



**2011** *State of the  
Inner City Report*  
*Neoliberalism: What a difference a theory makes*

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba

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## Cover artwork

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**Jacqueline Young** is a graduate from the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture. Her photographic collages attempt to document the space between the real and the imagined, bringing attention to the role of subjective experience of everyday life in the city.

The subjective experience Jacqueline depicts so well can refer to the frustration many inner-

city residents experience while negotiating the labyrinth of barriers and dead ends they encounter every day. Those barriers include institutional rules and regulations at odds with their attempts to get ahead, and pervasive societal attitudes that further stigmatize and alienate them.

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# 2011 State of the Inner City Report

## Policy and the Unique Needs of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners

by Shauna MacKinnon

*“When you’ve got the world telling you you’re never going to amount to anything and all of a sudden you know you can do whatever you want to do. Oh my God, it’s life changing.”*  
(Graduate of Urban Circle Training Centre)

Education is consistently recognized as central to poverty reduction and social inclusion. In the inner city, where poverty and social exclusion are much higher than in the rest of Winnipeg, having education better meet the needs of inner-city residents is a priority for participants in the State of the Inner City Report project. And since a high number of Aboriginal people living in Winnipeg are further concentrated in the inner city, ensuring that inner-city education is shaped in a manner that meets the needs of Aboriginal people is particularly important.

Fully 10 percent of Winnipeg’s population is Aboriginal compared with 3.7 percent of the population of Canada in general. According to the 2006 census, the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Winnipeg has the highest number of Aboriginal people of all CMAs in Canada and this population is expected to grow further. This growth is in part because the Aboriginal population is younger and growing at a faster rate, but it is also the result of migration from reserve communities as individuals and their families relocate to Manitoba’s largest city in search of better opportunities.

The Aboriginal population in the inner-city is

markedly higher than in Winnipeg generally. Fully 21 percent of the inner-city population identify as Aboriginal and in some inner-city neighbourhoods, such as Lord Selkirk Park, more than 50 percent of residents are Aboriginal. Within these neighbourhoods Aboriginal people are also among the poorest and most marginalized—65 percent of inner-city Aboriginal households have incomes below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO).<sup>9</sup>

### Education and training: Inner-city Aboriginal adult learners

The literature very clearly states that focusing on all stages of education is imperative. Intervening with culturally relevant programming in the very early years is the best way to prevent people from dropping out of school later, and providing alternative options for children and teens is equally essential. While some important programs have emerged over the years including head start programs, Niji Mahkwa and Children of the Earth Aboriginal schools, and the more recent Pathways to Education program, there are not nearly enough programs to adequately accommodate Aboriginal children and youth.

Related to this situation is the reality that Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to drop out of school at an early age and return later as adults to complete their high school and pursue post secondary education and training. This group of learners must not be ignored because their success

<sup>9</sup> MacKinnon, S. (2009) Tracking Poverty in Winnipeg’s Inner City, 1996 – 2006 in *It Takes All Day to be Poor, State of the Inner City 2009*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba.

can set the stage for generations to follow. Breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion requires that we not only focus our attention on creating opportunities for children, but their parents as well.

For this reason we focus this chapter on the state of education and training for Aboriginal second-chance learners. Second-chance learners are those individuals who have failed to complete their education and training through the traditional trajectory (post-secondary education following completion of secondary education). Second-chance learners can be further characterized as individuals with low socio-economic status, minimal access to resources and supports, and responsibilities beyond those of the mainstream student. For a host of reasons that will be described further in this paper, Aboriginal people are over represented among those who drop out of school at an early age.

The policy environment for these learners has changed significantly in the past 40 years. While an increasing number of Aboriginal people have high school and post secondary education, policy has evolved in such a way that it is more difficult for those most socially and economically marginalized to obtain satisfactory education and decent-paying work. This policy change occurred in spite of strong evidence to show that for those who are able to find the training and supports required, the social and economic impact is significant. The 2009 Senate Report on Poverty, Housing and Homeless showed how the government of Canada could generate billions of dollars each year if education outcomes were greatly improved (The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009)

The following quote from an individual who returned to school as an adult and has since obtained a professional degree speaks to the power of education for three generations of her family:

Once one person graduates, boy does that open a door. It's huge! My youngest sister and my nephew went to school there so all together there were five of us that graduated from Urban Circle. My two sisters are in their last year at the inner city social work program. My daughter has graduated and she's been working and my other daughter is on main campus and is hopefully getting into nursing in the fall. So within a matter of...seven years...we will have five university degrees—every woman in my family will have a university degree. My granddaughter is graduating from grade 12 this year. She's talking about what university she's going to. My Grandson who's 16 is talking about what he's going to do. It's the norm now. It's not just a dream.

