Table of Contents

About this Report .............................................................................................................. 3
Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 4

Indigenous Peoples in Atlantic Canada: A Statistical Profile ........................................ 6

1. Individual and Systemic Barriers facing Indigenous Recruitment & Retention ........... 6
   The Education Gap ........................................................................................................ 6
   The Employment Gap .................................................................................................. 7
   Infrastructure and Geography .................................................................................... 8
   Women .......................................................................................................................... 9
   Culture and Community ............................................................................................. 9

Systemic Barriers ............................................................................................................. 10
   Bureaucracy .................................................................................................................. 11
   Approaches to workforce development .................................................................... 11
   Federal Workforce Development Programs ............................................................. 12
   Racism ......................................................................................................................... 12

2. Best Practices in employer recruitment and retention ................................................ 13
   Developing a Strategy ................................................................................................. 13
   Liaisons & Committees .............................................................................................. 14
   Cultural Awareness Training .................................................................................... 15
   Capacity Building and Community Economic Development .................................. 15
   Performance Evaluation ............................................................................................ 15
   Assessments ............................................................................................................... 16
   Communication .......................................................................................................... 17

Education and Training .................................................................................................. 17
   Early Intervention ....................................................................................................... 17
   STEM: Engaging Indigenous Youth and Women ...................................................... 18
   Work Experience and On-the-job training ................................................................ 19

Recruitment Strategies .................................................................................................. 20
   Advertising ................................................................................................................... 20
   Application Processes ................................................................................................. 21
   Interviews ................................................................................................................... 22
   Workplace Culture ..................................................................................................... 22
   Discrimination and Harassment ............................................................................... 23
   Mentoring and Advancement ..................................................................................... 23
   Exit interviews ........................................................................................................... 24
Feedback from Coast Guard Staff Interviews ................................................................. 24
Workforce Themes ............................................................................................................ 24
  Aging Workforce .......................................................................................................... 24
  Priority Areas ................................................................................................................ 25
Indigenous Engagement Themes ...................................................................................... 25
  Indigenous Leadership Engagement .............................................................................. 26
  Duty to Consult .............................................................................................................. 26
  Raising Awareness of Indigenous Peoples ................................................................. 26
  Understanding the Indigenous Workforce ................................................................. 27
  Raising Indigenous Awareness of Opportunities in the Coast Guard ...................... 27
Barriers to Success ........................................................................................................... 27
  Current Awareness of the Indigenous Workforce ...................................................... 27
  Corporate Structure .................................................................................................... 27
  Geography .................................................................................................................... 27
  Cultural Sensitivity ...................................................................................................... 28
  The Application Process .............................................................................................. 28
  Education Requirements ............................................................................................. 29
  Tracking Indigenous Applicants .................................................................................. 29
  Bilingualism .................................................................................................................. 29
Conclusion and Recommendations .................................................................................. 29
  Considerations and Recommendations for Indigenous Individuals ...................... 30
  Considerations and Recommendations for Indigenous Groups ............................. 30
  Considerations and Recommendations for the CCG ............................................... 31
  Recommendations Specific to the Canadian Coast Guard College ....................... 35
Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 37
Appendix A: Coast Guard Staff Interviews - Themes and Recommendations .................. 42
About this Report

The purpose of this report is to summarize systemic barriers to Indigenous recruitment and retention as well as identify best practices currently employed by organizations like the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG). This report also summarizes the feedback received from CCG staff through interviewing on the subject of Indigenous recruitment. It provides considerations and recommendations for both Indigenous groups and for the Coast Guard to best support individuals and improve recruitment and retention in employment and at the CCG College.

There are no standard frameworks or approaches to Indigenous workforce development, employment or retention strategies. This report surveyed a cross-section of qualitative and quantitative research conducted by government, academics and non-profit organizations as well as media and organizations similar in structure to the Canadian Coast Guard. Internet searches as well as topical journals in the fields of Indigenous employment, education and policy were conducted using keywords such as: Aboriginal, Indigenous, recruitment, retention, diversity, Human Resources, workforce development, as well as individual subject categories. Best practices, trends and key strategies for engaging, attracting, hiring and retaining Indigenous peoples are presented.

