MANITOBA
RESEARCH
ALLIANCE

CED
IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Education and Training in CED and the New Economy

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MANITOBA RESEARCH ALLIANCE CED IN THE NEW ECONOMY

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CED AND THE NEW ECONOMY*

The Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy (referred to throughout this document as the Research Alliance or the MRA) is a three-year research project to examine how communities might overcome obstacles and share in the benefits created by the New Economy. We identified Community Economic Development (CED), a development strategy that emphasizes local self-sufficiency, local decision making and local ownership, as a strategic response to assist communities in taking up the opportunities and meeting the challenges created by the transition to a New Economy.

The Research Alliance brings together academic researchers from the universities of Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon; senior government policy makers; and practitioners active in Manitoba's dynamic CED community (and elsewhere). The lead organization is the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba, a community-based research institute uniquely positioned to make such community-university connections. The team's Principal Investigator is Dr. John Loxley, Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba. The Research Alliance was launched in late 2002, and it funded and oversaw over 40 individual research projects chosen to help meet the larger project's overall goals. This research was conducted by academics, students and community researchers, in many cases working in teams. These projects have been successful, not only in their particular research findings, but also in providing opportunities for students and community researchers to receive practical research training. And they have bridged the gaps between academic disciplines, and between the university and the larger community. While focussing primarily on Manitoba, the composition of the Alliance enables it to draw on experiences from across Canada and beyond.

This publication is one of ten summary publications prepared by the Research Alliance. These publications, which we have come to call "kits," describe the results of our research, and the kits are organized by audience or by theme. It should be emphasized that we are not — nor could we be — comprehensive in addressing these themes. Rather, we have identified a wide range of research results based on the specific research projects that we undertook. The themes and audiences for the kits arose out of the research, as we think these themes are the most effective way to organize the results.

The complete list of kits is as follows:

1. The impacts of the New Economy

* We are pleased to acknowledge the generous financial support of the Initiative on the New Economy of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council; via the Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy. For further information please see: http://www.manitobaresearchallianceced.ca.

2. The potential of Community Economic Development
3. Government policy regarding Community Economic Development and the New Economy
4. The role of gender in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
5. Aboriginal issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
6. Business issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
7. Education issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy (aimed at educators)
8. Urban issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
9. Rural issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy
10. Northern issues in Community Economic Development and the New Economy

These kits, along with the rest of the publications prepared by or for the Research Alliance, can be downloaded for free from www.manitobaresearchallianceced.ca. Much of the research has also been published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba (www.policyalternatives.ca/mb).

A note on sources

This particular publication is informed by all the research carried out, but in particular the information here has been drawn from the following individual projects:

Aboriginal Learners in Selected Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba, by Jim Silver, with Darlene Klyne and Freeman Simard

"Is CED an Alternative to the New Economy? Debates and Theoretical Issues," by Heather Graydon

CED-Oriented Business Development Strategies for Winnipeg's North End, by Brendan Reimer

Economics for CED Practitioners, by John Loxley and Laura Lamb

The Evolution of Community Learning Networks: Political Philosophy and Historical Examples from Rural Manitoba, by Karen Rempel

Identifying Employment Opportunities for Low-Income People within the Manitoba Innovation Framework, by Garry Loewen, Jim Silver, Martine August, Patrick Bruning, Michael MacKenzie, and Shauna Meyerson

Informal Learning and the Digital Divide, by Lawrie Deane

The New Economy? Continuity and Change in Gardenton, by Susan Heald

"A Scan of Community Economic Development Organizations, Rural Communities and First Nations in Manitoba and their Participation in the New Economy," by Carly Duboff

The State of Community Economic Development in Winnipeg, by John Loxley

State Policies to Enhance the New Economy: A Comparative Analysis, by Michael Mackenzie, Jim Silver, and Byron Sheldrick

Training Aboriginal Workers for Manitoba Call Centres: Public-Private Partnerships and the Public Good, by Julie Guard

Training Options that Would Increase Employment Opportunities for Local People in Resource Extraction Projects in Northern Communities, by Nancy LeBlond and Sasha Brown

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CED AND THE NEW ECONOMY

What Is the New Economy?[1]

In recent years, a New Economy has emerged, one in which information and knowledge play a central role. The emergence of the New Economy has been credited with generating robust economic growth, new and challenging employment opportunities, new wealth-creation possibilities, and the promise of greatly enhancing the productivity, and, hence, incomes, of people in the rest of the economy. Information technology also offers new opportunities for leisure, education, lifestyle and access to government services.

Some researchers have been quick to caution that the extent and "newness" of the New Economy should not be overstated. Historically, all capitalist economies have experienced cycles of upturn and recession, with the upturns often the result of technological innovations. Information technology is, no doubt, a major innovation, but the fundamental elements of the economy remain in place. Evidence suggests that the only sectors that have experienced extraordinary economic growth in the New Economy are the computer information technology-based sectors.[2] And since many businesses have already bought and incorporated the new technology, growth in these sectors will level off.[3]

There is also evidence that the benefits of New Economy growth have not been distributed evenly, and the New Economy may even have hurt the most vulnerable people, creating permanent job insecurity. A "dual-segmented" labour force intensifies the split between high-paying, flexible jobs and deskilled, low-wage, non-unionized, service-sector jobs.[4]

Not surprisingly, given that there is not even general agreement about whether and to what degree a "New Economy" actually exists, there is no foolproof, touchstone definition for the term. However, a number of authors see it as being underpinned by three major structural changes: a rise in general education levels; the development and availability of new information technology; and the increase in "invisible" trade in services, mergers and acquisitions, and the flow of information. This definition was adopted by the Manitoba Research Alliance as a starting point, and was used by many of the researchers on our team.