For this individual the cycle of poverty has been broken. But it took time. This individual was fortunate to have been able to find financial assistance to take her through a long adult-learning journey.

If we are to scale up this success to reach many more families, we will need to make significant changes in policy. This paper looks at how policy has evolved and how it could be improved so that all multi-barriered people have access to the education that they desire.

While consistent neighbourhood data showing education attainment rates over time are not available, we know that they continue to lag far behind that of the Non-Aboriginal population. For example, while the number of Aboriginal Canadians completing high school has increased, there continues to be a significant gap in contrast with the non-Aboriginal population. In 2006, one in three (34 percent) Aboriginal persons in Canada between 25–64 years had not completed high school compared with 15 percent of all adults between 25–64. Manitoba, including Winnipeg, has a particularly poor record when it comes to



high-school completion rates of Aboriginal people (Table 1).

To tell the full story of education in the inner city would require more space than is available in this report. The story we tell here is one important aspect of the education experience that is familiar to many inner-city residents.

When we look at how policy has emerged as it relates to education and training for socially and economically excluded groups such as the Aboriginal second-chance learner, two stories emerge. First, there has been a general shift in policy since the 1980s that has resulted in a scaling back of the social safety net. This shift has effected education and training with particularly negative results for people who are poor. Fewer supports are in place and education and training policies and programs are now designed to meet labour- market needs (MacKinnon, f/c). The robust programs that were put in place in the 1970s and 1980s that supported multi-barriered people in their efforts to attain post secondary education have been scaled back considerably.

The second story is a more promising one. In spite of policy retrenchment, community-based organizations are finding ways to work around restrictive policies to make education more relevant to the needs of inner-city people and in particular Aboriginal people. Winnipeg's inner city is home to some innovative education and training projects that are making a difference in people's lives. The result is that there has been a slow and uneven progression of change in the way we respond

to the unique education needs of Aboriginal adult learners.

### **Colonization: The historical policy context and intergenerational effects**

The history of colonial policies in Canada has had a significant impact on the social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people. Although not a completely homogenous experience, the colonization of Canada's Aboriginal people has been similar to that of indigenous people across the globe (Memmi, 1991; Maaka & Anderson, 2006). In Canada, there is a long history of state and church attempts to force European culture and values on Indigenous peoples and to deny, denigrate, belittle and criminalize indigenous customs and beliefs through a process of colonization (Laenuie, 2000). The implications have been well-documented in the five volumes of research of the 1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. More recently Canada implemented (2008) The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC followed a model similar to the Australian National Inquiry into the Stolen Generations through the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) launched in 1995 and which determined the impact of policies aimed at assimilating indigenous children in Australia. These inquiries further demonstrate that colonial policies have had deep and damaging intergenerational effects that we are failing to adequately address, and suggest that we continue to fail to ensure Aboriginal people are fully included without

**Table 1: Percentage of Population without high-school certificate (Age 25-64)**

	Total population	Aboriginal Identity
Canada	15 %	34 %
Manitoba	20 %	40 %
Winnipeg	14.8%	30%

Census of Canada 2006, Community Profiles

major structural change. For example, as the dominant approach to respond to poverty and social exclusion, short-term, remedial skills training is particularly unsuitable for Aboriginal second-chance learners because it fails to acknowledge that many of them require more than job specific training to reverse the damaging effects of colonization. As noted by Esping-Andersen (2002), a focus on remedial training is unlikely to be effective “unless participants already possess the necessary abilities and motivation” (p.5). For many Aboriginal second-chance learners, the legacy of colonization and oppression has led to internalized beliefs of inadequacy that inhibit motivation (Hart, 2010; Laenuie, 2000). Programs that integrate decolonization into their curriculum are essential to assist individuals to understand their troubles within this historical context so that they can move forward.

One graduate spoke passionately about her experience at Urban Circle Training Centre (UCTC) and emphasized the importance of learning through a decolonizing lens:

[without it] there is a piece missing. You can take lots of different training and go out there and get a job and you can earn money and you can do this and that, but you know—you’re still ashamed of being an Indian.

