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Executive **Summary**

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy is one element of the federal government's Youth Employment Strategy. Human Resources Development Canada has the lead in co-ordinating the involvement of 14 federal departments and agencies in the strategy. The objective is to assist youth to prepare to enter the labour market.

In the 1996 federal budget, the government reallocated \$315 million to create employment opportunities for young Canadians over three years ending March 31, 1999. Of this, \$60 million, or roughly 20 percent, was allocated to assist First Nations and Inuit youth living on-reserve or in recognized communities.

This report outlines the five programs under the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy. By March 31, 1999, these five programs will have supported more than 36,000 First Nations and Inuit youth.

The 1997/98 annual report demonstrates the success of the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy. Last year we saw an increase in both the number of participants and in the quality of work placements. Work placements were made available in various employment fields, with a large percentage of the youth working in growing sectors of the economy. There were also greater linkages made with other communities and partnerships developed among band offices, schools and with other First Nations communities. Many program co-ordinators remarked on the increase in self-esteem, confidence and school attendance in those who participated in the programs. Entrepreneurship, a positive attitude to staying in school, community and parental involvement and knowledge of tradition and culture were also heightened in the 1997/98 programming. First Nations and Inuit communities made extraordinary efforts to make Youth Employment Strategy programs relevant to all youth, especially those at risk of dropping out of school.

Introduction

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy is one element of the federal government's Youth Employment Strategy. Human Resources Development Canada has the lead in co-ordinating the involvement of 14 federal departments and agencies in the strategy. The objective is to assist youth to prepare to enter the labour market.

In the 1996 federal budget, the government reallocated \$315 million to create employment opportunities for young Canadians over three years ending March 31, 1999. Of this, \$60 million, or roughly 20 percent, was allocated to assist First Nations and Inuit youth living on-reserve or in recognized communities. This was in response to the high unemployment rate of First Nations youth and their relatively low high school completion rates. In 1991, the employment rate of on-reserve youth (ages 15-24) was 17 percent compared to 57 percent for the rest of Canada; 31 percent of on-reserve youth completed their high school education compared to 62 percent for Canadians in general.

The first three programs were introduced in 1996/97 and were extended and expanded for a further two years in 1997/98.

The *First Nations and Inuit Science and Technology Camp Program* exposes participants to science and new technologies, thereby increasing their educational and employment opportunities. It also offers a new perspective on possible career choices.

The *First Nations and Inuit Summer Student Career Placement Program* provides wage contributions to support opportunities for career-related work experience and training during the summer months to First Nations and Inuit students living on-reserve or in recognized communities. The overall purpose is to help students prepare for their future entry into the labour market by providing them with work experience related to their field of study.

The *First Nations Schools Co-operative Education Program* helps First Nations high schools establish and expand their co-operative education programs. The program creates school-based work/study opportunities that provide meaningful work experience in a supportive environment.

The last two programs were launched in 1997/98.

The *First Nations and Inuit Youth Work Experience Program* through wage subsidies provides work experience to out-of-school, unemployed youth. Participants improve their job skills and future employment prospects while contributing to their communities.

The *First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program* assists young people interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. The program provides mentoring, workshops, training and micro-loans.

Management of the Department's *Youth Employment* **Strategy**

With the exception of the Youth Business Program, the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy programs are highly decentralized and are administered by First Nations and Inuit communities.

Within the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), the Learning, Employment and Human Development Directorate is responsible for program design and national implementation. (See Appendix One for a list of contact names.) This directorate developed guidelines and a reporting framework for all programs except the Youth Business Program. The guidelines are broad, flexible and easily adapted to meet the needs of all communities. As a result, communities are taking advantage of other complementary programs and are integrating a number of them to maximize participation (e.g., youth and education programs).

At the regional level, the management of the programs varies from one region to another. Where programs are managed through DIAND's regional offices, regional officials review proposals and fund them based on either the merit of the proposal or by a regionally designed funding formula.

In the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec, program management has been transferred to First Nations or Inuit organizations. In 1997/98, as was the case in the previous year, First Nations administration of the program was found to be the most effective delivery mechanism. This was substantiated in the interim evaluation completed in 1997/98, which showed that First Nations use a more co-ordinated approach that is more cost-effective. They know what their community wants and needs. There is increased financial autonomy and community pride when they manage the programs.

The Youth Business Program is managed by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA), which ensures the delivery of the program across the country in both official languages through its network of member corporations known as Aboriginal Capital Corporations.

Program budget

for 1997 / 1998

Program	HQ Budget (Approx.2.5% of total national budget)	Regional Allocations	Total National Budget
Science Camps	\$44,865	\$1,755,135	\$1,800,000
Summer Jobs	\$205,000	\$7,995,000	\$8,200,000
CO-OP Education	\$150,000	\$5,850,000	\$6,000,000
Work Experience	\$162,605	\$6,337,395	\$6,500,000
Business	\$0	NACCA: \$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Total	\$562,470	\$22,937,530	\$23,500,000*

**Due to the mid-year start of the Youth Business Program,\$500,000. was re-profiled to 1998/99.*

1997/98 Results

In 1997/98, over 15,000 First Nations and Inuit youth participated in the five programs – over 5,300 youth more than originally anticipated.