It is important to note that changes in terminology affect how data is collected and reported. Statistics Canada uses the term ‘Aboriginal’ to refer to the ‘Aboriginal identity population’; individuals who identify as First Nations (registered under the Indian Act, Treaty Indian, member of a First Nation or Indian Band), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and who are recognized as “Aboriginal Peoples” in the Constitution Act of 1982. As ‘Indigenous’ becomes a more acceptable term of reference, data pertaining to First Nations people specifically or the Aboriginal identity population are sometimes reported as the ‘Indigenous origin population’; a substantially larger number of individuals who are not registered, Treaty, or First Nation/Band members (non-status), but have North American Indian, First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry.

Executive Summary

Statistics cited in the literature show that Indigenous population growth in Atlantic Canada exceeds that of the non-Indigenous population at least four-fold and is significantly younger. This is contrasted with an aging workforce in the non-Indigenous population who are anticipated to retire in the coming years, creating a shortage of skilled workers. Increasing the number of employed Indigenous people has the potential to spur economic growth not only in reserve communities, but in the Canadian economy in general. The CCG Atlantic region not only employs more people than other regions, but also has the oldest employees on average. It is anticipated that 75% of staff in the Atlantic, Central and Arctic regions will retire in the next five years.\(^1\) The organization is in a unique position to merge its needs with the requirements of local Indigenous communities, to the benefit of both.

Academics acknowledge the anecdotal nature and lack of practical research on Indigenous workforce and engagement practices. They do however note that the most successful recruitment and retention initiatives stem from having strong relationships with Indigenous people and communities and involving them in planning and implementation. Sources acknowledge that workplace culture, organization, and

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\(^1\) Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Integrated Business and Human Resources Plan, 2018-2019, Ottawa (2016), 18.
operational environments are different and the tools that work for one may not work for all. There is very little quantitative research about Indigenous career aspirations and factors that affect Indigenous employment in Canada. The United States, Australia and New Zealand have pioneered research in health care, public health, welfare, social services, teaching, education and on cultural safety and Indigenous retention. The mining and natural resource sectors, legally mandated to engage with First Nations, produced the bulk of the research on Indigenous trades education and remote workplaces in western and Northern Canada. Much of this is governed by contractual obligations in IBA’s and MOU’s and is not publicly accessible for legal reasons. Indigenous peoples and communities across Canada face very different socioeconomic barriers that impact their ability to find, apply, qualify and retain jobs. Very few studies address the particulars of Atlantic First Nations culture and geography and best practices employed in one part of Canada, may not be applicable in others for these differences. Longitudinal studies are needed in Atlantic Canada to evaluate the effectiveness of certain strategies and to test theories and findings presented by academics in the field. It is hoped that the TRC’s calls to Action and Federal government discourse have created a renewed interest in Indigenous workforce research.

Introduction

Many organizations are struggling to prevent what is estimated to be a severe shortage of workers. At the same time they are under pressure to create more diverse workplaces reflective of the Canadian population. The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC) in 2015, called attention to the effects of residential schools and colonial policies on Indigenous peoples and communities. Ninety-four Calls to Action, of which education, reconciliation, training for public servants and youth programs are directly within Canadian Coast Guard operations and jurisdiction, seek to end policies and processes that discriminate against people of Indigenous ancestry and address economic and social inequities that currently exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.2

While growing numbers of Canadian businesses, organizations and institutions are committed to addressing reconciliation by increasing Indigenous engagement and recruitment, there are few resources to guide them. The vast majority of research is out of date and not in tune with current economic or social realities. The top five responses in a cursory search using the terms Indigenous/Aboriginal and workforce/labour force development were published between 1998 and 2008. A similar search in the Canadian HR Reporter showed that the majority of the articles on Indigenous recruitment and retention were published between 2000 and 2010 after which there was a steady decline. Of particular concern is the fact that studies published after 2010, rely extensively on older data and conclusions without questioning underlying assumptions.3 These studies do not account for the aftermath of the 2008 recession, growth in automation and artificial intelligence (AI), or post-TRC social and political realities.

