

# Promoting Indigenous Youth **Recruitment and Retention** in Aboriginal Non-Profit Organizations

## A HANDBOOK



**anpBC**

Nurturing a healthy Aboriginal non-profit sector  
*is* nurturing healthy communities—we are one.

share  
learn  
unite  
grow

Canada



*Funding provided through the Canada-British Columbia  
Labour Market Development Agreement.*

APRIL 2017

### **About the anpBC Strategy**

The Aboriginal Non-profit Workforce and HR Strategy is an effort to strengthen the aboriginal non-profit sector by developing human resources and workforce strategies. The sector includes agencies and organizations that deliver services in the areas of health, employment, child and family services, treatment, and housing.

### **About the Logo**

"This print represents the perseverance and sustenance involved when we work for our communities. The salmon represents perseverance and is about respect for tradition, intuition, inner voice, determination, and the ability to follow your vision. The hummingbird represents sustenance and is the great nectar of Life, giver of beauty, love and harmony, the tireless song of joy."

Artist: Jaminn Zuroski, Namgis First Nation

# Contents

## Preface

<b>1. Introduction to this Handbook</b>	1
<b>2. Walking the walk: Indigenous youth recruitment</b>	2
2.1 Pillars of Indigenous youth recruitment and retention	2
2.2 Relationship building and developing youths' capacities and skills	4
2.3 Developing a Job Notice that attracts Indigenous youth	6
2.4 Getting the word out – Circulating the Job Notice	7
2.5 Providing guidance during application processes and/or job interviews	9
2.6 Conducting interviews in a culturally safe way	10
<b>3. Walking the walk: Indigenous youth retention</b>	11
3.1 Having an Indigenous Youth Retention Strategy	11
3.2 Cultural safety, addressing and preventing lateral violence	12
3.3 Elder guidance	13
3.4 Mentorship opportunities	15
3.5 Wellness policies and practices	16
3.6 Cultural ceremony, employee recognition and celebrations	17
3.7 Evaluating our strategies	18
<b>4. References and resources</b>	19

# Preface and Acknowledgements

**The Aboriginal Nonprofit (ANP) BC Strategy aims to build and support a strong ANP workforce so that organizations can continue to assist, heal, and strengthen Aboriginal communities now and into the future.**

This handbook is part of a larger strategy to support the workforce of Aboriginal non-profit organizations (ANPs) in British Columbia. Hundreds of ANPs across British Columbia offer services in the areas of health, employment, drug and alcohol treatment, child and family services, and housing in a wide range of locations – rural, urban, on-reserve, and off-reserve.

Between 2012 and 2014, work was undertaken to help create a strategy to strengthen the ANP sector so that it in turn can continue to do the work of strengthening Aboriginal communities. The results of this work can be found at: <http://anpbc.com/anpbc-strategy/>.

In 2016, the focus shifted from finding out what the ANP sectors need to developing resources for their use. The five areas of the ANP initiative are:

- 1. Mentorship / Elder guidance and recruitment and retention of Indigenous youth**
- 2. Culture and wellness plans**
- 3. Pension planning**
- 4. Holistic approach to retirement planning**
- 5. Promoting the ANP sector to Indigenous youth.**

This handbook was created as part of the project on Mentorship/Elder guidance and recruitment and retention of Indigenous youth.

The information for this Handbook was gathered from communities across BC. We are most appreciative of the thoughts, time and wisdom shared with us by Elders, youth, staff of Aboriginal non-profits and community members.

# 1. Introduction to this Handbook

## Purpose of this Handbook

This Handbook was created as a resource for Aboriginal non-profit organizations wishing to explore ideas and opportunities to strengthen their recruitment and retention of Indigenous youth as employees in their workplace.

### **This Handbook is a resource for:**

- **ANP managers & staff**
- **ANP Board members**
- **Indigenous youth**
- **Community members**
- **Trainers and educators**

## Overview

The Handbook is intended for people working in ANPs and those in Indigenous communities who work with and/or support ANPs. It can be used as a stand-alone guide or with other resources geared to engaging Indigenous youth and promoting their long term careers within ANPs.