1997/98 Youth Employment Strategy Programs	Total Participants 1997/98
Co-operative Education	3,696
Work Experience	1,483
Summer Career Placement Program	7,333
Science and Technology Camps	4,493
Youth Business Program	147
Total	17,152*

** Please note 10 percent of the reports are still outstanding. Total represents reports received as of November 30, 1998.*

Approximately 130 schools implemented or expanded co-operative education programs. Close to 400 communities offered work experience to out-of-school and out-of-work youth. Over 200 communities participated in the Science and Technology Camp Program. Seven Aboriginal Capital Corporations offered the First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program. By July 31, 1998, the number of Aboriginal Capital Corporations offering the program had grown to 24, ensuring that the program was available nationally.

Feedback on the *Youth Employment Strategy* **1997/98**

Overall feedback from First Nations and Inuit communities and organizations was extremely positive. Most people say that DIAND's Youth Employment Strategy provides a "win-win" situation for everyone.

Many program co-ordinators noted in their final reports for 1997/98 that they saw increased self-esteem, confidence and a feeling of empowerment among the youth who participated in the programs. Not only did the youth gain valuable job and life experiences, but many found a new appreciation for the work world, school, science and technology and even their own culture and traditions. It was noted in many communities that, after participating in one of DIAND's programs, many young people either returned to high school or went on to post-secondary education. Co-ordinators reported that some students at risk of dropping out of school were motivated to stay in school.

In many communities, parents, teachers and band council members got involved. When this happened the program proved to be especially successful. Some communities developed action plans or community "visions" when planning for one of the programs. The examples below demonstrate that many projects have left a lasting legacy in the communities.

There was constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement. One of the most striking challenges on a national basis was lack of motivation among some First Nations and Inuit youth, especially to attend school. Program co-ordinators suggested some possible solutions: provide individualized training, involve the students in their training plan, make ongoing adjustments (if needed) and have students develop short-term and long-term goals.

Many First Nations and Inuit communities noted that additional worthy projects could be supported if more funds were made available. In 1997, the demand among First Nations and Inuit communities for the Youth Employment Strategy programs was so great that current levels of funding could not accommodate all the requests. For example, Alberta region had an allocation of \$850,000 for the Work Experience Program, but they received over \$3 million in requests. When this occurred, some First Nations either did not get funded or received funding less than what was needed to run the type of program they wanted.

First Nations and Inuit communities also suggested that, in order to run programs more effectively, any future funding should include the administrative costs associated with running a program.

Co-ordinators, organizations and youth agree that there is a need to increase the wages provided to the youth under the Summer Student Career Placement Program and the Work Experience Program. Currently, youth receive the applicable provincial/territorial minimum wage.

Co-ordinators recommended that the federal government increase funding and make it available permanently. They also suggest looking at complementary programming and an integration of services.

Reporting has also proven to be a problem for many First Nations and Inuit communities. Many feel that there are too many reports, too many deadlines and that they are accountable to too many government departments.

The need for more information sharing and networking among the communities and organizations that run Youth Employment Strategy programs was also identified. Participants at the co-operative education conference in B.C. in October 1997 suggested creating a Web site as an information-sharing tool. They also suggested that they would like to see a group of Aboriginal organizations take the lead in creating an association that would head up conferences, teleconferences and workshops.

The *Department's* Response

Since 1996, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has made a concerted effort to listen to First Nations and Inuit communities. DIAND has taken the initiative to improve and enhance the strategy on several fronts.

A. Interim Evaluation:

DIAND was the only federal department to undertake an interim evaluation. Treasury Board requires a long-term evaluation in 1998/99. The interim evaluation considered the Summer Student Career Placement, the Science and Technology Camp and the Co-operative Education programs. The evaluation was guided by an advisory committee with First Nations and departmental representatives, and was undertaken by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal consultants.

Overall, the programs' initial objectives were largely met.

The evaluation found that the programs had positive initial impacts, such as increased levels of self-esteem and confidence, career-related employment experience, increased knowledge of community needs and help for youth with the transition from school to work. Students who were interviewed said the programs helped to improve their attitudes toward school and to recognize the importance of staying in school. Employment preparation skills (e.g., résumés, letters, interviews, competition processes) were also considered useful.

Administration of the strategy by First Nations and Inuit regional organizations was found to be more effective than the direct administration of the program by DIAND regional offices. These organizations were more efficient and effective because of their expertise in youth programming for their regions, their existing infrastructure, their team approach and a sharing of experiences and implementation support.

It was noted in the interim evaluation that First Nations and DIAND are making use of ongoing reports. First Nations stakeholders are especially interested in tracking and evaluating the long-term impact of co-operative education upon students.

B. National Working Committee:

DIAND established a National Working Committee composed of representatives of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Department. This committee's overall responsibilities are to ensure a successful implementation of the Youth Employment Strategy, including the implementation of the interim evaluation's follow-up action plan, the development of recommendations for a possible renewal of the strategy after March 1999 and the completion of the long-term evaluation.

The long-term evaluation of the strategy is to be completed by March 1999. A subcommittee comprising DIAND, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations has been formed to oversee the long-term evaluation.