The New Economy is intimately linked with the information and computer technology (ICT) sector (in fact, it is often *defined as* the ICT sector, although, in reality, it is broader than just that). The New Economy in Canada is largely concentrated — or "clustered" — in a few large cities, primarily in Quebec and Ontario, and secondarily

in British Columbia and Alberta. Relative to the rest of the country, the ICT sector in Manitoba is relatively small and growing relatively slowly. It is also located primarily in one urban centre: Winnipeg.

Manitoba seems to have had the misfortune of missing out on the late 1990s New Economy boom, but the good luck of avoiding the bust. (This is not at all unusual for Manitoba, a province with an open mixed economy not prone to the extremes of a boom and bust cycle).[6]

"The New Economy in Canada is clustered in four of its largest cities"

The New Economy in Canada: Education and Training Policy and Regional "Clusters"[7]

There is a growing body of academic literature conceptualizing the New Economy. Out of this, two theoretical approaches have gained particular prominence: National Systems of Innovation theory and cluster theory. Cluster theory would seem to best explain the development of the New Economy in Canada, and has particular relevance for education and training.

Research on "clusters of innovation" stresses the importance of proximity in the process of innovation. A "cluster" is essentially a group of interconnected companies, suppliers and institutions that both compete and cooperate in a field. The institutions are typically educational/research institutions, such as universities. They are all located in the same geographic area, which could be a city or a region (Silicon Valley, for example). The geographic concentration gives the area critical mass.

Cluster theory offers a way to understand the shape and character of the New Economy in Canada, as Canada's knowledge-based economy is concentrated in four regional clusters: Montreal (biotechnology, computer telecommunications and aerospace); Ottawa (telecommunications); Toronto (software, computer hardware, biotechnology and internet applications); and Vancouver (computer software, biotechnology and wireless communications). By one estimate, these four clusters make up 80% of the country's innovation capacity.[8]

State Policies to Promote Education and Knowledge in the New Economy[9]

For at least two decades, many jurisdictions have put greater emphasis within their economic policies on the development of New Economy industries. An examination of state policies aimed at promoting the New Economy reveals that the state plays an extremely active role in developing and supporting New Economy initiatives. This takes the form of policies designed to lure industries to locate in particular jurisdictions, as well as resources dedicated to supporting the capacities needed for New Economy firms to grow. In general, a significant conclusion to be drawn from this is that the New Economy development has relied to a very great degree on state assistance and investment. Most jurisdictions have established government ministries or offices dedicated to the promotion and advancement of knowledge, science, technology and innovation. The state in almost every jurisdiction plays virtually no role in connecting members of low-income communities to emergent New Economy industry; this is a weakness.

State investments to support the New Economy are primarily directed toward education and the building of public or quasi-public infrastructure. These expenditures can be broken down into four types: general knowledge-related infrastructure such as broadband networks; research councils and government research labs; the development of advanced educational institutions and facilities; and educational programs and initiatives that are unrelated or only partly related to any specific educational institution.

As regards the first of these types, all urban areas in advanced industrial nations, and most areas near urban centres, have access to modern knowledge-based infrastructures. This is not the case in many remote or rural areas. Efforts are being made to address this "digital divide." The Government of Canada has developed an extensive, multi-faceted initiative called Connecting Canadians, the purpose of which is to ensure all Canadian communities have access to broadband services. A centrepiece in this initiative is Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP), which seeks to provide affordable public internet access at libraries, educational facilities and community centres. (CAP is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this paper.)

"Much government support for the New Economy takes the form of investments in education"

Publicly funded government research labs complement the innovative potential of universities and private research-intensive firms. Government labs conduct research that is pre-competitive, labour intensive, preliminary and often expensive. Efforts are made to transfer knowledge with commercial potential to private sector interests. Knowledge and technology transfers from government labs to the private sector are a primary means by which early-stage public investment in R&D is transformed into economic growth. So, while government research labs clearly represent direct public investment in knowledge creation, they are often also explicitly established as supports for the private sector. Manitoba committed $24 million to the Red River College's Princess Street Campus. Completed in 2004, its focus "will be on information, communication and technology programs in response to the needs of the New Economy."

An increasing number of government education programs focus on job specific skills. They represent a direct public investment but they also directly benefit private companies by providing, in

some cases, very specific training that would otherwise have to be conducted on the job. Hundreds of education programs fit this description.

Education and Training as a Form of Public Support for Private Firms in the New Economy

Most industry support programs in most of the developed nations have been reconfigured over the past two decades to be more broadly available and to contain a smaller element of explicit subsidy. There are, however, many ways in which governments provide direct support to New Economy firms. There are several such supports related to education and training, including information networks that provide public knowledge and technology transfers to private firms, and training support or the provision of an already skilled workforce.

