

On the *Move*

Improving educational and economic opportunities for Aboriginal Manitobans

“The importance of the Aboriginal population to the future of the western Canadian economy cannot be overstated. Aboriginal Canadians will constitute an increasing proportion of the regional labour force over the coming years and, given that many indicators forecast an upcoming labour shortage in western Canada, ensuring that Aboriginal Canadians possess the educational training and skills necessary to compete successfully in the labour force is one of western Canada’s most important challenges.”

*CanadaWest Foundation,
Working Towards Parity:
Recommendations of the Aboriginal
Human Capital Strategies Initiative.
Building the New West Report #24,
February 2004.*

Manitoba Advanced Education and Training (MAET) recognizes that improvements in educational attainment and economic well-being are connected. In this issue of *On the Move*, we are pleased to provide you with a snapshot of some of the inter-related actions we are taking with Aboriginal partners that will lead to benefits for Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

These actions are:

- to increase participation in adult literacy and adult high school programs.
- to increase access to and completion of post-secondary education, and
- to support successful entry and participation in the labour market.

Increasing participation in adult literacy and adult high school programs

MAET contributed over \$12.5 million for Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) in Manitoba in 2002/03. The funding benefits both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students. Last year, all Manitoba ALCs reported that they had Aboriginal adult students, with 11 ALCs indicating an Aboriginal adult student population of over 50 per cent and two ALCs indicating 100 per cent. ALCs play an important role in removing barriers for Aboriginal learners who have not completed secondary schooling.

The Urban Learning Circle is one of many ALCs supported by MAET that is helping Aboriginal students succeed.

Urban Circle Trains for Success

The exterior teepee poles, the Sacred Turtle ceiling, the Four Directions colours, the Grandfather stones and the Elders' room at Urban Circle Training Centre's new home (519 Selkirk Avenue, in Winnipeg) uniquely reflect Aboriginal culture. The centre hums with the energy and commitment of everyone involved and under its protective shell, Aboriginal people are reclaiming their identity and breaking the cycle of poverty.

All aspects of the centre's programs and operation are rooted in Aboriginal culture. The centre's members work to provide Aboriginal people with skills training that meets current needs in the job market. Students can complete a Mature Student High School Diploma or take training programs that incorporate Aboriginal culture. In over 13 years of operation, the centre's programs have helped 86 per cent of its students find jobs.

Graduates from the centre move on to take university degrees in areas such as social work, education, nursing, medicine, commerce, human resources management, economic and community development and computer technology. To complete the circle, many graduates come back to the centre to talk about their successes and inspire the new students.

The centre's high retention and completion rates are measurable, but education co-directors Eleanor Thompson and Ruth Murdock say there are many intangible benefits as well. "How does one measure the intangibles?" Eleanor asks. "The Elder who sat for a long time in silence, then softly whispered from the depth of his ancestor's wisdom that many generations will come to know healing and wholeness in this place."



Some of the Urban Circle students and staff in their new home.

There are many success stories from Urban Circle Training Centre. The following are just a few examples.

- Noel Bruce attended the centre when he was "unemployed and...had no prospects for a career". He is currently working on his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Manitoba with the goal of becoming a history teacher.
- Haven Stumpf was a single parent on social assistance who discovered who she was "as a First Nations woman." Now she works at Urban Circle as the Administrative Assistant and Intake Coordinator.
- Lorraine Desmarais was given the opportunity to learn new things that were relevant to her as a First Nations woman, mother and wife. When she graduated from Urban Circle, she worked at Assiniboine Credit Union for four and a half years. She now works at Urban Circle and by August 2005 will have completed a four-year Bachelor of Social Work degree while working full-time.

Program	Students Enrolled	Students Graduated	Found employment or went on to PSE
Health Care Aide/Health Unit Clerk	177	163	96%
Adult Education and Employment Programs	182	162	85%

Additional department actions with ALCs include:

- working with Aboriginal communities to develop strategies for raising awareness of benefits of literacy and essential skills training; and
- increasing Aboriginal perspectives in literacy programming and Prior Learning Assessment.

For more information on Adult Learning Centres, contact Anna Beauchamp at 204/945-4399.