C. National Activities:

To support successful implementation of DIAND's Youth Employment Strategy, the Learning, Employment and Human Development Directorate has developed several products, funded a national conference on co-operative education as a means to share best practices and suggested improvements to First Nations and Inuit communities. For example, a science handbook and a youth business handbook were developed. The directorate has also placed all program guidelines and the interim evaluation on the Internet so that information is readily available to all Aboriginal people. DIAND has also created and distributed communications products such as posters and bulletins to all First Nations and Inuit communities to promote the success of the program, best practices and success stories. In addition, a copy of the interim evaluation report was sent to all Chiefs and Inuit leaders.

In the summers of 1996 and 1997, DIAND hired a First Nations student to travel to selected sites across the country to gather information and success stories on the Summer Student Career Placement and the Science and Technology Camp programs. The student collected first-hand stories by talking to co-ordinators and youth about what they liked and disliked about the programs.

In 1997/98, the Learning, Employment and Human Development Directorate reduced the frequency of reporting intervals from quarterly to biannually. They are also looking into the possibility of using the Internet as a reporting tool.

In October 1997, DIAND funded a national conference on First Nations co-operative education. The goal was for everyone involved in co-operative education programs to share their experiences, ideas and successes and to identify best practices. Recommendations included an annual national conference, regional workshops and a co-op Web site to improve communications. Those who participated found the workshop experience to be "empowering."

The National Working Committee held a national workshop in December 1998 with regional DIAND officials and approximately 30 First Nations and Inuit regionally based organizations involved in the management of the youth programs. The workshop focussed on information-sharing, identifying improvements and determining what First Nations and Inuit people wanted to see in a possible renewed First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy.

Co-operative Education

With an annual budget of \$6 million nationally, DIAND was able to provide opportunities to 3,696 First Nations and Inuit youth. The goal of the Co-operative Education Program is to fund proposals to establish or expand co-operative education programs (school-based work and study opportunities) in on-reserve schools. The intent of this program is to facilitate the successful transition from school to work.

DIAND's Co-operative Education Program brings industry, school and community together to create a culturally relevant learning environment for students, incorporating the knowledge of First Nations Elders, teachers and family.

In 1997, programs varied from school to school. Programs ran anywhere from two weeks to ten months. The students ranged from Grade 7 to adult education. The in-school portion most often included life skills courses, résumé writing, computers and mock interviews. The work placements also varied from community to community. The most common were reception, clerical, administration, working with the elderly and children, and working in sales and service. However, many young people were fortunate to participate in innovative placements that were directed toward business, science and growing industries. Some examples were firefighting, ranching, pharmacy, dentistry, forestry, fisheries, anthropology, astrophysics, aquaculture, Web design and computer technology.

Success Stories

There were many positive outcomes of the 1997/98 Co-operative Education Program. Not only did many young people develop self-confidence and job skills, but certain other unexpected benefits emerged such as a growing sense of entrepreneurship, "at-risk" youth returning to school and a heightened traditional and cultural awareness.

One of the best examples of entrepreneurship is the Native Fashion Outlet Co-op Program created by the *Alexis First Nation School* in Alberta. The goal of this program was to have young people operate a small business that designed, created and marketed Native clothing. Eight students with strong sewing abilities were selected to make and sell the clothing. All eight youth successfully completed the program, obtaining one credit toward graduation. Through this experience, the students gained invaluable job, entrepreneurial and marketing skills. In fact, this program proved to be so successful that the co-ordinator has already submitted a proposal for 1998/99 with suggestions on how to build on this past year's success. For example, the school intends to continue developing a marketing plan and increase their customer base. They also want to create a mini catalogue of all their designs.

Youth in *North Tall Cree*, Alberta also used the Co-operative Education Program to build entrepreneurship on-reserve. This community is no stranger to the Co-operative Education Program. In 1996/97, the students developed and operated a hot lunch program. The hot lunch program was so successful in empowering youth it has been continued.

This year, 11 students were selected to participate in the TC Kids Video Store project. The program began with the community identifying a need for a video store. Then a business plan was presented to and approved by the school board and band administration. The video store quickly became a viable operation that is “one of pride throughout the community.”

Many lasting and positive relationships were formed between First Nations communities and the surrounding towns and cities who participated in the Co-operative Education Program. For the first time, students from the *Sagkeeng First Nation* in Manitoba were placed at the Pine Falls Paper Mill. The co-ordinator states, “The potential is now there for the youth of this community to develop a working relationship and deal with matters relating to their future within their home community with one of the larger economic players of the surrounding community. The tendency before was that the youth of Sagkeeng did not really have a voice within their own community and most certainly within the surrounding communities. Now there is potential for growth.”

Verna Stager, the program co-ordinator for the *Xit’olacw Community School in Mount Currie*, British Columbia states that the relationship between Mount Currie and Whistler has not always been “positive.” In previous years, many youth who had to go to Whistler for their work placements would drop out of the program “due to their anxiety about working in the resort town.” In 1997, the community acknowledged that it was important to address the situation directly, so they hired a consultant to improve relations with Whistler. In the end the Co-operative Education Program proved to be very successful and all the participants completed their placements in Whistler. A “best-use” study is now being done, and the community applied for funding again for 1998/99.