> "The depth of the 'digital divide' is usually measured in terms of computer ownership and usage"

The Networks of Centres of Excellence program is a major initiative of the Canadian government designed to develop partnerships among universities, government research institutes and industry. There are Centres of Excellence across the country doing research in areas ranging from language and literacy to engineering to sustainable energy to information and telecommunications technology to health sciences and biotechnology. One of the primary functions of these centres is to facilitate the commercialization of new ideas by bringing together technological expertise, entrepreneurial skill and new sources of capital. At the provincial level, there are many smaller scale centres dedicated to supporting research, start-up companies and commercialization.

The "Digital Divide"[10]

It is frequently stated that knowledge is the key to work adaptation in the new economy. Specifically, rapid change in information technology will mean that most workers will need to engage in a process of lifelong learning to stay current with the demands of their occupations. Proposals to meet the need for knowledge and skills in IT usually focus on incorporating IT learning into the formal education system.[11] Less often discussed, however, are means by which potential employees can realize for themselves, and effectively demonstrate to employers, the quality of learning they have obtained outside a formal education setting. This lack of access to flexible assessment of prior learning is surprising, since much IT learning is informal, individualized and experiential.

Some students from low-income communities and ethnic minority status may be affected in a particular way by this issue. Since they often lack the resources to acquire computer hardware, advanced programs and internet access, and they spend relatively less time using computers, they may believe that their skills are less developed than those of young people from more affluent communities.

As a result of phenomena such as the one described above, there is much discussion of a so-called "digital divide."[12] This term refers to a new form of social inequality based on differential access to information technology. An issue of growing concern, both within industrialized countries and across the international community, is inequality of access to IT equipment and inequality of skills in information technology. This disparity has racial, cultural and geographic patterns.

The depth of the digital divide is usually measured in terms of unequal ownership of home computers, frequency of internet use and cultural patterns of IT use and participation. There are more computers in the United States than in all other countries of the world combined. Forty-one percent of all global internet users are located in the United States and Canada. Even with this widespread usage, however, there is inequality

of access within North America. In the US, only 37.7% of central city residents have computer access, compared to 42.3% of residents of urban areas in general. Only 22.8% of female-headed lone parent families have internet access, compared to 51% of all other households. African-Americans have fewer computers at all income levels than do whites.[13] Gaps between those who have access to IT and those that do not appear to be widening. This has implications for educational attainment and employment for members of low-income communities.

Most proposals to address this inequality involve increasing availability of computers and internet connections in low-income communities and modifying the teaching of IT knowledge and skills in formal educational settings. Equally important, however, may be access to flexible assessment of knowledge already gained through informal use of information technology. Such assessment of prior learning may have an equalizing effect that could supplement increased availability of computer hardware and formal education.

What Is Community Economic Development?[14]

The last several decades have witnessed the evolution of a renewed, multi-faceted and comprehensive development ideology that is referred to as Community Economic Development (CED). CED seeks either to bring impoverished communities into the mainstream economy or to develop alternative economic institutions or systems that work for them. CED is a strategic attempt to increase individual, family and community wealth and self-determination through a blend of social and economic factors, ultimately creating a better community.[15]

"CED has been subject to an eclectic range of definitions"

CED has been subject to an eclectic range of definitions. To some, CED covers any economic development initiative, be it private, public or community driven, taking place within some definition of 'community', usually a geographic one. According to this view, there is no necessary inconsistency between orthodox economics and CED. In keeping with the more demanding definitions of CED now coming to dominate the literature, more radical departures from the orthodoxy seem necessary.[16] These define CED as a social process in terms of decision making; they replace the individual 'consumer' with the collective community; they see the meeting of collective 'needs' taking precedence over the satisfaction of individual consumer 'demands'; they take a long view of economic activities as opposed to that of short-term profit maximization; and they see economic decisions as being inextricably linked to social, environmental, political and cultural considerations.

Within this more demanding view of CED, there are two schools of thought. The first, associated with a more radical, communal, tradition, sees CED as a form of social organization alternative to capitalism. The second has a more limited vision, seeing CED as a desirable and workable approach to dealing with particular problems facing communities. These problems are a direct outcome of the way in which capitalism differentially and unevenly affects certain communities and CED is seen as a way to help fix them. Adherents to the first school are often found working alongside those of the latter.

"The Neechi Principles have been widely adopted as a benchmark in Winnipeg's large and active CED community"

The most complete set of CED principles are those underlying the Neechi model of CED. Neechi Foods Co-op Ltd. is an Aboriginal worker-owned cooperative retail store in inner-city Winnipeg. The idea of this approach is to build a strong, inward-looking, self-reliant economy, which is based on goods and services consumed by people who live or work in the community. In theoretical terms, it is a "convergence" strategy of economic development.[17] It favours cooperative ownership, small-scale production and popular control over economic decision making. It is a holistic approach, in which the safety, health and self-respect of residents are of paramount importance.[18] The principles on which it operates are as follows: production of goods and services for local use; use of local goods and services; local re-investment of locally generated profits; long-term employment of local residents; local skill development; local decision making; improved public health; improved physical environment; neighbourhood stability; human dignity and solidarity among communities and businesses following these principles.