I had the benefit of experiencing something different, and if I had not, I would not be talking about this.

For 44 years I walked around with my head up my ass because I’m supposed to be all those terrible things and I’m not all those terrible things. I come from tribes of people that were amazing. But I never knew.

Understanding the historical and social context of Aboriginal learners is essential if we are to ensure that future policy and program development better aligns with the needs of

these learners. There are many factors contributing to the unique path of many Aboriginal learners.

For many Aboriginal people the experience of residential schools left grandparents and/or parents psychologically and spiritually damaged; they have passed their distrust of schools on to their children. Further, the continued use of Eurocentric content and teaching styles, a shortage of Aboriginal teachers, and a lack of trust in the promise that education equates with a better life leads many Aboriginal youth to leave school at an early age. The effect has been high levels of illiteracy, absence of hope for a better future, and a perpetuation of poverty.

Huffman (2008: 45) points to assimilationist policies as being a central problem that has resulted in ambivalent attitudes toward education among Aboriginal people. He notes that years of “paternalistic and condescending educational philosophies and approaches”, have contributed toward ambivalence, distrust, poor academic performance and early withdrawal.

This experience was also reflected in a study of Aboriginal post-secondary learners in Manitoba that found students to be struggling with “dispositional, situational, and systemic obstacles in their pursuit of post-secondary education”(Sloane-Seale et al. 2001). Study participants reported factors including lack of self-esteem, racism and sexism, lack of role models, dislocation, poorly educated parents, lower incomes, difficult family circumstances, lack of academic preparation, and shortage of childcare and other social supports as factors contributing toward a very daunting experience (Sloane-Seale et al. 2001: 23-25). Conversations with representatives of adult training organizations in Winnipeg reveal similar obstacles (MacKinnon/fc). They note that Aboriginal students generally come to them with low levels of education—few

beyond grade 10—and a host of family challenges and responsibilities that complicate their ability to complete programs and move out of poverty.

The experiences described above are consistent with the literature on colonization that describes a long process of destruction that has “affected people physically, emotionally, linguistically and culturally” (Smith 1999: 69). The damaging effects of colonization include internalized oppression (Poupart 2003; Freire 2006) that results in “a lack of self confidence, fear of action, and a tendency to believe that the ravages and pain of colonization are somehow deserved” (Daes 2000 as cited in Hart 2010: 117). This can lead to self-destructive behaviour that leads to a cycle of failure and contributes to one’s own oppression.

### **Policy and programs: Past and present**

While it is true that it makes a lot of sense to intervene in the early years to prevent kids from dropping out later, the reality is that many Aboriginal people are returning to school as adults and are improving their and their children’s lives. An interesting story continues to unfold in Winnipeg’s inner city that demonstrates the links between policy and programs, showing how investing in adult learners can have important social and economic returns.

In the 1970s, policymakers and educators began to understand the complex needs of many Aboriginal adult learners and responded with programs designed to provide extra supports. For example, a series of university and college ACCESS programs were introduced by an NDP government in the 1970s. These programs were designed to make Manitoba’s post-secondary institutions accessible for individuals who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend. ACCESS programs

continue today; however, like other programs, they have been eroded. Students receive less financial support than they did in the past and this makes it more difficult for those most in need to attend.

Some ACCESS programs are more specifically focused on providing opportunity for Aboriginal students. Others are open to a broader range of students recognizing geographic, financial, social, and academic barriers. Priority groups consist of northern Manitobans, Aboriginal people, single parents, women, immigrants, visible minorities, and people with disabilities. ACCESS programs provide academic and personal supports as required to assist students with completing their course of study.

By 1987, the Province was financially supporting sixteen separate programs. Five Manitoba post-secondary institutions now deliver twelve ACCESS Programs. While all ACCESS programs are targeted toward disadvantaged learners, they are not all the same. Programs like the University of Manitoba’s Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP) and the University of Brandon’s Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) were developed as community-based programs—programs that operate off-campus. However others, including the University of Manitoba’s ACCESS Program (UMAP) and the Engineering ACCESS Program (ENGAP) operate on campus, offering student supports including counselling, academic upgrading, advisory services within the traditional university setting.