Many organizations wish to contribute to Reconciliation in some manner but do not know where to start. A 2017 survey commissioned by Indigenous Works reports that 85% of medium and large companies in Canada have absolutely no relationship with local Indigenous communities,4 and

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3 Publication of Census data is delayed, and reports published towards the end of a census cycle are forced to rely on old data. Studies published in 2012 largely rely on data collected between 1996 and 2006.
companies in sectors that do report they continue to have difficulty hiring and retaining qualified employees. The mining industry and high turnover professions such as nursing and teaching are major contributors to current literature in Indigenous recruitment and engagement. Even so, the majority of companies in the mining sector, one of the largest employers of Indigenous peoples in Canada, admit that they do not have Aboriginal recruitment strategies. The CCG shares many similarities with the natural resources sector in that it has enormous potential to contribute to a highly trained Indigenous workforce but faces challenges in doing so. These include strict budgetary and regulatory requirements, high capital costs, and demanding work environments.

Overwhelmingly, the sources consulted for this report agree that building a diverse and inclusive workplace for Indigenous peoples is not easy. One study of companies currently engaged reported they were “very” or “somewhat” challenged in their ability to recruit Indigenous workers. There is no panacea and offering comprehensive solutions for all stakeholders is beyond the capability of most researchers. At the same time, researchers and employers universally agree that Indigenous engagement through hiring and other initiatives is a worthwhile, economical, and ethical thing to do that brings untold value to workplaces, bottom lines and the country as a whole.

The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB) reports that the full potential of the Indigenous workforce could be worth an additional $27 billion dollars per year to the Canadian economy. Eliminating barriers and employing an estimated 953 Indigenous peoples in manufacturing, and 791 in science, technology and professions, could add $183 million dollars per year to the Atlantic economy alone. More importantly, diversity is often cited by workers as something they look for and value in an employer and the lack of it is a reason why they leave, suggesting that greater diversity equals better recruitment and retention outcomes.

What follows is a compendium of best practices currently utilized, recognized and recommended throughout the literature. This information comes with the caveat that there are few, if any quantitative studies that test the effectiveness of these practices primarily because long-term Indigenous engagement, outside of legal agreements is relatively new, and operations, expenses and other key indicators are considered proprietary information. Industry reports based on surveys often rely on small sample sizes answered by corporate representatives who are already engaged with Indigenous peoples to some degree. Academic studies tend to be smaller, theory-based, and reliant on quantitative and anecdotal evidence for the conclusions they make. Organizations like the Conference Board of Canada confirm the need for more in-depth research on strategies used by employers to recruit and retain Aboriginal workers and how they effect change in the workplace. Private and public institutions are relying on others to pick up the threads and continue research on the subject.

5 Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MIHR), *Canadian Mining Labour Market Outlook, 2017* (Ottawa, 2017).
6 Alison Howard, Jessica Edge, and Douglass Watt, *Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers* (Conference Board of Canada, Ottawa, July 2012), 14.
Indigenous Peoples in Atlantic Canada: A Statistical Profile

1. Individual and Systemic Barriers facing Indigenous Recruitment & Retention

Studies on recruitment and retention suggest employers are unaware of the historic trauma or barriers to employment Indigenous peoples face. The socioeconomic barriers faced by Indigenous peoples are rooted in the legacy of colonialism. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, intergenerational trauma, poverty, and the Indian Act continue to affect the lives of First Nations people on- and off-reserve. As Federal Government entities, the CCG, like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Royal Military College (RMC), and other organizations must acknowledge and understand its role in both perpetuating and remedying the current inequities faced by Indigenous people in Atlantic Canada.

Employment is considered a key social determinant of health and increasing Indigenous workforce participation and improving the quality of jobs will have the greatest impact on community and individual health and wellness. Beyond improving results in traditional economic indicators (labour force participation, income levels, GDP) a social determinant’s of health approach recognizes the potential that parity in labour force participation and educational attainment has to improve self-determination, cultural revitalization and leadership capacity. It is important to note that despite the barriers discussed below, over the last 25 years, all indicators are suggesting steady improvement. The interconnected nature of socioeconomic challenges means that small advances in one area have the potential to create significant and meaningful change in others.