Notwithstanding the ongoing debates about how to define CED, the Neechi Principles have been widely adopted as a benchmark in Winnipeg's large and active CED community, and as a theoretical starting point by the MRA and most of the individual researchers working on projects under the MRA. Several researchers attempted to refine or restate a definition of CED, but all these redefinitions remained broadly consistent with the Neechi Principles. For example, Friesen and Hudson extracted components from a number of works to define CED as "placing the community at the centre of economic development — such that the community is both the beneficiary and the prime mover. By matching local resources with local needs, community members are able to realize their higher-order non-economic needs, as well as their basic material needs."[19] Fernandez adopts a definition prepared by the BC Working Group on CED, which takes CED to be "a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly combines social and economic development and is directed towards fostering the economic, social, ecological and cultural well-being of communities."[20]

CED in Manitoba

Many commentators have noted that Winnipeg is rapidly becoming a focal point in Canada for CED. In an address to the CED Gathering held in Winnipeg in 2003 on the theme of "Maintaining Momentum," Loxley listed reasons for this: CED in Winnipeg is guided by a clear set of principles (the Neechi Principles); CED activists in Winnipeg have demonstrated a willingness to engage nationally in promoting the philosophy and practice of CED; there is a strong institutional base for CED in Winnipeg, with the Community Education Development Agency, Assiniboine Credit Union and SEED Winnipeg, among many other institutions; government support for CED has improved markedly since 1999; charitable foundations have

become more active in supporting CED; there is a supportive academic environment for CED. The Manitoba government has adopted a CED Lens, but there is evidence that it is not as widely used in decision making as it could be.[21]

Education and Training in Targeted CED Communities

Urban Communities

Conditions in Winnipeg's inner city are worse than for Winnipeg as a whole. For particular groups of people and particular neighbourhoods, circumstances are *very* bad. However, there are encouraging signs of improvement in socio-economic conditions, although the challenges — many of which are long-standing — remain severe.

"Incomes in the inner city are low"

Currently, the inner city makes up just under 20% of Winnipeg's total population, but the inner-city population is shrinking. Its residents are also highly mobile — more people move more frequently in the inner city than in the rest of the city. These factors add to the challenge of revitalizing the inner city.

The median inner city family income in 2000 was $36,411, compared with $54,724 city-wide. While inner-city incomes remain below those city-wide, the gap is narrowing. Inner-city median family incomes, as a proportion of median family incomes in Winnipeg, climbed from 61.2% in 1990 to 66.5% in 2000. Adjusted for inflation and represented in constant 2000 dollars, real median inner-city family income increased by 7.0% between 1990 and 2000, while declining by just under 1% city-wide. Census data show that inner-city unemployment rates fell from 14.8% in 1991 to 9.0% in 2001. Over the past decade, the number of employed adults in the inner city increased by almost 6.0%. This improvement is even more significant, given that the number of working-age

adults in the inner city fell by 5.0% over the same period. Despite these improvements, the incidence of unemployment continues to be higher in the inner city than in the city as a whole.

Improvements in educational attainment in the inner city are also emerging. According to the 2001 census, 38.5% of residents 15 years of age and over in the inner city had less than a high school education, down from 49% ten years earlier. And the number of inner-city residents who hold a university degree has grown by almost 23% over the same period, to more than 13,500 individuals in 2001.

"Manitoba is facing a skilled labour shortage"

Manitoba, like much of the industrialized world, is facing a labour shortage, and, in particular, a skilled labour shortage. Loewen et al. surveyed the literature on this issue. Winnipeg is especially likely to be a localized "hot spot," suffering from an acute shortage of skilled workers. Among the lowest rates of unemployment in the country have consistently been found in Manitoba, and specifically in Winnipeg. Winnipeg is a slow-growth city (increasing at an annual rate of 0.04%) in a province that loses about 1000 skilled young workers each year to provincial out-migration. Losing young people is contributing to the greying age structure of the city, where, in 2001, 17.2% of residents were over 60 years of age.[22] The tight labour market and demographic aging in Winnipeg point to looming labour shortages, the beginnings of which are already being felt by employers.

The Innovation Framework for Manitoba[23]

One strategy to address the labour shortage is to link the large pool of un- or underemployed people in the inner city and other low-income communities with those industries expected to experience labour shortages. In 2004 the Province of Manitoba released An Innovation Framework for Manitoba, which outlined a strategy aimed at ensuring that Manitobans benefit from economic development in targeted industries expected to be future growth industries. Six clusters of industries were identified, with each supported by a coherent strategy for ensuring that Manitoba will become a player in these industries.

While the preamble to the document acknowledged the importance of drawing members of disadvantaged communities into the paid labour force of those industries, it did not lay out clear strategies for doing so. A report prepared for the MRA by Loewen et al. argued that filling this gap should be an important priority for the province. The authors conclude that the government should partner with the business community, educational institutions, unions and community-based organizations to create a workforce intermediary for advanced manufacturing industries in Winnipeg. Such an organization would be charged with bringing together diverse stakeholders from across the region, organizing, supporting planning and overseeing multiple partners and funding streams toward common goals.[24] In particular, provincial government resources would be needed to enable the intermediary to become established, and then to perform the full range of employment development functions that are necessary.