To create this Handbook, we held gatherings across BC and received input and feedback from Indigenous youth, Elders, individuals and organizations; we also gathered Aboriginal employee recruitment and retention resources from across Canada and internationally.

This Handbook is divided into two sections:

### **Indigenous Youth Recruitment**

### **Indigenous Youth Retention**

Central to the Handbook are a set of “self-reflection” questions for you and your organization to consider and potentially discuss as a group.

## 2. Walking the walk: Indigenous youth recruitment

### 2.1 Pillars of Indigenous youth recruitment and retention

As a first step in thinking about attracting Indigenous youth to become involved with and work at your organization, here are two questions to consider:

**Do we have an Indigenous Youth Recruitment Strategy?**

**Have we identified values to guide our strategy?**



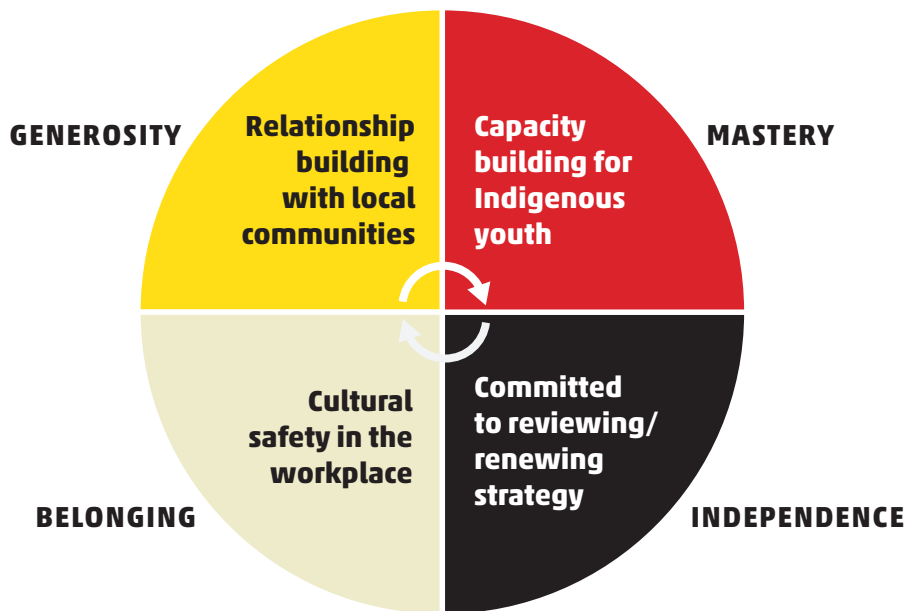
Charlie, Ojibway  
Mohawk & West  
Indian

#### WHERE ARE WE ON THE **SELF-REFLECTION** PATH?



Through this project, we've learned that it's very important to have a set of pillars or principles that provides a foundation for an Indigenous recruitment and retention strategy. While no single set of principles will be relevant to all Aboriginal non-profits, the image that follows provides examples of pillars that reflect Indigenous values to guide a strategy for engaging and retaining Indigenous youth (Island Health, 2015).

This image also highlights four pillars: generosity, mastery, independence and belonging. These pillars originate from Dr. Martin Brokenleg's **Circle of Courage** model for positive youth development (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002). The model is based on several theories as well as traditional Indigenous methods of child rearing, and suggests that it is crucial that children and youth are provided with opportunities to develop their capacities in these four areas.



Ensuring that there is **commitment to reviewing the strategy regularly** is essential.



## 2.2 Relationship building and developing youths' capacities and skills

Another recruitment-related question is:

**How are we making connections with Indigenous youth?**



**Samantha,  
Snuneymuxw  
First Nation**

A similar question may be: "How are we building connections with Indigenous youth to promote our agency – i.e., to get ourselves known to youth and to provide opportunities for them to develop skills, capacities, and possibly mentorship relationships?"

### WHERE ARE WE ON THE **SELF-REFLECTION** PATH?





An important recruitment practice relates to relationship-building, outreach and capacity development with Indigenous youth.



