionally, professional development training was often generic and not tailored to individual needs. However, a more dynamic view of professional development is that it is a lifelong undertaking that requires a flexible approach to learning in order to acquire the skills needed these days - i.e., communication, leadership, and networking. These are skills that are difficult to teach or acquire through standard professional development training approaches, as is cultural knowledge. Hence, mentoring can be considered an aspect of professional development in as much as it is about learning, personal and professional development, and skill acquisition (Cuerrier, 2004).

R. Rice (personal communication, November 2013), describes the nuances and challenges for Aboriginal agencies providing mentoring and professional development opportunities as well as some ways to address them as follows:

> The organization has a mandate to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal Communities. Considerable time and resources are spent on training and professional development for employees who often leave the organization but the training nonetheless contributes to that capacity building. We have to build turnover and a training budget into our process so that we acknowledge that people get trained and gain experience and move on to other jobs in the community. One way to address this turnover of trained staff is through:
>
> o flexibility in job placements,
> o offering opportunities for laddering into different positions, i.e., being trained on the job for a position that is beyond the current qualifications of the employee, for promotion,
> o offering a greater range of benefits e.g., cultural leave, gym memberships

Best practices put forward in a report on Aboriginal employment in British Columbia (Imagination Fx & Oars Training Inc, 2009) suggest that (p. 5):

- All learning and training should be documented, recognized by other workplaces or educational institutions, and certifiable
- Individual personal supports are required on the job

Finally, according to Caverley (nd), the following were considered "effective Aboriginal specific" professional development strategies (p. xiv):

- Role models for Aboriginal job seekers - This involves the publication of articles on various Aboriginal association websites, job sites, and newsletters as well as speakers at job fairs.
- Work experience programs
- Management development through employment programs which often involve partnerships between government and the private sectors
- Career development resources such as the Aboriginal Human Resource Council's *Guiding Circles* program
- Aboriginal Economic Development programs which promote entrepreneurial skill development
- Recognition of Aboriginal educational achievement – providing tuition subsidies and reimbursement
- Aboriginal Employee networks that - (a) identify employment opportunities for Aboriginal job seekers within a particular jurisdiction, (b) develop support systems for Aboriginal employees to meet and share experiences, and/or (c) connect Aboriginal employees and non-Aboriginal employers in order to discuss methods and strategies for improving recruitment, training, development and promotion/ advancement opportunities.

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Appendix D – Mentoring Toolkit Samples

Aboriginal Construction Careers

This link is provided because it offers a toolkit that is geared towards Aboriginal workers in the construction industry. The resource contains tools for coaching and mentoring (Section 6 – <u>Succeeding with Hiring and Retention</u> – and under the tab, <u>Long-Term Success – Some Special Considerations and Case Studies</u>). For example, the resource provides a list of questions that are seen as helpful when contemplating a mentoring program:

1. How will the mentoring program contribute to the increase of Aboriginal participation in the organization or the construction industry?
2. How will the mentors benefit?
3. How will the learners benefit?
4. What support is needed for the program?
5. Who can best sponsor the program?
6. Who will provide ongoing support to both mentors and learners?
7. How will mentors be selected?
8. Who will pair mentors with learners?
9. What criteria should be considered for matching mentors with learners?
10. How would the program be rolled out?
11. How would the requirements of the program be communicated to potential mentors?
12. How would the program be communicated to the organization?
13. What are some of the resources needed for rolling out this program? (e.g. money, people, time)
14. What would be the measure of success for the mentoring relationship?
15. What would be the measure of success for this program?
16. What type of ongoing support should be provided for mentors and learners?
17. What type of reporting structure, if any, is needed?

From: http://www.aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca/toolkit/step-5-coaching-and-mentoring-long-term-success

The First Nations National Building Officers Association

This link is provided because it has a section on their mentorship program – under <u>Education</u> tab. Included are mentoring policies and their applications manual, which contains forms including and an evaluation of the mentoring experience. Following is an example of their Mentorship Agreement: (http://www.fnnboa.ca/documents/mentorship/FNNBOA-Mentorship-Program.pdf)

Tool: Mentorship Agreement

This mentorship agreement is between _____ (the mentee) and _____ (the mentor).