Aboriginal Communities

Almost 38% of Aboriginal people living in Manitoba, or more than one in every three, reside in the city of Winnipeg. This is the largest Aboriginal community in the province. Nearly half of Winnipeg's Aboriginal population lives in the inner city. As in other metropolitan areas, Winnipeg's inner city has been declining for decades, and has become an area with concentrated poverty, unemployment and social problems. Manitoba has one of the highest proportions of Aboriginal residents in Canada and Winnipeg has more Aboriginal residents than any other Canadian city, making up 8% of the population in 2001.[25] It is this component of Winnipeg's

population that holds the key to turning around the city's demographic fortunes. The Aboriginal population is much younger than the population as a whole, with a median age of 24.7 years in 2001, notably younger than the median age of the general Winnipeg population, 37.1 years.[26] So, while Winnipeg's general population begins to age, the growing Aboriginal population will slow that aging down and provide large numbers of young new entrants into the labour market in coming years. Although Aboriginal children represent "the economic future" of the province, the Aboriginal population in the past has been significantly under-represented in the labour market.

Northern Manitoba has a high percentage of Aboriginal people — about two-thirds of northern Manitobans.

Adult Learning Centers in Manitoba[27]

Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) first offered high school credits to adult students in 1996–97. ALCs are a relatively new phenomenon in Manitoba, one that emerged in an unplanned way. There is no evidence of considered policy development or even that the government had identified needs to be met. As a result, although ALCs have many things in common, each one is different from the others.

In a report prepared for the MRA, Silver, with Klyne and Simard, investigated the nature and potential of Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba. They examined closely five Adult Learning Centres, chosen specifically because they had a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal learners. The demographics of Manitoba are such that the education of Aboriginal adults will, in future, be a central concern for all educational institutions.

The authors conclude that Adult Learning Centres are a very exciting educational innovation, and an important addition to the tools available to the province to build a better future for Manitobans, and, in particular, a better future for Aboriginal people. Given the demographics of Manitoba — which suggest a continued and significant growth of the Aboriginal population, both in absolute and relative terms, for quite some time into the future — such initiatives are particularly important. Their importance is accentuated by the fact that, generally, the regular school system has not yet made the changes needed to respond to Aboriginal educational needs, as documented in a recent study of Aboriginal education in Winnipeg inner-city high schools.[28] The importance for Aboriginal people of the work being done by ALCs is not just that individuals can transform their lives, as important as that is. It is that Aboriginal people as a whole, Aboriginal people collectively, can benefit from appropriate and effective forms of education so as to take charge of their lives.

"Adult Learning Centres are an important addition to the tools available to the province to build a better future for Manitobans"

The authors learned from their interviews that many Aboriginal learners carry with them a great deal of pain and often suffer from a lack of self-esteem or confidence. Given this reality, the authors conclude that the single most important explanation for the success of ALCs is the great lengths to which the institutions go to provide a friendly, helpful, relaxed atmosphere, free of racism. Another, closely related, point is that ALCs use a holistic approach to adult education — this means that learners are not treated simply as students, but as whole people, whose (often difficult) lives outside the classroom are every bit as important to their prospects of completing grades as their facility with math or English. This means that the instructors are called on to be much more than "just" teachers. Moreover, several ALCs offer an explicit "decolonization" approach, in which steps are taken to enable Aboriginal people to see

the real, historical causes of their despair. In particular, Winnipeg's Urban Circle Training Centre does this in a deliberate and very successful way; the process then becomes part of a foundation for successful learning.

Based on their research and interviews, the authors identified the following key themes that they believe characterize a successful ALC: group-based learning; rooting adult education in learners' experience and culture; efforts aimed at job-preparedness and a well-paid, secure job at the end of the process; the importance of community, as well as individual, transformation. ALCs are doing a good job of improving levels of educational attainment and improving job prospects of Aboriginal people and others from low-income communities.

> "The Province should encourage the involvement of unions in the call-centre industry as an additional protection for very vulnerable workers"

Call Centres[29]

The Manitoba government has put in place initiatives to train disadvantaged Aboriginal people for call-centre jobs. In a creative response to the restrictions imposed by federal employment and training policy, the province has used partnerships with employers as well as with community organizations to create opportunities for disadvantaged workers. In a report prepared for the MRA, Guard evaluates these initiatives. She concludes that, by providing training for Aboriginal people for entry-level jobs in a high-demand industry, it has deployed its limited resources strategically to address one of the region's most urgent social and economic problems. Yet, the requirement that employment programs be provided in partnership with employers incurs significant costs. These partnerships sacrifice transparency, making public scrutiny of the project all but impossible.

The complexity created by a web of public-private partnerships is virtually inevitable under the terms of the federal-provincial agreement. But the exclusion of unions is not. The province's failure to include unions as partners points to a too-close identification with the perspective of employers. Many employers in this industry, including some in unionized call centres, are hostile to unions. But without unions, workers have no advocate with expertise in workers' rights and experience in protecting them. Unions are also an important part of the community and a vocal advocate of social justice. Manitoba unions have taken an active role in protecting and advancing the interests of Aboriginal people and other racialized workers, providing ant-racist education to their members, supporting self-organization among workers with particular interests and encouraging members of racialized and other equity-seeking groups to seek leadership positions. By refusing to involve unions, the province accommodates low-road employers and offers no incentive to others to maintain their higher standards. Recruiting Aboriginal and other workers for insecure, poorly paid jobs where workers are not treated with respect does not advance the interests of the community. Those interests can be advanced only by supporting workers through training and into employment in well-paid, secure jobs that build self-esteem.

