

CHAIR IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP (CEL) IN INDIGENOUS FORESTRY



SUMMARY

INSIGHTS INTO EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES
AND BEHAVIORS REGARDING INDIGENOUS
WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

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PROMOTIONAL DOCUMENT: INSIGHTS INTO EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS REGARDING INDIGENOUS WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jean-Michel Beaudoin, Professor, Department of Wood and forest Sciences, Laval University.

CO-INVESTIGATORS

Hugo Asselin, Full Professor, School of Indigenous Studies, University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Jamal Ben Mansour, Associate Professor, Department of Human Resources Management, University of Québec in Trois-Rivières.

Luc Bouthillier, Full Professor, Department of Wood and forest Sciences, Laval University.

Bruno Fabi, Professor Emeritus, Department of Human Resources Management, University of Québec in Trois-Rivières.

Étienne St-Jean, Full Professor, SMEs Research Institute, University of Québec in Trois-Rivières.

RESEARCH PROFESSIONAL

Delphine Théberge, Department of Wood and forest Sciences, Laval University.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Joanie Caron (UQAT), **Guillaume Proulx** (LU), **Pascal Vallières** (LU)

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PARTNERS

Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS); Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture

Indigenous employees as a solution to labour shortages in the natural resources sector

Labour scarcity affects many sectors of activity around the world. In Canada, the mining, forestry and fisheries sectors are not immune. At the same time, many Indigenous communities want to play a greater role in their regions' economies. Certain characteristics of Quebec's Indigenous communities could help to develop a pool of employees and thus address the issue of labour scarcity. For example, Indigenous communities are experiencing high population growth, have a young population and have high unemployment rates. In addition, the presence of Indigenous peoples in the labour market would have a positive impact on communities, as it would help reduce socio-economic disadvantages, psychological distress and depression, as well as promote higher self-esteem among those concerned.

In this context, a multidisciplinary research team led by Professor Jean-Michel Beaudoin conducted a study to better understand the factors that influence Indigenous participation in the work force. A survey was conducted among 127 employers in the Quebec forestry sector, including 18 Indigenous employers. The survey shows that collaborations, the fact that the business is Indigenous-owned and the size of the business influence employers' practices with respect to the management of Indigenous employees. This study also presents the results of interviews with employers in the mining, forestry and fisheries sectors to document their attitudes and practices towards the Indigenous workforce with a view to identifying practices that value the cultural diversity of workers.

While contexts vary from one sector to another, the findings of the study show that Indigenous ownership of a business, community partnerships and legal and judicial obligations influence employers' attitudes and practices, as well as the success in recruiting, integrating and retaining Indigenous workers. Legal

and judicial obligations, notably in the mining sector, lead employers to find solutions to promote the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees. These obligations have the advantage of encouraging employers to continue their efforts and identify new ways of doing things when they encounter difficulties. With no obligations, employers tend to focus their efforts on the non-Indigenous labour pools with which they have more experience.

For the three sectors studied, the development of a relationship of trust between the business and its indigenous



employees seems to be a key to the recruitment and retention of Indigenous workers, particularly by fostering a sense of belonging. Practices such as mentoring or an attitude of indulgence, tolerance and patience in the face of social challenges are also among good practices. In addition, collaborations and partnerships between businesses and Indigenous communities contribute to the evolution of the relationship of trust. Moreover, Indigenous businesses are more successful in recruiting Indigenous employees. This can be explained by their mission and, above all, by the presence of Indigenous managers who foster a climate of openness, inclusion and trust, as well as a sense of belonging.

To foster a climate of trust, inclusion and openness, training for all employees in the realities and cultures of Indigenous peoples seems essential. It is particularly important to provide training for foremen and supervisors who play an important role in the business. This type of training can reduce prejudices against Indigenous workers, improve the inclusion of Indigenous employees and help create a culturally safe environment. The creation of a culturally safe work environment must be assessed by Indigenous workers themselves, since the concept of cultural safety is based on the experience of those concerned.

In order to maximize trust between the organization and its Indigenous employees, several mining companies have hired a liaison officer who assists in, among other things, recruiting in the communities, welcoming and integrating Indigenous peoples into the business, improving interactions between Indigenous employees and supervisors, and raising awareness among non-Indigenous workers of Indigenous realities and cultures. In the forestry and mining industries, personalized follow-up of Indigenous workers, sponsorship and mentoring have been identified as practices that promote Indigenous employability.

Table 1 Excerpt from the table of good practices found in the in the global report

	Best Practices	Mines	Forestry	Fisheries	Documentation Review
SOCIETAL FACTORS					
Indigenous Social context	Adaptation to social problems (indulgence, tolerance and patience, ...)	X (p.28)	X (p.14)	X (p.22)	
	Organizational policies and awareness specific to alcohol and drugs		X (p.14)	X (p.22)	
	Indigenous health improvement initiative				X (p.12)
Work Location	Organization of a personalized transportation system for Indigenous employees		X (p.16)	X (p.13)	X (p.14)
Image of the natural resources sector/ Corporate image	Raising awareness among young people in schools	X (p.20)	X (p.17)		
	Creating role models for Indigenous workers	X (p.18)	X (p.17)		
	Commitments to social responsibility and workforce diversity / participatory management process with Indigenous peoples	X (p.43)			X (p.22)
	Obtaining certification (e.g. FSC) that shows that the company favours the hiring of Indigenous people.				X (p.29)
	Emphasis on the positive effects of work on the community / creation of a sense of pride in working for the company			X (p.24)	X (p.35)
ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS					
Training and Skills Development	PSC - business - Indigenous community collaboration		X (p.18)	X (p.35)	
	Bridging project, work-study and internship		X (p.18)		
	Recognition of prior learning / training involving only Indigenous peoples	X (p.19)	X (p.18)		X (p.18)
	Mentoring in companies	X	X (p.35)	X (p.21)	
	Financing training courses; Training offers		X (p.18)		
	Training adapted to the needs of Indigenous peoples (e.g. short-duration, practice-oriented, in communities)	X (p.19)		X (p.30)	X (p.18)

One of the challenges for businesses wishing to hire Indigenous workers, mainly in the mining and forestry sectors, is the existence of an accessible pool of skilled labour. Indeed, 27% of Indigenous peoples in Quebec aged 25 to 64 do not have skills recognized by a certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 13% of the non-Indigenous population. On the other hand, in the fisheries sector, the low level of education of Indigenous peoples has resulted in efforts to provide training and skills development. In some communities, the number of people trained exceeds the number of positions available. However, this phenomenon makes it possible to organize replacements when an Indigenous employee must be absent.

First and foremost, measures that promote the reconciliation of work and personal life are beneficial for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees. Nevertheless, the concept of family may differ from one culture to another. In this respect, the adaptation of employers to the traditional activities and family context of Indigenous employees appears to be a retention factor. However, it is important to raise awareness among Indigenous employees of the importance of planning their leave for traditional activities or family responsibilities. This request was also raised in the fisheries sector. It may be useful to consider a work arrangement where each position is associated with more than one person.

The project *Insights into employers' attitudes and behaviors regarding Indigenous workforce diversity* has produced a list of good practices, as well as recommendations for employers and governments. With these results, it is now possible to devise more effective measures for the recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous workers. However, the implementation of these recommendations and the applicability of good practices in the different sectors studied still need to be further developed. The political-legal frameworks related to Indigenous realities are complex and affect different areas of society. Fostering the participation of Indigenous employees in the labour force requires the coordination of several stakeholders. A reflection will be necessary to facilitate this coordination.