The Co-operative Education Program is helping to address the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Six Inuit students who were close to dropping out of the Arsaniq School in *Kangiqsujuag*, Quebec participated in a bakery project. During the morning they would attend courses. In the afternoon, the students learned the basic operations of a small business. They learned all aspects of the bakery business such as preparing the products, packaging, marketing, pricing, inventory control and accounting.

The project began in the summer of 1997 when the co-ordinator, Gisèle Tardif, went to Montréal and received training at the Maison Cousin de Montréal. When the school year began and the students were selected for the project, they immediately entered into a partnership with the Northern Store (the local store), which provided them with the necessary staples to make their products.

The *Mamartuq Bakery*, which produces several types of bread, pastries, muffins, pizza and submarine sandwiches, is the first of its kind in Nunavik. The community members can now purchase baked goods every day, "something previously impossible in this isolated community of 450 people."

According to Miss Tardif, "Such an achievement increases a young person's self-esteem. The drop-out rate in Nunavik is very high. Those who complete the fifth year of secondary school are rare. Thanks to the bakery, classroom attendance rose 16 percent and we won back two students who were no longer attending school. Children with serious problems in school have a difficult time obtaining the few jobs available in the community. This special training, recognized by the entire community, considerably raises the employment prospects of these girls."

This Co-operative Education Program was so successful that the students and Miss Tardif won the 1998 Partnership Focus Award of the Conference Board of Canada in Ottawa.

Eight students at *Le Goff School in Cold Lake*, Alberta were chosen to participate in the Co-operative Education Program because of their "high-risk potential for school dropout." The eight students were not experiencing academic success in school. Entering into this program, their Canadian Achievement Test results ranged from 2.3 to 5.3.

During the school year, the students were placed at locations such as a mechanic shop, the carpentry shop and the day-care centre. They enjoyed their placements so much that, in May, they created their own company called Crew from School. This company focussed on lawn and yard maintenance, which was a "much-needed" service in the community. To advertise, the youth made their own computerized business cards and posters. Their first contract was for \$200 to care for the school grounds. The program was so successful that absenteeism from school was "almost unheard of" because the students "took pride in their work."

Another benefit of the 1997/98 Co-operative Education Program was a heightened appreciation and awareness of Aboriginal culture and tradition.

For example, eight "at-risk" students at the *Peter Yassie Memorial School in Tadoule Lake*, Manitoba, not only learned about computers, but also learned how to set out commercial fishing nets, establish traplines and harvest caribou.

Similarly, the youth at the *Mah Sos School in Maliseet Nation at Tobique*, New Brunswick, learned traditional and modern methods of fishing, hunting, and managing resources. They were also taught how to make baskets, such as the potato or fancy basket, and they designed and beaded their own moccasins.

First Nations and Inuit Communities Support the Strategy

As evident through the many examples above, First Nations and Inuit communities consider the Co-operative Education Program a success. As the co-ordinator from the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, in Ontario states, “The Co-operative Education Program enhances the overall quality of education.”

As well as the benefits listed above, other positive outcomes mentioned by those involved are as follows:

- provides access to equipment and expertise not available in the school
- increases community and parental involvement
- helps identify students’ capabilities
- utilizes community resources effectively
- promotes closer co-operation and understanding between the school, community and local businesses
- assists students in securing employment

Recommendations

1. Contained in the Final Reports:

- increase community and parental involvement
- create a community vision or action plan
- keep the programs flexible to fit the needs of the youth; change midstream if need be
- tailor the program to fit the youth
- make co-operative education mandatory for everyone
- combine programs (e.g., once the student has successfully completed their co-op placement, they should apply to DIAND’s Summer Career Placement Program to further their employment opportunities)
- increase job shadowing opportunities
- have day care available to increase participation and reduce drop-out rate
- make program two to three years in duration
- have student exchanges

2. From the National Co-operative Education Conference, October 1997:

- use partnerships
- hold annual workshops
- ensure long-term funding; otherwise there cannot be any long-term planning

3. From British Columbia's Regional Co-operative Education Workshop, May 1997:

- arrange student exchanges (at the conference, nine communities identified potential placements where exchanges could occur)
- obtain criminal records for each student at the beginning of the program and get the consent from the parent or guardian before doing so
- use criminal record checks to raise awareness among students about the impact of criminal activities and how they influence future employment

Science and Technology Camps

With an annual budget of \$1.8 million nationally, DIAND was able to provide opportunities to 4,493 First Nations and Inuit youth. DIAND funds First Nations and Inuit communities to provide science camps or to sponsor on-reserve First Nations and Inuit youth who wish to attend a science camp outside their community. The camps can be held in an academic setting or in the wilderness, depending on the subject matter.

Programs varied from community to community. They ran from one day to three weeks. Some had full-day camps, while others chose a half-day program. Participants ranged between the ages of 8 and 17.

The program was popular because it was innovative and because it made science and technology fun and relevant to the youth. Many youth who live in isolated communities got their first opportunity to travel to an urban centre or even to a foreign country. Some youth also got the chance to participate in a science camp in a university setting, thus getting an early exposure to post-secondary education. Finally, many students got the chance to learn about their culture and traditions through community members and Elders who taught them about Aboriginal science such as herbs and medicines.