New Technologies and Education in Rural and Remote Communities

Since the Second World War, rural Manitoba has seen significant farm consolidation, but that trend — in which ever-fewer families rely on the family farm as their primary source of income — has been exacerbated in recent years. According to the 2001 Census, from 1996 to 2001, the total number of farms in Manitoba declined by 13.6%, while the average farm size rose. A farm-income crisis is forcing more and more farmers to rely on off-farm income. In general, the family farm is disappearing in the face of high capitalization requirements and the concentration of land ownership. There seems little doubt that globalization and the structural adjustment of Canadian agriculture are affecting rural Manitoba. A parallel trend is that rural population growth is essentially stagnant.

Education and Training in Rural Communities[30]

The New Economy offers education and training opportunities for rural communities and First Nations. During the mid-to-late 1990s, the Government of Canada launched two programs to bring internet into northern communities and First Nations, with a goal of improving the education system. The first program began in February 1995. The Community Access Program (CAP) was to provide 10,000 public-access computers to ensure that all Canadians could have internet access, as well as providing teachers in northern regions the ability to access distance education. All communities with populations of less than 50,000 across Canada were to be connected by March 2001. By 2000, there were 136 CAP sites in Manitoba; only 19 were in First Nations and only six were northern or remote First Nations. Most of the CAP sites were in southern Manitoba, and community access was very limited because most were located in schools.

Along with CAP, SchoolNet was created to provide all Manitoba with access to the internet. Schools were given computers and satellite uplink equipment.

On-Line Education

On-line electronic learning, or e-learning, occurs when education or training is conducted over the internet. Opportunities to receive education on-line continue to grow. In 2000, 57% of colleges and universities in Canada offered almost 3000 on-line courses.[31] As well, the private sector offers a plethora of training services through the internet. E-learning provides high school students in remote regions the opportunity to take courses that are not offered at their smaller schools. Through e-learning, students, educators, employers and anyone with broadband service can get access to courses and learning resources that would otherwise be out of reach. E-learning can occur in different ways. Instructors can e-mail a course to a student and interaction only occurs between the student and instructor (rather than between an entire class and the instructor) by e-mail. This type of learning allows students to learn at their own pace. Some electronic courses are offered like traditional courses, with students meeting for "class time" in a chat room. E-learning instructors often also post information on their Web sites, including course outlines and reference materials.

> "The New Economy has not eliminated the economic marginalization of rural communities"

E-learning is also a useful tool for training staff. Many CED organizations do not have the resources to retain a staff person to train employ-

ees. Instead, many organizations use training on-line for their staff. This may be to learn new computer programs, to learn about what other organizations are doing or to receive on-line certification. E-learning results in lower training costs, as organizations do not have to pay for travel or courses, as well as not having staff away from the office for days at a time. Another benefit of e-learning is that modules or portions of courses can be completed during slower periods of the day.

"Compared with other Canadian jurisdictions, Manitoba's university extension activities into rural communities have been erratic and short-lived"

Tele-Learning

Tele-learning occurs when a group of people from more than one location participate in a teleconference during which teaching and learning occur. A person or organization offers a learning opportunity and people or groups can call and participate. Tele-learning is practical for rural communities and First Nations, who can participate in learning events without incurring travel costs or losing staff hours. Communication and sharing with communities or First Nations with similar resources, industries or locations can occur without the concern over expenses.

Community Learning Networks in Rural Manitoba[32]

The Network of Community Enterprise Development Centres (N-CEDC) is a network of six southwest and south-central Manitoba communities and regional economic development organizations. The goal of the N-CEDC is to promote community and economic growth in and among the network members. From 2001 to 2003, the primary activity of the N-CEDC was the Learning for Life Initiative, a community-based program aimed at promoting lifelong learning as an approach for CED.

In a report prepared for the MRA, Remple studied the recent history of community learning organizations in rural Manitoba and the contributions that lifelong learning can make to CED. This was partly to test the idea that New Economy developments — in particular, access to new technologies — offer the opportunity to scale up current CED models and increase their reach into rural communities. Community learning actually has a long history in Manitoba, making up part of the province's cooperative/communitarian tradition. Based on a survey of the literature, interviews, and focus groups, Remple draws three key conclusions:

- Government funding is critical to establishing, though perhaps not to sustaining, community learning organizations.
- Manitoba community learning organizations have received little or no government support for their programs, and, as a result, have had to rely largely on voluntary agencies. This situation is not typical in Canada.
- Compared with other Canadian jurisdictions, including our closest neighbour Saskatchewan, Manitoba's university extension activities into rural communities have been erratic and short-lived.