Examples of ways that organizations have engaged in relationship-building and skill/capacity development include:

- Participation in careers fairs
- Hosting an agency tour so that Indigenous youth can observe what goes on
- Partnerships with schools and post-secondary institutions
- Mentorship program and opportunities that link youth with employees
- Having volunteer and internship opportunities within the organization

As noted in the literature: *Recruitment through participating in career fairs can be a successful means of attracting potential applicants. Providing information on the career areas within the school division and qualification requirements can draw Aboriginal youth to consider these career areas* (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, no date, p. 22).



## 2.3 Developing a Job Notice that attracts Indigenous youth

Two other questions to reflect upon are:

**Do our job postings encourage youth to apply?**

**Are the postings youth friendly?**

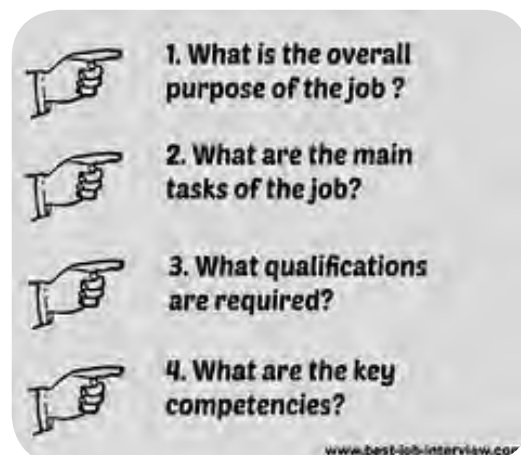
### WHERE ARE WE ON THE **SELF-REFLECTION** PATH?

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

Ways to encourage Indigenous youth to apply and to reduce barriers include:

- Having a message within the posting that welcomes Indigenous youth candidates
- Listing only the education and experience that are needed for job success
- Focusing on what needs to be achieved (and not how it will be achieved)
- Asking for life skills so that candidates with transferable skills can apply
- Emphasizing what youth bring to the organization – e.g., media savvy-ness
- Emphasizing when the job provides benefits and opportunities for advancement
- Emphasizing that ANPs are a place where youth can be themselves (e.g., in terms of personality and self-expression).

Also, pay attention to ensure that the job notices are written clearly and simply, with avoidance of jargon, technical and legal language, and acronyms.



## 2.4 Getting the word out – Circulating the Job Notice

Next, we come to self-reflection questions about how we get the word out about postings:

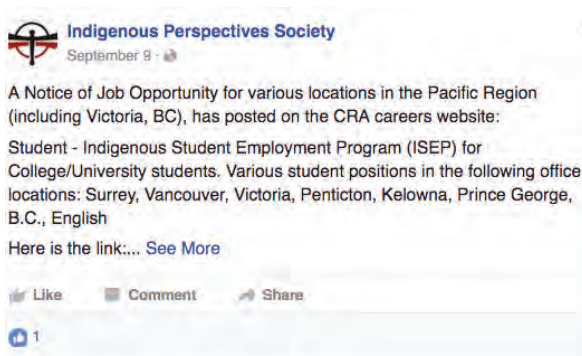
**How are we getting the word out about our job postings, e.g. are we using social media as best as we could?**

### WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

When advertising the position, always advertise the posting in places/ media that Indigenous youth are likely to see and use.

Social media and word of mouth can be very helpful for getting the word out and to support the recruitment process.



We also heard from Aboriginal youth that posting notices in newspapers and Band newsletters, sending notices out to schools and post-secondary institutions, and making face-to-face connections were good ways of getting word out.

Additional ways to spread the word about a posting include (Step Up BC, n.d.):