Success Stories

Twenty-nine students from the *Eskasoni First Nation* in Nova Scotia received hands-on experience. They tested the salinity of water, algae and bacterial counts in the Bras d'Or Lakes, quantified and measured plankton and crustacean levels, and examined fishery habitats.

The *North Shore Tribal Council* in northern Ontario ran a camp for 33 students. The camp focussed on science and on Native tradition and culture. The students participated in Sudbury's Science North travelling road show where they learned about the solar system and insects. Other activities included making rockets, mapping out forests and, in crafts class, learning the significance of the medicine wheel and the dreamcatcher.

In 1997, the *Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute* offered their third annual "On-the-land Traditional Knowledge and Western Science Camp" for 13 senior high school students at the Knut Lang Camp outside of Aklavik, N.W.T. There, the students worked with Gwich'in Elders and with scientists from the disciplines of anthropology, biology and geography. During the nine-day camp, the youth learned about the human and natural history of the local area, based on Gwich'in oral history and traditional environmental knowledge and western scientific knowledge. They studied the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim. They also explored career and employment options in the research and management of environmental and heritage resources.

The *Tron dek Hwechin First Nation* in the Yukon used the funding for a First Hunt Camp. Students, Elders, community members, RCMP and teachers attended a five-day camp which focussed on increasing people's knowledge and respect for the wildlife, the environment and the community's cultural values. The program varies from year to year as it depends on the Porcupine caribou herd and its annual migration. An article on the camp was circulated as a local success story on Aboriginal Day in the Yukon Territory.

Another community in the Yukon, *Kwanlin Dun First Nation*, ran a youth program. They used their funds, as well as resources from the municipal and territorial governments, for an all-encompassing project that touched on traditional knowledge, culture and the sciences. The program ran for the complete year, mainly through the "House of Learning," an educational centre for all community members. During the summer, the youth attended a fish camp and participated in a caribou and moose hunt. They went to the city landfill and the recycling centre, where they learned about recycling and its effects. The students began a recycling program in their community. Many were so motivated by their summer experience that they continued on at the Learning Centre by going to computer and homework clubs throughout the school year. The whole community got involved. Absenteeism from school fell. Community pride increased. This is a great example of a community accessing DIAND funds and using them to leverage other funding to run a youth program.

Many First Nations and Inuit communities are isolated and lack the resources to hold a quality science camp. Saskatchewan addressed this problem by using both DIAND's program and another federally funded program called Mobile Science Camp to complement one another. The Mobile Science Camp travelled to First Nations communities during the school year and brought hands-on experience to the classroom, while DIAND's summer camp program offered First Nations youth an opportunity to explore the sciences away from home in a university setting.

Seventeen youth from the communities of *Waswanipi*, *Nemasko*, *Eastman*, *Waskaganish* and *Ouje-Bougoumou* in Quebec attended a two-pronged science program. During phase one, the students attended an orientation to computers at McGill University in Montréal. In phase two, the youth travelled to the U.S. Space Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, and participated in the NASA Camp. There the students learned about space, land and water survival. They experienced space travel through a flight simulator.

First Nations and Inuit Communities Support the Strategy

First Nations and Inuit youth are being provided opportunities to examine potential careers and to learn what it takes academically to pursue careers in the sciences. Moreover, not only are they learning about their culture and traditions, but by travelling to Canadian and U.S. cities, the students are being exposed to other cultures and ways of life.

Some First Nations and Inuit communities are also making changes to improve their programs. For example, last year the *Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations* developed a junior and senior program within each camp. The tiered camp system was aimed at providing appropriate science and learning to the variety of age levels at the camps.

Recommendations

1. Contained in the Final Reports:

- increase the age of the participants
- provide more money to fund the program

Summer Student Career Placement

With an annual budget of \$8.2 million nationally, DIAND was able to provide opportunities to 7,333 First Nations and Inuit youth. The Summer Student Career Placement Program provides wage contributions for career-related summer jobs for on-reserve First Nations and Inuit students. The jobs can be created by Inuit communities, organizations and businesses or by First Nations governments, organizations and businesses on-reserve.

The summer of 1997 was extremely successful. Work placements ranged anywhere from two to seventeen weeks. Some communities chose to hire only a few students for longer work placements, while others tried to maximize the number of student employees by providing shorter work terms, and thereby giving more students work experience.

Regardless of the duration of the placement, First Nations and Inuit youth received work experience in a myriad of employment areas. Placements ranged from those in office work, band and school administration, construction and working at the local service and retail industries, to others in Web design, biology, forestry, health sciences (e.g., research on substance abuse, speech pathology and audiology), nursing and environmental science.

Success Stories

Culture was a theme of summer placements in 1997/98. Many First Nations developed cultural village sites, like the one in *North Thompson*, B.C., where the youth prepared the village site, constructed teepees, nature trails and sweathouses. Other First Nations, like *Hesquiaht* in B.C., ran a “Rediscovery” program where students were hired as guides at the wilderness and survival camps. The student guides learned their trade through their participation at previous Rediscovery camps. With the skills they learned, they then became the teachers to those younger than themselves. The guides taught the children Hesquiaht songs, dances and traditions.