As mentor, I think the most important parts of our agreement are:
  1._____
  2._____
  3._____

As mentee I think the most important parts of our agreement are:
  1. _____
  2. _____
  3. _____

Conditions of Agreement

The goals we agree to are:
We agree that at times we will be sharing confidential and personal information. We will honour and respect each other's privacy by not repeating this information outside the confines of the mentorship pairing without prior approval of one another.

If we find that things do not seem to be working out we will do the following:
- express our concern with each other
- agree to make an appointment/contact the Mentorship Consultant
- agree to remain respectful of each other

Length of agreement/date of review:

This agreement will remain in effect from _____to _____.

We will meet to review the conditions and goals to see if would like to make changes on _____. If there are changes to be made we will make the changes to the agreement at that time. If there are no changes to be made, the agreement will remain as is. In addition, we will set the next date to review the agreement.

Signed and agreed to on _____ (date) by:

_____   _____
Mentor   Mentee

Government of Alberta: *Handbook for Aboriginal Mentoring* (2007, pp. 14–15).
This link is included because it is less of a toolkit and more of a guide for agencies, schools, or others wanting to develop a mentoring program for Aboriginal youth. It includes a checklist for developing an Aboriginal mentoring program (see below). While the handbook is directed towards educators or those working with youth and young people, the material could be helpful for Aboriginal agencies or networks contemplating setting up their own mentoring program.

Tool 7: Checklist for Developing an Aboriginal Mentoring Program

1. Do the goals and objectives for your program include:
   - An assessment of your community's needs for a mentoring program?
   - The what, why, how and who of your mentoring program?
   - Input from Elders, community members and potential volunteers?
   - A realistic, attainable and easy-to-understand plan for mentoring?
   - Goals, objectives and timelines for all aspects of mentoring?
   - A plan for fundraising and developing resources?
   - A focus for mentors and youth?

2. Does your recruitment plan for mentors and youth include:
   - Strategies to identify potential mentors in your community?
   - Ways to involve Elders and community members in securing volunteers?
   - Asking parents, schools and social service agencies to refer youth?
   - A description of eligibility, screening process and suitability requirements?
   - Involving families and community members in the program?
   - Expected time commitment from volunteers and youth?
   - Benefits and rewards they can expect from mentoring?

3. Does your screening procedure for mentors include:
   - An application process and review?
   - Criminal records check from the local RCMP or police detachment?
   - A face-to-face interview and home visit, if youth will be in the home?
   - A character reference check?
   - A driving record check, if the mentor will be transporting youth?
   - A discussion about the motivation for volunteering to mentor?
   - Successful completion of training and orientation?

4. Have you planned an orientation for mentors and youth that includes:
   - An overview of your mentoring program?
   - Orientation of the program?
   - Expectations and restrictions?
   - How to get the most out of the mentoring relationship?
   - Mentor's role and role descriptions?
   - Program policies regarding contact with youth and families?
   - Cultural sensitivity and appreciation training?

○ Do's and don'ts of relationship management?
○ Confidentiality and liability information?
○ Crisis management/problem-solving resources?
○ Communications skills development?
○ Ongoing training?

5. Have you developed a strategy for matching volunteers and youth that:
○ Links with the program's statement of purpose?
○ Encourages a commitment?
○ Considers gender, age, availability, life experience and temperament?
○ Includes signed agreement by mentor and youth to the mentoring?
○ Obtains agreement of youth's parent or guardian to the match?

6. How will you monitor your program to ensure:
○ Consistent, regularly scheduled meetings with staff, mentors and youth?
○ The program has ongoing assessment in place?
○ Written records are maintained? (including appropriate insurance)
○ Regular input from Elders, family and significant others?
○ Procedures are in place to manage grievances, praise and problems?

7. Have you developed plans for support, recognition and retention that include:
○ A formal kick-off event?
○ Ongoing support for volunteer mentors, participants and others, and ways to disseminate information?
○ Regular communication with mentors, supporters and funders?
○ Ongoing training and development for mentors including opportunities to discuss relevant issues and networking and social gatherings with different groups or organizations, as needed?
○ Annual recognition and appreciation events?