The North

Northern Manitoba is geographically vast and sparsely populated. According to the 2001 census, northern Manitoba accounted for only 7% of the province's total population. Northern Manitoba also has a very high proportion of Aboriginal people — 68%, according to census data. And the northern population is young — the greatest number of northern Manitobans fall within the 5–14 and 25–44 age categories. This means that there are a large number of youth who will join an already-young labour force within the next five to ten years.

Education levels in the North are lower than in the province as a whole. The 2001 Census revealed that 46% of northern Manitobans over 20 years of age have not completed high school, compared with 28% provincewide. Where 19% of Manitobans have attained a diploma or certificate from a university, only 10% of northern Manitobans have done so. Lower education levels make it more difficult for Northerners, on average, to find a job, and overall economic growth is hindered by these lower average education levels. Employment levels have fallen slightly between 1991 and 2001; employment levels fell during the same period in the specific category of agriculture and resource-based industries, which includes fishing and trapping, logging and forestry, and mining. The fall in this category has been offset slightly by a rise in employment in manufacturing and construction.

The northern economy will benefit in numerous ways from a better trained and more educated populace, and this can be achieved through distance learning and community-access computers, among other ways.

Educational Institutions in Northern Manitoba

Currently, **Keewatin Community College (KCC)** is the key post-secondary institution located in the North. However, two other training and/or educational centres are to be established within the next several years.

The **University College of the North (UCN)** is a post-secondary institution that will offer a comprehensive range of post-secondary education options including developmental, trade, career, technical and undergraduate degree programs. UCN will provide Northerners with a regional institution that will grant university degrees. Initial indications are that the UCN will develop one-year programs that lead to Bachelor of Arts and/or Science degrees, with other programs to follow in the future. Programming focus will be community driven.

"The population in the North is relatively undereducated"

The **Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence** (a partnership between Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, based in Nelson House, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development) has resulted in plans to build a training facility and business incubator on-reserve. The programs to be offered by the centre include: literacy; security skilled trades; heavy equipment operating; and women in Trades and Technology. The centre will also offer business support services.

Recommendations

Use personal contact to recruit Aboriginal people into training programs

We found strong evidence that direct personal contact is the most effective means of recruiting Aboriginal people into pre-employment programs. Schools and training centres should expand their recruitment efforts by focussing on direct engagement with the Aboriginal community. To take just one example, the Aboriginal U-Crew at the University of Manitoba, comprised of students from Manitoba and northwestern Ontario, attends university and high school events to share their own experiences and provide concrete advice to other Aboriginal students.

> "Retention of Aboriginal students is a serious issue for some vocational programs in Manitoba"

Improve retention by making Aboriginal students more comfortable

Retention of Aboriginal students is a serious issue for some vocational programs in Manitoba. It is, therefore, important to increase the ambient comfort of learning centres, both physically and non-physically, in order to foster high retention rates among Aboriginal learners. Sexsmith and Pettman quote the director of Aboriginal Focus Programs at the University of Manitoba, who observed, "In order to be able to learn, students need a place where they can feel comfortable. They need a place that's pleasurable to be in and that says we believe in you." A supportive, culturally appropriate environment is also instrumental in maximizing the retention rates in Aboriginal training programs. Discussion groups and personal attention were strategies used by the most successful programs, such as Urban Circle. Organizations that are concerned to retain a high proportion of entrants should ensure their facilities are comfortable and that program administrators are personable, encouraging and compassionate.

One notable example in the banking sector is Assiniboine Credit Union (ACU). The Credit Union's board of directors is committed to hiring Aboriginal people, and makes efforts to engrain this goal as a company-wide value. By sourcing Aboriginal employees from centres where people are devoted to making life changes, communicating skills requirements to training organizations, providing sensitivity training to all employees and striving to advance Aboriginal people through the organization, ACU has achieved an Aboriginal employee turnover rate of less than 1%, which is one-tenth the rate of similar organizations.[33]

Use strategic partnerships to increase Aboriginal employment in targeted industries

The Manitoba government is already using partnerships to connect Aboriginal people with jobs in the call-centre industry. And there is significant potential to increase the number of work placements for Aboriginal people in several key industries, including banking and airlines, both of which were studied by the MRA. Such opportunities are more limited in the latter, due to an economic environment that has constrained hiring capacity. Nonetheless, the airline sector has much to learn from companies in the aerospace industry, which appears to be fairly proactive in its hiring of Aboriginal graduates. An organization such as the Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources Coordinating Committee (MAC), which works with both secondary and post-secondary institutions to create pathways into the industry, or the creation of a human resources branch of the MAC, could have a significant impact on the number of internships offered in the airline industry by

relieving private companies and training centres from the responsibility of setting up partnerships themselves. With respect to banking, the number of financial institutions and training organizations operating in Manitoba renders the creation of a centralized Aboriginal human resources committee unrealistic. Even so, facilities such as the the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centers have significant potential to facilitate discussion between prospective Aboriginal employees and companies in the banking sector.

Create a workforce intermediary[34]

The provincial government should partner with the business community, educational institutions, unions and community-based organizations to create a workforce intermediary for advanced manufacturing industries in Winnipeg, to help place people from targeted populations (such as the Aboriginal community) into good jobs. (This recommendation overlaps with the next one.)