The *Coldwater First Nation* in B.C. hired two students to research and gather material for the Native (Ntekepmxicin) Language Program. After they completed their research, the youth input the data into a computer and then developed and designed a curriculum booklet. This booklet comprised Salish translations of numbers, the alphabet, animals, plants, stories, a list of Indian names of people from the community and a song.

In 1997/98, a number of community improvement projects were developed. Students in *Saddle Lake*, Alberta, for example, formed an environmental crew whose role was to pick up garbage in order to “beautify the community.” The youth in *Spuzzum First Nation* in B.C. worked on enhancing the existing beaver pond by cleaning and replanting. They also cleaned a grave site and repaired pithouses.

Some communities, like the *Heltsuk First Nation* in B.C., looked into the future and thought it would be best to use Summer Student Career Placement dollars to teach the youth about the treaty process, self-governance and land claims. The students spent the summer doing research on issues relevant to their First Nation.

The Learning, Employment and Human Development Directorate provided funding to national organizations to hire students. (See Appendix Two for the complete list of national organizations that the Department funded.)

The *First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres* hired a student to develop Internet Web sites for both its members and the association itself.

The *National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation* hired one student to act as assistant co-ordinator to do administrative, marketing and fundraising work for both the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards and the Blueprint for the Future Conference.

Finally, the *National Association of Friendship Centres* hired two students to work on a Royal Commission Dialogue Kit to be used by friendship centres across the country. The kit included a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples overview, Urban Perspectives and a discussion guide. The students also facilitated workshops on the Royal Commission report.

The AFN, ITC and First Nations and Inuit Communities Support the Strategy

Co-ordinators commented that there was a noticeable increase in self-esteem and confidence in the participants by the end of the placement. Participants learned communication, interpersonal and job skills. Kelvin Wong, a student hired by the *Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers* to create a Web page, says he learned delegation skills, initiative-taking and the importance of responsibility.

In Saskatchewan, many felt that the summer employment opportunities that were created contributed to communities and personal development.

Pauktituut, the Inuit Women's Association, says that "We appreciate the opportunity to take part in this win-win program, and look forward to participating again in 1998/99." Similar comments were made by the *Assembly of First Nations*.

Tania Koenig-Gauchier of the *United Youth of Turtle Island* states, "The summer provided an opportunity for the youth that would not have existed otherwise."

Recommendations

1. Contained in the Final Reports:

- make the program into an ongoing, full-year, part-time work placement
- increase the wages paid out to students, and make them similar to wages offered by other federal government employment programs
- announce any further commitment of summer student funding by the federal government earlier so that a more timely distribution of program information and application packages can be made to potential employers/program users
- include discretionary funds in the subsidy to cover the mandatory and other costs associated with employment (e.g., Workers' Compensation coverage, transportation, day care)

Work Experience

With an annual budget of \$6.5 million nationally, DIAND was able to provide opportunities to 1,483 First Nations and Inuit youth. The Work Experience Program funds proposals to offer work experience to on-reserve First Nations and Inuit youth who are out of school and unemployed. The objective of this program is to increase basic job skills and provide practical work experience to improve future employability while enabling participants to contribute to their communities.

In 1997, programs varied from community to community. Participants were between 16 and 24 years of age. Programs generally ran from six to nine months. As in the Co-operative Education Program, life-skills courses, mock interviews, résumé writing and computer classes were given.

Work placements also varied. Many youth gained experience at the band or school office, the local gas station, restaurants and construction sites. Many First Nations went further and found innovative placements in business, science and growing industries. Some examples were city planning and mapping, journalism, wilderness survival, forestry, photography, fisheries, tourism, environmental health, Hydro operations and ranching.

Success Stories

Many communities found implementing the Work Experience Program “highly rewarding” for the youth and the community. The program brought people together to learn more about themselves and about the opportunities available to them. Many participants state that they have developed a better sense of their community and have made valuable contacts and lasting friendships as a result of this program.

Community involvement/investment was apparent in *Chemainus*, B.C. The youth did a community assessment and found that the primary concern of the community was the children. To address this concern, they decided to renovate a basement in a community building and open a second-hand store. Creating a second-hand store would be a lasting legacy to the community. From their fund-raising efforts, the youth received donations of clothing from consignment shops, thrift stores, department stores, businesses, non-profit organizations and community members. The *Soaring Eagles Second Hand Store* opened for business.

The youth didn’t stop there, however. They also realized that reading would benefit the children of the community, and so they collected used books and created a library. In total, over 800 books were collected and more than 300 books were donated to the reserve’s preschool. The youth also raised enough money to buy playground equipment for the community.

Plans are currently under way to continue the store and to eventually hire a paid co-ordinator. Their final report states that “Not only have the youth gained valuable work experience, but they have also created the opportunity for employment and business on the reserve.”