8. Have you thought about how to handle mentoring relationships that end including confidential exit interviews to debrief:
○ Youth, mentors and staff?
○ About policies for any future contact between the mentor and youth?

9. How will you:
○ Analyze your program and relationships?
○ Evaluate program criteria and purpose?
○ Assess the needs of Elders, mentors, youth, community partners and program supporters?

http://www.fcssaa.org/sites/default/files/documents/Handbook%20for%20Aboriginal%20Mentoring,%202007.pdf

The BC Aboriginal Youth Internship Program

This link is included because it offers an example of the types of information, criteria, and activities associated with a centrally administered internship/mentoring program that may be useful if establishment of an equivalent program is contemplated for the Aboriginal non-profit sector.

The program provides:

- **Recruitment, selection, and placement** of qualified Aboriginal Youth Interns in ministries and Aboriginal organizations.
- **Central coordination** of the program through program staff (Program Lead, Program Coordinator, Program Administrator) ensuring program quality and consistency across government and Aboriginal organizations.
- **Direct support** to Interns, supervisors, and mentors regarding placement.
- **In-person site visits** to all government and Aboriginal organization placements.
- Building of strong **peer support network** with Aboriginal Youth Cohort.
- **Relocation costs** if the intern must move to take Ministry or Aboriginal organization placement.
- **Program resources** (Quarterly intern newsletter, mentorship guidelines, handbooks, etc.)
- On-going **professional skill development, overall mentorship**.
- Assistance with access to **Learning Services** consultants and courses.
- On-going **program support**, structure, and development.

To maximize the success of the Internship, Organizations need to provide the following support structure for the Aboriginal Youth Intern:

- Designated Supervisor, **Mentor**, and Administrative support.
- An office, cubicle, or workspace.
- Desktop or laptop computer.
- Phone line, cell phone, or blackberry.

http://www2.gov.bc.ca/myhr/article.page?ContentID=da597988-e529-b2e7-7289-498126786486&PageNumber=2.

The Ontario Nurses Association

The Ontario Nurses Association (ONA) is the union that represents Ontario nurses and health professionals, and students. Consequently the toolkit examples have a union focus. This link is included because it offers a comprehensive mentoring toolkit/guide. The toolkit is generic and does not include an Aboriginal worldview or approach.

https://www.ona.org/documents/File/education/ONA_MentorToolKit_201303.pdf

National Mentoring Partnership

This US based organization offers a step by step tool kit for establishing a mentoring program. The toolkit is generic and does not include an Aboriginal worldview or approach. The toolkit offers downloadable tools for a step by step guide to a mentoring program, for program managers:

- Tools for Designing and Planning
- Tools to Manage a Program for Success
- Tools to Structure Effective Program Operations
- Tools to Establish Evaluation Criteria and Methods

The tool kit can be found at: http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_413.pdf

Appendix E – Key Informant Questions

1. Can you share a story about how mentoring or professional development has helped you (or someone in your workplace)?
2. Tell us about the most successful mentoring or professional development program (s) for Aboriginal employees or job seekers you are aware of. What is it about those programs that make them successful?
3. What does your agency currently have in place re: Mentoring?
4. What about Professional Development?
5. What difference have mentoring or professional development opportunities made to your agency/to the people who work there?
6. What about the community you serve? How do they benefit?
7. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in terms of workplace mentoring or professional development in your agency or in other Aboriginal non-profit organizations?
8. If you had three wishes for the future of Aboriginal mentoring/professional development programs, what would you wish for and why?
9. Would you be interested in talking with any of the other teams about your experiences with Workplace Wellness and Connections with Cultural in HR Practice, Pensions and Benefits? If so, we will pass along your name and contact information.
10. Lastly, are there other Aboriginal non-profit organizations that you think would be interested in being contacted for an interview?
11. Please add any other thoughts, comments, or recommendations that will help guide development of future Aboriginal mentoring and professional development programs.