Increasing access to and completion of post-secondary education

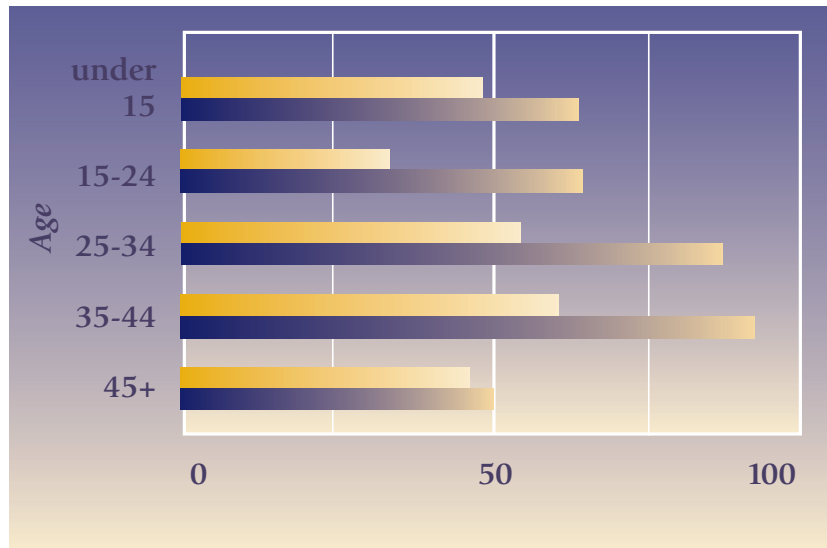
MAET is pleased about the creation of the University College of the North (UCN) -- a new institution dedicated to serving the post-secondary education needs of northern residents. Students enrolled at UCN will be able to receive university degrees, college diplomas and certificates. The initial phase of work lays the foundation for UCN by developing a governance model and legislation. The proposed legislation is the first in Canada that establishes a Council of Elders. For more information on the progress of the University College of the North, visit the UCN website at www.ucn.mb.ca or contact Don Robertson at 204/945-0472.

Additional actions that contribute to increased completion of post-secondary education are:

- Increasing the number of community-based programs available and the number of Aboriginal participants enrolled in these programs in all regions of Manitoba;
- Developing Aboriginal perspectives in career education programming; and

- Participating in a research pilot project that provides enhanced services at selected high schools to increase access for Aboriginal persons to post-secondary education and training.

Challenging barriers to labour force participation: Paving the way for success in the labour market



Employment Rates - Manitoba¹

Aboriginal

Non-Aboriginal

¹Statistics Canada, 2001.

Aboriginal employment rates continue to be relatively low as compared with non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba. Young people, in particular, experience the largest disparity. Non-Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are almost twice as likely to be employed as Aboriginal youth.

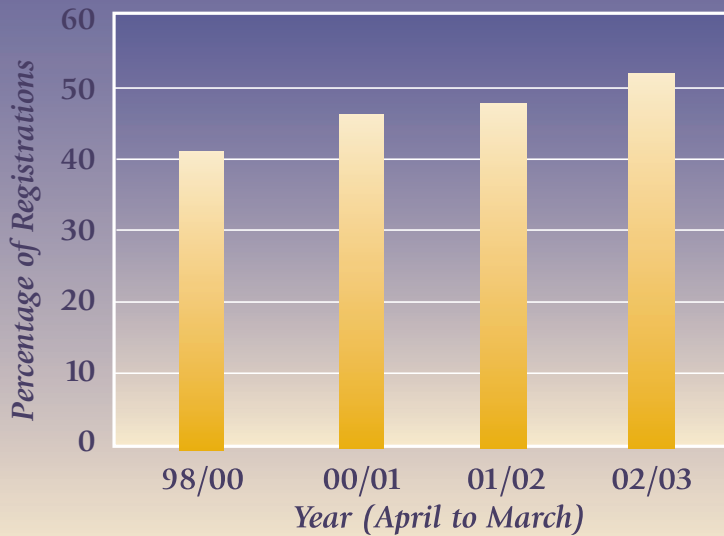
MAET has partnered with several First Nations communities in northern and central Manitoba,

colleges and other government departments to deliver training for short and long-term human resource needs. These partnerships allow band-sponsored apprentices to develop hands-on experience in their communities and receive the technical training component of their education in their home communities.

MAET is also working with industry sector associations (e.g. aerospace, food processing, health care products, tourism, customer contact), government and Aboriginal organizations to promote Aboriginal employment through the work of Aboriginal liaison officers (ALOs). Based on the needs of each sector association, ALOs are identifying barriers to Aboriginal participation, helping sector associations build business cases for increased representation of Aboriginal peoples in sectors, developing retention strategies and placing Aboriginal job seekers in meaningful employment.

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Client Placements Partners for Careers Program



If you want to find out more about any of the programs and initiatives described in this issue, or if you want to comment on this publication, contact Nancy Buchanan at 204/945-0884.

Over the next several years, northern Aboriginal people will benefit from the Northern Hydro Training and Employment Initiative. This initiative will train First Nations and northern Aboriginal peoples for jobs in designated trades, non-designated trades, support positions and professional/technical opportunities.

MAET Partners for Careers works to connect qualified Aboriginal graduates with Manitoba employers looking for the best people for jobs. From their storefront location at 309 Balmoral Street in Winnipeg, Partners for Careers staff assist Aboriginal graduates of high school, college, university, trade schools and special training programs. Since the program began in 1998, about 1,100 job openings in Manitoba's workplaces have been filled by Partners for Careers clients annually.

This issue of *On the Move* has highlighted just a few of the initiatives and programs that are making a difference for Aboriginal people in Manitoba. Manitoba Advanced Education and Training is continuing to develop strategies with Aboriginal partners to help Aboriginal people gain the economic and social benefits that will result from improved education.