Using the Work Experience Program, the *Whitefish Lake First Nation #128* in Alberta also completed a community-based project that involved five young people making signs. Before this initiative, this community did not have road signs. At the project's conclusion, a total of 268 road signs were completed (e.g., stop, curb, no exit, etc.), a community entrance sign was constructed and directional signs were installed. The co-ordinator states, "The signs have assisted people in locating buildings and facilities, as well as assisted in providing direction on the roads. Overall, safety and directional assistance have been improved. Without the support of INAC [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada], this opportunity would not otherwise have been possible."

Six youth from *Six Nations of the Grand River* in Ontario participated in the development of an educational nature trail. The participants worked on the project from beginning to end. First they researched and recorded all the vegetation including their uses, plus animals and birds that inhabit the area of the nature trail. Then they mapped out and rough cut the trail. They did fund-raising, and developed educational trail handbooks. They even constructed hexagon picnic tables, benches, garbage containers and identification signs and placed them at various points along the trail.

This program not only provided recreation for the community, but the co-ordinator states that all six youth returned to school in September 1998. Five were accepted into New Start to complete their high school education and one went on to Niagara College.

Most First Nations made an extra effort to make the Work Experience Program relevant to all youth, especially those "at-risk."

For example, in *Peigan First Nation*, Alberta, 15 youth who participated in the program were previously on social assistance. These individuals "lacked the skills and education to successfully compete for employment initiatives both on and off reserve." Natoshia Bastien, the program co-ordinator, said the program was such a success that 11 of the 15 youth will be returning to school (both secondary and post-secondary) in the fall, while the other 4 are working. Miss Bastien concludes, "It has been a pleasurable 30 weeks and I commend the federal government for their investment in youth."

Another positive development as a result of the Work Experience Program is the partnerships that were developed between bands and the surrounding towns or among First Nations themselves. For example, for the first time the *Aatse Davie School* and the *Kwadacha Band* in B.C. worked together to implement the program. The co-ordinator states, "This partnership between the school and band office has never been seen before. They are beginning to view one another as partners."

By working together, the *Seabird Island* and *Shxw'ow'hamel* First Nations in B.C. also realized that by combining their resources they could provide a more comprehensive and wide-reaching program. According to the final report, this partnership helped "form important connections for both youth and the communities involved."

First Nations and Inuit Communities Support the Strategy

Excellent results have stemmed from this program. Participants have increased self-esteem. Communities have looked inwards and identified their priorities and vision for the future. Entrepreneurship has increased. Participants have found jobs or returned to school. New partnerships and friendships have been formed.

As the co-ordinator at the Kapawe'no First Nation in Alberta states, "DIAND has a potential gold mine with the Work Experience Program."

Recommendations

1. Contained in the Final Reports:

- increase the wages paid to youth
- get funding out to First Nations early so they can start their program earlier
- do more information-sharing (e.g., workshops and teleconferences)
- provide funding to pay full-time co-ordinator
- provide funding to cover child care, transportation costs and Workers' Compensation Insurance
- use mentors
- have a flexible learning and working environment

Youth Business Program

With an annual budget of \$1 million nationally, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association (NACCA), in partnership with DIAND, was able to provide opportunities to 147 youth. The program provides access to seed capital and mentoring to First Nations and Inuit youth who are interested in starting a business. While the program focuses on out-of-school, unemployed First Nations and Inuit youth who are between 15 and 30 years of age, underemployed youth, part-time students and those at risk of dropping out of school were also eligible in 1997/98.

Between April and August 1997, DIAND consulted with NACCA to develop the overall parameters for the Youth Business Program. It was decided that NACCA would manage and ensure the delivery of the program across the country in both official languages through its network of member corporations.

From September 1997 to January 1998, NACCA designed the program and established a framework from which to work. In January 1998, NACCA was ready to launch the program with seven pilot Aboriginal Capital Corporations.

DIAND's Youth Business Program was developed around three main focuses:

1. Proactive business opportunity advice and counselling (including workshops)

NACCA developed a five-step program, through which participants must progress one step at a time. Step 1, *Assessment of Entrepreneurial Potential*, and Step 2, *Summary of the Business Project*, are aimed at individuals assessing themselves. All participants must go through the **First Nations and Inuit Youth Business Program handbook**, a self-assessment guide, to see if they are ready to start their own business. In Step 3, *Starting a Business*, participants must select a mentor who will help them prepare their business and financing plan. In Step 4, *Project Financing*, participants are required to contact the program co-ordinator to obtain information on how to submit their project for financing. Step 5 involves *Post Start-up Follow-up*, in which participants receive assistance during the first two years of their business operation.

Due to the late start of the program in 1997/98, no workshops were held before March 31, 1998. However, 102 youth did receive counselling. In Whistler, B.C., for example, 12 youth received counselling and from that session, five business plans are being developed.

2. Mentoring and advisory support

As of March 31, 1998, 35 youth benefitted from mentoring.

In late 1997, NACCA started to put together a mentors' data bank which would provide mentors for youth in their field of interest. The mentors are individuals with business experience in government or private industry, entrepreneurs in any field or simply individuals with the knowledge and expertise to provide specialized advice. NACCA is still working on finalizing the data bank, which continues to grow as more and more youth participate in the Youth Business Program.