The Education Gap

Access to education is one of the most challenging barriers to workforce participation that Indigenous people face. In Atlantic Canada, 28% of Indigenous people over the age of 25 did not have a degree, diploma or certificate in 2011 compared to 22% of the non-Indigenous population. While a higher percentage had a post-secondary diploma or trades certificate, the number of non-Indigenous people who complete university is significantly higher (18% compared to 12%). While attainment rates have been steadily increasing, gaps such as a higher drop-out rate and lower post-secondary attendance rate still persist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Estimates suggest that between 2001 and 2017 this gap cost the Canadian economy over $70 billion dollars per year.

As more youth complete high school, post-secondary attainment rates will follow, however older workers and youth who drop out will continue to suffer from higher unemployment rates and limited career options. Individuals increasingly shoulder the burden of their own education and career planning at a time when occupations in the knowledge economy demand higher levels of education. Pathways to

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11 Service Canada, Client Segment Profile: Aboriginal Peoples in Atlantic Canada, January 2014, 8.
these careers demand long-term planning that begins at an early age however a lack of career awareness and culturally appropriate counselling at critical transitional junctures (elementary-secondary-post-secondary-workforce) means that Indigenous students are less likely to consider these careers as options. For instance, several studies suggest that youth in general and Aboriginal youth in particular lack scientific ocean literacy, awareness, and interest in marine occupations that could prove detrimental to marine-based career aspirations.\(^{13}\)

Parental and community support has a tremendous influence on whether students pursue post-secondary education. The lure of employment, financial pressures and family or community responsibilities are “pull factors” that draw students away from school and can deter them from completing their studies.\(^{14}\) Band funding remains the most common source of financial assistance for First Nations post-secondary students, but amounts have been frozen since 1996 despite universal acknowledgement that the Indigenous population is growing. There is not enough money for all who want to attend, and First Nations students often have to seek part-time employment or apply for loans to cover transportation, rent, daycare and other expenses. While students already receiving familial and institutional support are also more likely to seek out bursaries, loans and grants, urban First Nations and Métis students who cannot access funds for community members are even more dependent on employment income from part-time jobs. In many instances, finances ultimately determine the level of education pursued and completed.

**The Employment Gap**

Studies show that employability increases in concert with the level of education achieved: university and college graduates are more likely to be employed and to earn higher incomes. The most recent data suggests the recession in 2008 affected Indigenous peoples harder than non-Indigenous Canadians and while a brief recovery occurred between 2010 and 2012, these gains have largely eroded. Between 2007 and 2015, the unemployment rate for Indigenous peoples off-reserve slowly climbed from 9% to 11% while the rate for non-Indigenous people was 5% to 6%. The downturn was felt most by Indigenous women from all groups and First Nations people. Another consequence of the recession is that more individuals 55 and older have also postponed retirement. Although the Atlantic Provinces had the second highest Aboriginal unemployment rate, it had the smallest gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.\(^{15}\)

Lower educational attainments mean that Indigenous peoples are concentrated in particular economic sectors such as agriculture, natural resources, construction, manufacturing, retail trade, education and healthcare, many of which are precarious, lower paying and offer fewer opportunities for advancement. Indigenous people are employed the least in finance, insurance and real estate; professional, scientific and technical services and information, culture and recreation, and accommodation. While some companies in the resource sector have achieved a 20-30% Indigenous workforce, employment is still


concentrated in the trades. Fewer than 2% of Indigenous people are engineering managers, technologists or technicians or geological engineers.\(^\text{16}\)

Critics fear that in the desire to get people working, the people who could benefit the most from education and training opportunities are receiving the least.\(^\text{17}\) It is a concerning trend that while jobs requiring high school are declining, the number of people with university degrees entering the workforce and the number of jobs requiring post-secondary degrees are increasing. Some academics and analysts fear that instead of focused career planning for the high-tech careers of the future, a “piecemeal approach” to education and training is preparing individuals to fill lower skilled market- and employer-driven vacancies in the resources sector. While it is important to make sure that employment is available upon completion of training, these critics warn that it is crucial to ensure that Indigenous people find satisfying, well-paying jobs in all sectors and are not being trained to fill difficult positions because no one else wants them.