Enhance employment development by building on CED strengths and best practices[35]

Winnipeg's employment development environment would benefit greatly from being made more systematically networked. In particular, workforce intermediaries would achieve this goal in targeted industries. Such organizations would be charged with bringing together diverse stakeholders from across the region, organizing, supporting planning and overseeing multiple partners and funding streams toward common goals.[36]

The employment development environment should also become:

- **More employer-driven.** Experiences in Winnipeg and the evidence from elsewhere show that employer involvement in training frequently leads to good jobs. The employers interviewed by Loewen et al. identified a number of characteristics of potential employment development programs that would make such programs more appealing to employers. Those characteristics include: a coop or internship component; training allowances or subsidies for employers; the full involvement of any unions from the first stages; financial assistance to support students through the training period.
- **More interventionist.** If employers restructure jobs, qualifications and recruitment processes to better meet the needs of disadvantaged workers, they are much more likely to integrate those people into the workforce.
- **More culturally competent.** A large proportion of Winnipeg's low-income population outside the labour market is Aboriginal. Cultural barriers need to be overcome if bridges to good jobs are to be built.

"Winnipeg's employment development environment would benefit greatly from being made more systematically networked"

Additionally, any employment development programming should take into account the following best practices:

- Focus on good jobs (full-time, permanent, paying a living wage and with some opportunities for advancement).
- Simulate the workplace by holding similar expectations in terms of punctuality, attendance and teamwork.
- Provide post-employment supports.

Make Adult Learning Centres even stronger

The following recommendations apply specifically to Adult Learning Centres, which have emerged as an important tool in Aboriginal education in Manitoba. (They are taken from Silver with Klyne and Simard. However, it is interesting to note that one of the most successful ALCs with a large proportion of Aboriginal students — Urban Circle Training Centre — also was singled out for praise by a number of respondents to a study on Aboriginal employment in the airlines and banking industries.)

> "Many northern communities want to have access to basic skills training within their own community"

- Direct additional funding at Adult Learning Centres, both to make greater resources available to existing ALCs and to increase the number of ALCs operating in Manitoba.
- Promote Aboriginal culture at all ALCs, through the increased use of sharing circles, additional educational opportunities for staff and adult learners and hiring more Aboriginal staff.
- Promote group-based learning, including the use of orientation sessions for incoming learners, in ALCs where it is not now used.
- Develop job-specific programs in partnership with prospective employers in key industries.
- Encourage social service agencies to direct appropriate clients to the ALCs.
- Faculties of education should be encouraged to use ALCs as teacher-training sites.
- Research should be conducted into what steps might be taken to bring more Aboriginal men into ALCs.

Enhance training in the North

Many northern communities want to have access to basic skills training within their own community. It is recommended that government continue to develop partnerships with community colleges and community-based organizations for additional community-delivered programs aimed at young adults and adults, in communities not currently serviced. These programs should include basic literacy and numeracy skills, academic upgrading, employment/job readiness skills, testing and assessment programs, and technical training directly linking high-demand occupations and local employment opportunities. Similarly, it is recommended that government work with industry to design training programs and encourage industry partnership in these programs.[37]

Notes

1 This section draws most heavily on Graydon and Duboff.

2 Bobe, 2002; Tabb, 2001, cited in Graydon, p. 16.

3 Delong, 2002; Tabb, 2001, cited in Graydon, p. 17.

4 Hudson, 2001; Yates, 2001, cited in Graydon p 16.

5 This section is based primarily on Friesen and Hudson.

6 Calculated from Statistics Canada, *Trends in Provincial and Territorial Economic Statistics: 1981–2002*, Table 1, p. 21.

7 This section is based primarily on MacKenzie, Sheldrick, Silver.

8 Niosi, 2002.

9 This section draws on Mackenzie, Sheldrick, and Silver.

10 This section is based on Deane.

11 OECD, 2001; Beaudin and Breau, 2001, cited in Deane, p. 1.

12 Norris and Conceicao, 2004; OECD, 2000, cited in Deane, p. 1.

13 Norris and Conceicao, 2004, cited in Deane, p. 3.

14 This section draws most on Loxley and Lamb, Friesen and Hudson, and Fernandez.

15 Reimer, p. 87,

16 See, for instance, Canadian CED Network, 2004; Loxley, 1986.

17 Thomas, 1974, cited in Loxley and Lamb, p. 2.

18 Loxley, 2002, cited in Loxley and Lamb, p. 2.

19 P. 4.

20 P. 1.

21 See Sheldrick.

22 City of Winnipeg, 2004.

23 This section is based on Loewen et al.

24 For a longer discussion, see Loewen et al., p. 17.

25 Mendelson, 2004, p. 9.

26 Statistics Canada, 2003b, 2003c.

27 This section is based on Silver with Klyne and Simard.

28 Silver and Mallett, 2002, cited in Silver, Klyne and Simard.

29 This section is based on Guard.

30 This section is based primarily on Duboff.

31 Industry Canada, 2001, cited in Duboff.

32 This section is based on Remple.

33 Sexsmith and Pettman, p. 81.

34 See Loewen et al. for a full discussion of this issue.

35 Loewen et al., pp. 48–50.

36 For a longer discussion, see Loewen et al., p. 17.

37 LeBlond and Brown, p. ii.

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