- A listing of Aboriginal media, such as BC's Raven's Eye or Ontario Birchbark, can be found at [AMMSA.ca](http://AMMSA.ca).
- First Nations in British Columbia host a job board ([fnbc.info/jobs](http://fnbc.info/jobs)) where employers can post job vacancies geared toward Aboriginal job seekers.
- Friendship Centre Bulletin Boards and Aboriginal employment officers at local Friendship Centres are among the first to receive new job postings and can help to locate candidates.
- Nation Talk is a nationally focused online hub for current Aboriginal news.
- The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) website hosts an online job board (<http://bit.ly/1cbd7Wx>) where employers can post job vacancies.
- First Nations Online (<http://bit.ly/1hs1v1l>) is an online portal that targets Aboriginal job seekers across Canada.
- The LYNX Aboriginal Student Career and Employment Program (<http://aboriginallynx.ca>) connects post-secondary students and recent graduates to potential employers seeking educated Indigenous employees. The site works with a number of post-secondary institutions in BC and Alberta.
- The Inclusion Network ([inclusionnetwork.ca](http://inclusionnetwork.ca)) is a national job site aiming to attract Indigenous job-seekers.
- The Turtle Island Native Network is a resource that provides a listing of Aboriginal groups and organizations by province.
- Métis Employment Services offers employers opportunities to post job openings on the MES job board and to circulate postings.
- College and University Resource Rooms.

## 2.5 Providing guidance during application processes and/or job interviews

Our next self-reflection question has to do with the job interview process itself:

**Do we provide guidance during the application process?**

**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

Providing guidance or coaching to Indigenous job applicants is important. Some ways to provide that guidance include (Island Health, 2015):

- Creating an Indigenous Job Seekers Handbook.
- Offering workshops on Résumé Writing or Interviewing.
- Providing Indigenous youth applicants with support in preparing their application or offering interview advice.
- Offering feedback on the interview process, regardless if the applicant was the successful candidate or not.



## 2.6 Conducting interviews in a culturally safe way

Our final question about hiring is:

**Are we conducting interviews in a culturally safe way?**

**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

As noted in StepUp BC (no date), here are some pointers that you may want to consider:

- Interviewers should be aware that applicants may have different ways of communicating and expressing themselves. Some may be hesitant to highlight their successes, as it is customary to practice humility.
- Don't view silence as a sign of disrespect or lack of knowledge. Silence may indicate a need for time to process the question and think through an answer.
- Minimal eye contact does not mean a lack of confidence when responding to interview questions. Some candidates may avoid eye contact with figures of authority as it is considered disrespectful in their culture.

Also, remember that cultural safety involves other things, including how the room is set up, acknowledging territory, asking candidates where they are from, and so forth.

In sum, it's important that recruitment and hiring practices align with Indigenous values.





## 3. Walking the walk: Indigenous youth retention

### 3.1 Having an Indigenous Youth Retention Strategy

Just as it's important for Aboriginal non-profits to have an Indigenous youth recruitment strategy, it's important to have a youth retention strategy. So, as a starting point:

**Do we have an Indigenous Youth Retention Strategy?**



**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**



In this section of the Handbook, we focus on what helps to retain Indigenous youth as employees of Aboriginal non-profits, based on the community-based input we received from youth, Elders and agency staff and our review of the literature.

As in Section 2, we invite you to think about and discuss how your agency is working so that Indigenous youth, once engaged, will stay and grow as part of the ANP sector.

### 3.2 Cultural safety, addressing and preventing lateral violence

Time and again, we heard about the importance of cultural safety in the workplace as a key component of Aboriginal employee retention. Clearly, there are a variety of ways to work toward cultural safety; some strategies identified through this project include having a welcoming committee for new employees, engaging in cultural activities, and requiring all staff of the organization to take cultural safety training.



Three questions to reflect upon as an Aboriginal non-profit organization are:

**How do we create safety?**

**Do we have an open-door approach?**

**How do we address lateral violence?**

#### WHERE ARE WE ON THE **SELF-REFLECTION** PATH?

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

The importance of good communication and an open door policy between employees and their supervisors cannot be understated. Things related to communication and safety that have been found to make a difference to Indigenous staffs' retention include:

- supervisors' approachability;
- managers taking time to connect; and
- supervisors asking staff's opinion.

