

MODULE 3, UNIT 3

BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES



A presentation by

Gwen Point

for the

Association of Canadian Land Surveyors

Winter 2014

Gwendolyn Point, B.Ed., M.Ed.

University of the Fraser Valley

- I live with my family on the Skowkale First Nation in Chilliwack, BC
- For 12 years, I was the Stó:lō Nation government's Education Manager
- I served as Chatelaine for Government House in Victoria and was an Honorary Patron for numerous organizations along with my husband who served as BC's Lieutenant-Governor
- My education includes a degree in Education from the University of British Columbia, Post-Baccalaureate from Simon Fraser University, Master in Education from the University of Portland and I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at SFU
- I am Patron for First Nation House at the University of Victoria and in 2012, that university awarded me an Honorary Doctorate in Education

Outline

- Learning Objectives
- Did You Know...?
- Introduction: Inclusion Works '13
- Opportunities, Best Practises & Partnerships
- Breakdown Myths & Prejudices
- Prevent Isolation & Inclusion Tips
- Focus on Retention
- Share and Celebrate Success Stories

Did You Know...?

- Partnerships and joint ventures in mining, construction, transportation, telecommunications, and utilities are bringing together the knowledge skills, technology, and capital of their partners – Indigenous and non-Indigenous
 - *Best Practices Toolkit: Strategies and Tools for Employing Aboriginal People* (November 2006)
 - <http://www.centralalberta.ab.ca/imagesedit/Edmonton%20Workforce%20Connection%20BP%20Toolkit.pdf>

Did You Know...?

- Workplace training opportunities enable Indigenous workers to move up the ranks and take on new positions and added responsibilities
 - ▣ *Insights You Can Count on: Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers*, Conference Board of Canada (July 2012) – you can get the full report if you sign in (free of charge) on the Conference Board website
 - <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=4886>

Introduction

- Video: *Inclusion Works '13: Formula for Success*
 - ▣ Canada's Largest Indigenous Inclusion Event and Recruitment Fair
 - Inclusion Works 13, watch the highlights (9 minutes)
www.aboriginalhr.ca/en/inclusion13/



Two Bank Economists Shoot Down the 10 Most Prevalent Myths about Indigenous Canadians

Steven Bolduc, who has built his business up to three printing franchises in the heart of Bay Street, is an example of the new generation of successful, urban native people. He's originally from the Fort William First Nation near Thunder Bay and grew up both on and off reserve. (Colin McConnell, Toronto Star, April 8, 2011).

Note: The following 4 slides are adapted from *The Toronto Star*
http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/2012/06/21/most_canadians_harbour_myths_about_aboriginal_people.html

Most Canadians Harbour Myths about Indigenous Peoples

Myth/Stereotype

- Indigenous people do not pay taxes

Fact(s)

- True for a minority, including some Status Indians living on reserves (up to 30% of Indigenous population)
- Those living off reserve (30%), Non-Status Indians (12%), Métis (23%), & Inuit (4%) all pay taxes
- Those exempt groups are taxed on income earned off reserve & purchases made off reserve

Break Down Myths, Stereotypes & Prejudice

Myth/Stereotype

- Indigenous students receive free post-secondary education

Fact(s)

- Some do and some don't
- The federal government provides funds to First Nations & Inuit communities to pay for tuition, travel costs, and living expenses
- Not all students get support or full support as demand is higher than the supply of funds
- Non-Status Indians & Métis are excluded

Break Down Myths, Stereotypes & Prejudice

Myth/Stereotype

- Most Indigenous communities are protected by treaties, which guarantee economic and political rights

Fact(s)

- True in Ontario
- Not true in British Columbia, Québec, Newfoundland, and Labrador

Some Public Perceptions Are Sadly True

- Compared to all other groups of Canadians, Indigenous people have higher rates of
 - ▣ Poverty
 - ▣ Drop-out
 - ▣ Substance abuse
 - ▣ Suicide
 - ▣ Incarceration
- However, the old labels, such as “lazy, dependent on the public purse, unwilling to improve their lives,” no longer fit
 - ▣ Each generation of Indigenous people is doing better than the last

Addressing Myths and Stereotypes

- Addressing these issues with staff on all levels – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – in a “safe” environment will help create a “healthy workplace”
- “Misinformation can spread like poison if it’s not stopped”
 - ▣ Fighting racism requires leaders to speak out against it and communicate clearly that there is zero tolerance for it
 - *Widening the circle: Increasing opportunities for Indigenous people in the workplace, Deloitte*
 - http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Canada/Local%20Assets/Documents/About%20us/Diversity/ca_en_diversity_widening_the_circle_040413.pdf