ACCESS programs were initially administered through the Department of Education and Training. In addition to academic and personal supports, students were provided with financial supports: tuition fees and textbooks were provided for in addition to a monthly living allowance. In 1992 a Conservative government eliminated living allowances for ACCESS students and despite strong opposi-

tion by the NDP at that time, the decision was not reversed when the NDP returned to office in 1999.

Another program that emerged in the 1970s was the Province of Manitoba's New Careers program. New Careers provided multi-barriered individuals with training opportunities in over 40 different career areas. In spite of graduating more than 1000 trainees, many of whom became leaders in their communities, New Careers was scaled back in the 1990s after federal cutbacks in transfer payments resulted in a loss of 60 percent of program funding. Filmon's Conservative government chose not to fill in the funding gap and New Careers eventually ended in the mid 1990s.

In many ways New Careers was a model for the non-institutional, community-based training programs that emerged in the 1990s. The difference was that while it was labour-market focused, New Careers had greater flexibility to support students with complicated needs.

ACCESS programs also lost significant funding but they continued to exist, albeit in a considerably scaled-back form. Students were no longer provided with a living allowance. This has created a deterrent to many students who say that they are simply too afraid to take out student loans and fall into debt. As explained by a graduate of an inner-city ACCESS program and role model for many of the women emerging as leaders in the inner city, having a living allowance provided by social assistance was critical to her success: "I was a single mom on welfare, if I had not been given the opportunity get my degree, fully funded, I would not now be doing what I am doing....". Another single mother who attended the inner city social work ACCESS program in the 1980s emphasized the importance of funding so she did not have to worry about going into debt with young children to feed and nobody to rely on but herself: "...it gave me a bit of room to breathe and think, okay, that part's looked

after so maybe I can do this ...". She now has a bachelor of arts degree in social work and has been financially independent since graduating in the early 1990s.

## **The 1990s: Community-based training**

Other programs emerged in the 1990s albeit in a very different policy environment.

One example is Urban Circle Training Centre (UCTC), which was formed in 1991. The program grew directly from a need expressed by Aboriginal women in Winnipeg's inner city for training that would lead to meaningful employment. UCTC had the cultural component—which was introduced by the Aboriginal women in the program—right from the beginning. The Life Skills programming was later developed, integrating the philosophy of the medicine wheel into the core programming.

Urban Circle has grown significantly since first formed but it continues to operate within a restrictive policy environment. This is somewhat ironic given the devolution of training dollars from the federal government to provincial governments and various Aboriginal authorities such as the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD) in Winnipeg. While it would seem that there would be greater flexibility with resources managed at a more local level, this has not been the case. This is because local authorities have less control than it would seem. They are bound by agreements signed with the federal government that have become increasingly restrictive, allowing for funding of programs that are short term in nature and tied directly to labour market need.

Interviews with directors of adult learning programs, training programs and Access programs consistently identify this restrictive policy environment as a critical problem. It is particularly difficult to access living allow-



ances for those on social assistance wishing to pursue their education and there seems to be a lack of understanding within governments about the kinds of challenges students/trainees are up against. An example of this lack of understanding came from a senior manager working in the area of social assistance who said:

“EIA clients should be treated like everyone else. If they want to go to university, they can do that, but we cannot support them.... we are not in the business of supporting people to get careers—we are here to assist them to transition to work as quickly as possible—our policy is ‘work first’<sup>10</sup> (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2006, p. 15)”

This type of attitude is endemic in government and until policymakers have a full grasp of the barriers and complexities of people’s lives, policies will fail to align sufficiently with need.

## **Decolonization and education**

Many community-based Aboriginal organizations that are not directly involved in education have embraced the idea that decolonization is a critical component of the journey for Aboriginal people and have integrated cultural and historical teachings into their programming. Many argue that this stage is a necessary precursor to formal education and training. While sometimes invisible and difficult to measure, this type of “informal” learning in the community can have a positive impact on the education paths of those who may have become disillusioned early on and dropped out of “formal” education. Many Aboriginal adults have regained confidence and hope through their participation in community-based Aboriginal programs that

have integrated important traditional teachings in their way of operating (MacKinnon & Stephens 2010). There are many examples of individuals who have abandoned formal education with little hope for the future, and who attribute their return to formal education as adults to their participation in community-based programs (MacKinnon & Stephens 2010; Silver 2006). This is because understanding individual ‘troubles’ in the historical context of colonialism—seeing those problems as being less about personal failings than about damaging social forces—can be transformational.