In addition, issues associated with lateral violence can have a huge impact in terms of recruiting and retaining Indigenous youth. The following resources offer an excellent description of lateral violence-related behaviours, costs, and what to do in the event that lateral violence occurs in your life or workplace:

**“Aboriginal Bullying”** presentation by Simon Brascoupé, Acting CEO National Aboriginal Health Organization: [www.slideshare.net/NAHONews/aboriginal-bullying](http://www.slideshare.net/NAHONews/aboriginal-bullying)

**“Aboriginal Lateral Violence in the Workplace”** from Bob Joseph’s ‘Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples’ website:

[www.ictinc.ca/blog/aboriginal-lateral-violence-in-the-workplace](http://www.ictinc.ca/blog/aboriginal-lateral-violence-in-the-workplace)

**“Lateral Violence in Aboriginal Communities”** from Denise Findlay and Tereasa Golka’s YouTube video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDwGPve8f4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDwGPve8f4)



### 3.3 Elder guidance

*“Elders” are those people who are recognized by their community to be first and foremost “healthy” – spiritually, psychologically and mentally. . . . An Elder, in this sense, can refer to respected people in the community regardless of age. . . . Elders are culturally regarded as teachers, mediators, advisors, medicine people, stewards of our lands and the keepers of our culture and way of life.*

(BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2010, p. 4)

Elder guidance is traditionally the role of someone who carries the knowledge and wisdom passed down through generations. Elder guidance is a key facet of mentorship, recruitment and retention within Aboriginal non-profits.

Thus, an essential question is:

### **How do Elders provide guidance in our agency?**

A few other critical questions include:

- What roles do Elders want to have in guiding our agency?
- How do we identify and the Elders who provide guidance to our agency?
- What gets in the way of engaging Elders, and what can we do to remove barriers?

### **WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**



Each community has its own way of deciding who takes on the role of respected Elder, especially when setting an example or providing guidance to the next generation.

When seeking to involve Elders:

- Look for the Elders who are respected in your community as well as who fit your definition
- Think about who is healthy – Elders should not be asked to heal others if they are still dealing with their own healing
- Ensure Elders are not over-committed and have transportation
- Take care of Elders' needs when asking them to speak or participate in your organization's events or gatherings



### 3.4 Mentorship opportunities

Mentoring is an age-old practice in Aboriginal communities to guide, teach, and nurture individuals to achieve their fullest potential. Mentoring can assist in building skills and capacities of workers and promote cultural knowledge and practices in the workplace.

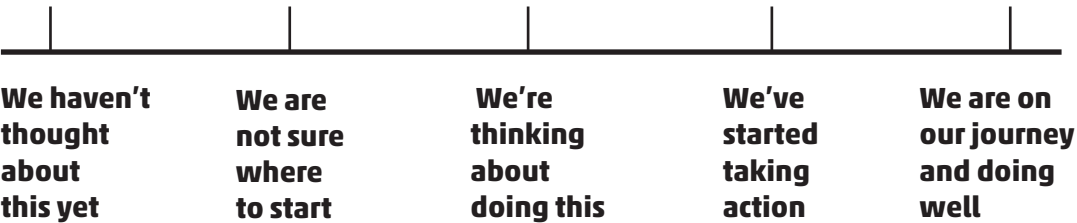
Just like Elder guidance, mentorship – and having mentorship opportunities – is hugely important for both recruiting and retaining Indigenous youth in Aboriginal non-profits.

There are lots of ways that mentorship can be defined and put into place in organizations. Through this project, we have produced a Handbook on Mentorship and Elder Guidance for Aboriginal non-profit organizations (see: ANP project’s website).

Key questions about mentorship opportunities at your agency are:

- Do our employees have opportunities for mentorship?**
- Does cultural mentorship exist for staff?**
- How do we use co-ops and internships to mentor new staff?**

**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**



**Laurie MacDonald, Enoch First Nation**



### 3.5 Wellness policies and practices

Through this project, we learned that having good wellness policies and practices – and having wellness benefits that align with Indigenous values – is very important, as is reviewing these policies regularly to ensure they meet the needs of employees. We also heard about the importance of professional development opportunities.