Best Practices

- Utilize awareness, recruiting, training, employment, and retention strategies with all your workers, not just Indigenous employees
- Designate a single point of contact or liaison for Indigenous employees
 - Someone from an Indigenous background or someone who has knowledge of Indigenous culture and society
 - The individual can be one of the production workers, and may be a mentor
 - *Best Practices Toolkit: Strategies and Tools for Employing Aboriginal People*
 - <http://www.centralalberta.ab.ca/imagesedit/Edmonton%20Workforce%20Connection%20BP%20Toolkit.pdf>

Retention and Inclusion

Benefits of Hiring Indigenous Employees and Presenters

- Gives your company direct connections with Indigenous communities
- They can become mentors for new Indigenous employees, help organize cultural events, and create positive news stories
- A local Indigenous elder or cultural leader can help support staff and also assist with cultural activities, workshops and presentations

Retention and Inclusion

- If recruitment is a challenge, then retention is going to be a challenge
- Inflexible, closed organizations won't encourage people to "stick it out"
- But if Indigenous hires become leaders, they can work to change the culture from within, and bring about continuous improvement

Retention and Inclusion

- Crucial to ensure there are strategies in place to move qualified Indigenous employees into leadership positions
 - ▣ *Insights You Can Count On: Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers*, Conference Board of Canada, July 2012

Preventing Isolation and Promoting Inclusion

Helpful Tips

- Appoint Indigenous mentors for new employees and/or have an employee who is aware of Indigenous issues and willing to act as a mentor
- Hold cultural awareness training sessions for all new employees
- Indigenous employees must be seen in all levels of the workplace

Methods for Increasing Retention

- Strengthen every source of employee engagement
- Offer career advancement planning, professional development, and continuing education
- Provide frequent reminders as to why an employee's work is meaningful
- Offer free counselling services that ensure full confidentiality
 - ▣ *Ten Proven Methods for Increasing Aboriginal Retention*
 - <http://www.aboriginalhr.ca/files/file/programs/rfws/Ten%20Proven%20Methods%20for%20Increasing%20Aboriginal%20Retention.pdf>

Methods for Increasing Retention

- Offer flexible scheduling for funerals, hunting, and other community-related events
- Conduct exit interviews
 - ▣ *Ten Proven Methods for Increasing Indigenous Retention*
 - <http://www.aboriginalhr.ca/files/file/programs/rfws/Ten%20Proven%20Methods%20for%20Increasing%20Aboriginal%20Retention.pdf>

Share and Celebrate Success Stories

- Celebrating “success” in the workplace that is inclusive is a “win–win” proposition for all employees
- What does success look like?
 - ▣ This can be determined by employees on all levels in the company
 - What success means to one person can be very different for another
 - For new Indigenous employees, success can mean surviving while living away from his/her home community for two weeks

Share and Celebrate Success Stories

- The positive benefits of employing Indigenous workers and upbeat stories about Indigenous achievements should be better publicized to
 - ▣ Encourage employers to engage with Indigenous Canadians and
 - ▣ Help combat negative stereotypes about Indigenous people among the non-Indigenous population
 - *Insights You Can Count On: Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers*, Conference Board of Canada, July 2012

Share and Celebrate Success Stories

- While Indigenous organizations can and do play a role in publicizing success stories about Indigenous people these stories may not be perceived as having as much legitimacy as they would if they came from non-Indigenous organizations
 - ▣ *Insights You Can Count On: Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers, Conference Board of Canada, July 2012*

Review

- “Inclusion Works ’13” – this is a great place to start is to an Indigenous recruitment workshop in your region or province
- Create a “safe and respectful” place to address myths and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples
- Hire a local Indigenous Elder or cultural person to support Indigenous staff and cultural activities
- Employ a mentor for new employees

Review

- Create strategies to support new employees
- Indigenous people in all levels of the company become role models
- Hire local Indigenous people
- Offer all employees cultural awareness sessions – for example, you could have guest speakers at lunch
- Share and celebrate success stories

Internet Resources

- Aboriginal Human Resource Council: Building prosperous partnerships
 - www.aboriginalhr.ca
- Best Practices Toolkit: Strategies and Tools for Employing Aboriginal People November 2006, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation: Edmonton Workforce Connection
 - <http://www.centralalberta.ab.ca/imagesedit/Edmonton%20Workforce%20Connection%20BP%20Toolkit.pdf>

Internet Resources

- *Finding and Keeping Aboriginal Employees: A Handbook for Small and Medium-sized Businesses*, The Business Link: Alberta's Business Information Service & Aboriginal Business Development Services
 - <http://www.canadabusiness.ab.ca/docs/Finding-and-Keeping-Aboriginal-Employees.pdf>

Internet Resources

- *Widening the circle: Increasing opportunities for Aboriginal people in the workplace*, Deloitte
 - http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Canada/Local%20Assets/Documents/About%20us/Diversity/ca_en_diversity_widening_the_circle_040413.pdf
- *Insights You Can Count On: Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers*, Conference Board of Canada, July 2012 – Get the full report if you sign in (free of charge) on the Conference Board website
 - <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=4886>