Some community-based educators, in particular UCTC, have fully integrated decolonization and cultural reclamation into their programming. While not all Aboriginal organizations and others responding to the education needs of Aboriginal learners integrate decolonizing pedagogy into their programs, they are increasingly recognizing its importance, because the evidence shows that it has a powerful effect on learners (MacKinnon *f/c*; Silver et al. 2006).

## **Training that integrates work**

There is a significant body of literature that shows the benefits of integrating supply side programs (training and education) with demand side programs (job creation). There is far too little being done in this regard because of the restrictive nature of contemporary labour market policy (MacKinnon, *F/c*). Nonetheless, some innovative examples have emerged in Winnipeg’s inner city.

One example has in part been made possible through the support of the Manitoba Government, Manitoba Hydro and more recently the Government of Canada. Building Urban Industries through Local Development (BUILD)

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<sup>10</sup> Work-first policy emerged in the context of welfare reform in the U.S. It has been widely adopted across Canada. The basic idea of work-first is to address poverty by moving the poor from welfare into work as quickly as possible.

is a non-profit community-based organization with a mandate to combine environmental stewardship and poverty reduction. It incorporates a community economic development approach to the business of retrofitting houses to be more energy efficient. BUILD trains people who have limited experience in the formal labour market. The program is designed to integrate training and hiring of unemployed or underemployed inner-city residents so they can work retrofitting houses in the inner city. An equally important aim is to introduce participants, the majority of whom are Aboriginal, who have either been incarcerated or have had some attachment to the criminal justice system, to the trades through a workplace training/employment program. While this program is short-term in nature, the goal is to encourage and assist participants to pursue further training that will lead to certification in a skilled trade. There is a very high demand in the skilled trades, where wages are relatively high, providing greater opportunities for people to move out of poverty.

The programs described above are examples of how community-based organizations are finding innovative ways to work within a policy environment that is not compatible with the needs of those most marginalized. In the following section we explain why the policy environment is so restrictive and how it might be improved.

### **Neoliberalism: The new world order and how it relates to inner-city adult learners**

As described earlier, the current policy environment as it relates to education in the inner city, and in particular education for second-chance learners, is the result of a general shift in policy since the 1980s. Education and training has become valued less in its own right and increasingly viewed as a means to labour

force attachment. As described by Crouch, Finegold and Sako (2001, 0,5), in the current political economy “the concern is almost solely with education that will be occupationally useful rather than as a civilizing mission or a broadening of minds.”

While labour market policies include a host of government policies and programs including training, employment assistance, employment insurance and employment standards, governments are increasingly relying on short-term training measures designed to move people into the workforce quickly. Within this paradigm there is no consideration of the complicated factors that keep many people from moving forward.

Manitoba has not been immune to the scaling back of support to help multi-barriered individuals obtain post-secondary education. As explained earlier, in the 1990s the provincial government eliminated living allowances for social assistance recipients registered in College and University ACCESS programs thereby discouraging them from enrolling. This policy decision has never been reversed.

The erosion of public policy in support of marginalized people in Manitoba is directly tied to what has happened nationally and internationally. For those individuals most economically disadvantaged, governments are responding with policies and programs aimed at moving them quickly into the labour market. These policies are inspired by a particular kind of economic policy (neo-liberalism) which subscribes to the idea that the market should be free to regulate the economy. The idea is that if left to its own devices, the free market will provide opportunity for all who work hard enough. This model emphasizes short-term, supply-side (training) strategies aimed at changing individual behaviour to adapt to existing market conditions. The model rejects the other side of the equation, being the integration of demand-side strate-

gies (job creation) and comprehensive approaches that recognize the inability of the market to insufficiently respond to structural challenges (Bartik, 2001; Crouch et al, 1999; Livingstone, 1998). The result is that for people who are poor and have had significant interruptions in education, short-term training is the primary ‘inclusion’ tool currently used by governments.

However, statistics very clearly show that full inclusion remains elusive and in fact we have greater disparity in Canada than ever before (Yalnizyan, 2007; Osberg, 2008). Many Canadians continued to live in poverty during a time of economic prosperity and many more are falling into poverty as the economy now sputters along. Many individuals have participated in remedial training because this is what they have been told they must do to escape poverty. Yet they continue to be poor. This is particularly important for the Aboriginal population who continue to be over represented among the poorest and least educated, especially in northern Canada and across the Prairie Provinces (Mendelson, 2006). The reality that many Aboriginal people continue to fall behind raises questions about the effectiveness of the current policy approach taken by our governments.