This leads to the next key questions to consider and discuss within your organization:

- Do our wellness benefits reflect Indigenous values?**
- How do we provide opportunities for professional development and learning?**

**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>



Examples of wellness benefits and learning opportunities that reflect Indigenous values:

- Ensuring that staff can access bereavement leave for extended family members
- Recognizing the antecedents to stress and burnout
- Ensuring that staff can take part in cultural activities
- Having opportunities to try out new approaches
- Having employee scholarships for professional growth
- Having a place for spiritual well-being in the workplace



### 3.6 Cultural ceremony, employee recognition and celebrations

A core principle for Aboriginal recruitment and retention is the importance of employees feeling welcome and included in the workplace culture. As noted in the literature:

*When an employee feels valued, confidence increases along with job satisfaction (Step Up BC, no date).*

*Feeling seen, heard and valued in the workplace has been identified as useful for Aboriginal employee retention (WANADA, 2011).*

So, another important question is:

**How do we recognize and celebrate our employees?**

#### WHERE ARE WE ON THE **SELF-REFLECTION** PATH?

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

Here are some ways to promote employees' sense of being welcome and valued:

- Recognitions of excellence (e.g., ceremonies, celebrations) are an important way to publicly acknowledge employees' contributions;
- Recognizing special days and events (e.g., National Aboriginal Day, International Day to End Racism, Orange Shirt Day, Anti-Bullying Day)
- Planning and sharing meals together, where employees can strengthen relationships and learn about one another's cultures; and
- Recognition as a whole person (i.e., staff's roles and lives outside of work).

### 3.7 Evaluating our strategies

Lastly, we leave you with a final question to reflect upon and discuss as an organization:

**How are we evaluating our Indigenous Youth Engagement and Retention Strategy?**

**WHERE ARE WE ON THE SELF-REFLECTION PATH?**

<b>We haven't thought about this yet</b>	<b>We are not sure where to start</b>	<b>We're thinking about doing this</b>	<b>We've started taking action</b>	<b>We are on our journey and doing well</b>

It's important to make time regularly review, document and celebrate successes related to Indigenous Youth Recruitment and Retention, and to shift approaches when needed.



**Pamela Bevan,  
Kitselas Nation**

## 4. References and resources

- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. (2010). Honouring Our Elders: Elder Abuse Prevention & Awareness. Victoria, BC: BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.
- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2002). Reclaiming Youth at Risk Our Hope for the Future. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- ECO Canada (no date). ECO Canada's Aboriginal Recruitment Guide. [www.eco.ca/pdf/Aboriginal-Recruitment-Guide.pdf](http://www.eco.ca/pdf/Aboriginal-Recruitment-Guide.pdf)
- Findlay, D & Golka, T. (2007) Lateral Violence in Aboriginal Communities. YouTube video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDwGPve8f4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJDwGPve8f4)
- HR Council. (no date). Diversity at work – Resources to facilitate the recruitment of Aboriginal People. [www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-recruitment.cfm#broader-recruitment-efforts](http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-recruitment.cfm#broader-recruitment-efforts)
- Island Health. (2015). Island Health Aboriginal Employment Program. Unpublished Powerpoint presentation.
- Joseph, B. (no date) Aboriginal Lateral Violence in the Workplace. [www.ictinc.ca/blog/aboriginal-lateral-violence-in-the-workplace](http://www.ictinc.ca/blog/aboriginal-lateral-violence-in-the-workplace)
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2011). Aboriginal Lateral Violence. <https://nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2011-Aboriginal-Lateral-Violence.pdf>
- Saskatchewan School Boards Association (no date). An Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Guide for Boards of Education. Research Report #09-02. <http://SaskatchewanSchoolboards.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/09-02.pdf>
- Simpson, A. (2009). Aboriginal Employment – A Guide to Better Attraction, Selection and Retention Strategies. Department of Health Western Australia, Office of Aboriginal Health. [www.reconciliation.org.au/workplace/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/aboriginal-employment-guide.pdf](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/workplace/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/aboriginal-employment-guide.pdf)
- Step Up BC: Healing Non-profits Thrive. (no date). Attract and Hire Aboriginal People (Tool kit). <https://www.stepupbc.ca/develop-your-non-profit-recruitment-and-hiring/hiring-aboriginal-employees-overview#.Vyzk-qsjHww>
- Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA). (2011). The Culturally Secure Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Recruitment and Retention Guide.



Copyright © All Rights Reserved  
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres  
Developed by Arrive Consulting and Roundtable Consulting Inc.