3. Loans/equity matching

Youth can receive a small loan of up to \$3,000 and/or an equity advance of up to \$1,500. In addition, all participants receive mentoring and assistance in developing a business plan up to a value of \$2,000 of service during the first two years of self-employment.

From January to March 31, 1998, eight youth received a micro-loan and two received equity matching.

Success Stories

The Aboriginal Capital Corporation delivering the Youth Business Program in Nova Scotia is Ulnooweg Development Group Inc. In 1997/98, 15 loans have been booked in fields such as telecommunications, logging, fishing, financial services, grocery and dog grooming.

A 23-year-old in Nova Scotia received equity matching to open up a logging company. He has created a small business on-reserve and hired four people from the community. Another First Nations individual near the Vancouver area opened up a convenience store, bringing a much-needed service to the community.

A man in Truro, Nova Scotia, opened up a Chip King, a windshield repair franchise. When another man from Halifax who opened up a separate Chip King experienced trouble, the Truro man provided advice and support. They have since decided to open up a third Chip King together.

In Quebec, the Native Commercial Credit Corporation reports that between January 1997 and July 1998, 13 business projects were accepted, 3 are under study awaiting a decision from Aboriginal Business Canada and 2 are in the final phase of preparing business plans. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 30, with an average age of 26.

Projects funded by the Native Commercial Credit Corporation between January and March 1998 include financing for a clothing store, a garage, a restaurant, a smokehouse, an excavation project, tree planting, an ice cream bar and a chiropractic centre. A young man who opened up his own chiropractic centre received a \$1,500 start-up and publicity grant and an 8.5% loan. He states that after six months of operation, “the financial projections in my business plan are right on.”

In lower mainland British Columbia, a woman purchased an equity position in an auto-wrecking business. She intends to leverage other funds so that she can purchase controlling interest in the business.

First Nations and Inuit Communities Support the Strategy

Through the Youth Business Program, First Nations and Inuit youth are contributing to the economic development of their communities through the creation of viable, profitable businesses and decent, interesting jobs that reflect who they are. They also have the opportunity to ensure that Native values, culture and diversity are represented in the Canadian labour market.

One of the value-added components to DIAND’s program is it offers mentoring, assistance in developing a business plan and follow-up for two years.

In 1997/98, the stage was set by the pilot projects and participating Aboriginal Capital Corporations to meet a growing need for youth in First Nations and Inuit communities. We can see the potential of the program if we look at the explosion in the number of participants from April 1 to July 31, 1998: 692 youth received counselling, 305 secured a mentor, 28 obtained micro-loans and 14 received equity matching, thus bringing the total number of participants to 1,039. From the 7 pilot Aboriginal Capital Corporations that laid the groundwork for the Youth Business Program, 24 such corporations across the country will be delivering the program in 1998/99.

Recommendations

1. Contained in the Quarterly Reports:

- increase the level of the micro-loan from \$3,000 to \$5,000
- some Aboriginal Capital Corporations are better at marketing the Youth Business Program than others; more effort on ways of reaching youth should be made by all member Aboriginal Capital Corporations
- increase visibility and use of mentors’ data bank

Conclusion

The 1997/98 results show that the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy is a successful program for which there is considerable, unmet demand.

DIAND's Youth Employment Strategy uses a holistic approach that is community-driven and focussed on the needs of individual youth. Our programs encompass culture, traditions, apprenticeship, internships, mentoring, job shadowing, career exploration, capacity building, partnership, and the integration of an academic and vocational curriculum.

The 1997/98 success stories show us an increase in the number of participants and in the quality of placements. Work placements were established in various employment fields, with a large percentage of the youth working in growing sectors of the economy. Greater linkages were made with other communities, and partnerships developed among band offices, schools and with other First Nations communities. Self-esteem, confidence and attendance were increased in many of the participants. Entrepreneurship, a stay-in-school attitude, community and parental involvement and knowledge of tradition and culture were also heightened through programs in 1997/98. Most importantly, however, First Nations and Inuit communities made extraordinary efforts to make Youth Employment Strategy programs relevant to all youth, especially those at risk of dropping out of school.

First Nations and Inuit communities support Youth Employment Strategy programs. They are developing recommendations for 1998/99 and for a possible renewal of the strategy. They are seeking additional resources to administer the programs, and an increase to the wages provided to the youth for the Summer Student Career Placement and Work Experience programs. They want student exchanges, flexible guidelines and long-term funding. The final report on the Proceedings of the First Nations Co-operative Education National Conference concludes, "The lack of long-term planning in the absence of a long-term funding commitment from DIAND is a great obstacle."

The challenge will be to provide ways to assist communities to pursue a long-term vision on how to address youth issues.

Appendix One **Key Contacts**

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Appendix **Two**

National Organizations Funded by the Department for the Summer Student Career Placement Program

- Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
- The Assembly of First Nations
- Native Women's Association
- Canadian Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association
- Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers
- Inuit Broadcasting Corporation
- Pauktuutit
- Inuit Art Foundation
- United Youth of Turtle Island
- First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres
- Aboriginal Nurses Association
- Inuit Circumpolar Conference
- National Aboriginal Forestry Association
- National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
- National Association of Friendship Centres
- Aboriginal Liaison Directorate