If reducing poverty and social exclusion is our main goal, it cannot be overstated that focusing only on training is insufficient. As described by Esping-Anderson (2000, p. vii), the “employment generating power of improvements in skill levels is limited” in its ability to resolve poverty and social exclusion. Policy cannot depend solely on supply side measures such as education and training without addressing other fundamental systemic problems. Reforming institutions at one level are likely to be ineffective if other systems are not reformed in a compatible manner. This is particularly relevant for the Aboriginal second-chance learners for whom challenges are often complex, requiring supports that involve multiple

levels and departments of governments. This becomes problematic because the mandates of governments and departments are often not only incompatible, but arguably in conflict. For example, changes to education and training policies to encourage skill development in specific sectors are useless for individuals reliant on social assistance if ‘work-first’ policies as described earlier in this report create barriers for recipients to access these training opportunities.

## **Where to from here**

There is much more that we must do to improve the social and economic outcomes of people living in poverty. This paper looks at only one area—training and employment for Aboriginal second-chance learners—where improvements can be made. What follows is a list of policy recommendations pertaining to this particular area. Moving on these recommendations would help, but they alone will not resolve the growing disparity. Resolution will require a fundamental shift away from neoliberal policies that are serving a small percentage of people at that the expense of everyone else (Yalnizyan, 2007). Nonetheless, the following set of policy recommendations are provided for their potential to create a more holistic and comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of Aboriginal adult learners thereby helping to break the cycle of low-education and poverty. These recommendations have been derived from interviews with current trainees, graduates, teachers, counselors and program administrators who know from experience what works best.

### ***Funding, funding, funding***

“My clientele have huge gaps in social development, [many] have huge culture shock when they come to Winnipeg [from First Nations communities]. [Many] have addiction issues in the past or present and

[some] have extended family that sometimes interfere. They have so many barriers that I can't sufficiently train people in the time that we have designated."

Time and time again we are told of the complex lives of many Aboriginal learners and the insufficient funding available to support them through what is sometimes a long learning journey. Governments need to extend the parameters to at least 4-years and/or for the length of time needed to allow them to reach their education/employment goals.

### ***Supporting the Transition into Employment***

"There seems to be nothing in between there. Once you're done your course you're on your own. The government pays for this course then there's nothing there to take to your next step..."

The above challenge was expressed by some trainees but it was also raised as a concern of administrators and teachers who said that they had very limited capacity to assist their students with transitioning into the work force. Many program administrators have recently come together to recommend the establishment of a Labour Market Intermediary, an organization that would be steered by existing CBOs to work with them, program graduates, inner-city and marginalized job seekers and public-sector and other employers to ensure successful transition into well-paying jobs. This entity should be established.

### ***Decolonizing Pedagogy***

"learning about my culture and colonization was as important to me as the technical training I received...it help me to understand why I had so much difficulty in the past...I needed to do that before I could move forward."

We know that when Aboriginal people learn about their history as a colonized people, they are far better equipped to move forward. Yet funders do not provide funding for cultural reclamation. Some have found ways to work around this by couching their programs as 'life-skills' programming. Decolonization must be accepted as essential to curriculum and adequately funded as such.

### ***Integrating training and employment***

"...I didn't even know how to use a measuring tape, like six months ago, and now I'm just flying by making all these basements... this job kind of gave me the inspiration to go back to school and get my apprenticeship..."

While many adult learners choose to continue with their post secondary education after obtaining their high school certification, empowered by renewed confidence in their ability to learn and reach new goals, others simply want jobs. As illustrated in the above quote from a BUILD participant, this sometimes leads them to further their education.

Programs that integrate training with employment are important. BUILD was provided as one example of how this can be done; there are others. More opportunities—providing on-the-job training for good jobs in a variety of sectors—must be made available.

These are just a few ideas of how policies can be improved upon to make the learning journey for Aboriginal adults more effective and satisfying. The evidence shows that there are significant long-term and intergenerational benefits to be gained when we support Aboriginal adults pursuing their education. While not the only solution, expanding supports to this group can contribute toward our overall goal—to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion.



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