**Infrastructure and Geography**

Significant gaps between on- and off-reserve Indigenous populations are related to physical infrastructure deficits including access to safe drinking water and healthy food, adequate housing, transportation, and internet access, all of which contribute to mental and physical health problems, addictions and higher rates of suicide. Physical distance or geography is recognized as one of the biggest roadblocks to education and employment in Atlantic Canada. While infrastructure deficits are of highest concern in Northern First Nations communities such as Nunatsiavut, New Brunswick has the highest population living on-reserve and the Atlantic region has the highest number of rural and remote communities. Because they have to commute or relocate, find daycare and absorb higher costs of living, on-reserve residents are subject to additional logistical and financial barriers to post-secondary education, training and employment.

Newfoundland & Labrador has the smallest urban Indigenous population\(^\text{18}\) and with the exception of a ferry, communities in Nunatsiavut do not have access to all-season roads or a regional energy grid. The overwhelming majority in Atlantic Canada have suitable housing, and access to microwave or fibre optic internet communications\(^\text{19}\) however individual access is subject to quality, availability and affordability. Internet access and parity is vital for cultural and economic development. By providing a pathway to careers in the knowledge economy and engaging youth, technological innovations have the potential to bridge many of the barriers to education and training cited here without requiring people to leave family and community.

Urban Indigenous people also face their own barriers. Discriminatory provisions in *The Indian Act* and conflict between federal and provincial service providers means that many urban Indigenous people experience difficulties accessing comparable services available to members on reserve. Halifax has the largest number (80%) of first or second-generation Métis, and while most Indigenous peoples come to the city for family reasons (to join or leave), education, employment, or other advantages,


\(^{18}\) Service Canada, 6-7.

(advancement, health care, friends, housing), a massive migration has not and will probably not materialize.\textsuperscript{20}

**Women**

While the education levels of Indigenous women meet and sometimes exceed those of Indigenous men, on average they face higher unemployment rates (50%), earn less, and are more likely to live below the poverty line than Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women. A study by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (now Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), indicates that improving education outcomes results in substantially higher incomes and better labour force participation rates, however a gender gap between education and workforce outcomes exists.\textsuperscript{21} While attainment levels are increasing, women are still vastly outnumbered in the professions, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), construction, transportation and technical trades. It is not clear whether women avoid particular occupations out of interest, choice or necessity, however a recent study by the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) finds that Indigenous women lack employment information, do not have required courses or training, and lack work experience to a greater degree than men.

Indigenous women confront additional barriers that are often not considered by employers and policymakers. Due to gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*, many First Nations women living in urban centres are unregistered and lack access to on-reserve job and training programs.\textsuperscript{22} Women without employment experience or working part-time may not be able to access programs for Employment Insurance recipients and may have certain benefits reduced when they do. Women who are single or primary caregivers for children and elderly relatives also struggle to find affordable daycare so they can work or attend school. Indigenous women are exposed to violence and addiction in greater numbers and face a double challenge of being female and Indigenous in predominantly male workplaces which can add additional element of concern and discomfort, particularly where there are shared living quarters.\textsuperscript{23} Currently only 22% of the CCG’s staff is female and more than half are seagoing personnel (Ships’ Officers and Ships’ Crew) working 7 to 42-day rotational shifts.\textsuperscript{24}

**Culture and Community**

The influence of Indigenous cultural values and norms on recruitment and retention is not well known. Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada take “a holistic approach to development” beyond material

\textsuperscript{21} Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Economy* (Strategic Research Directorate, 2006).
\textsuperscript{24} Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Integrated Business and Human Resource Plan, 2016-2019, (Ottawa: 2016).
wealth to consider “social, health, environmental and organizational concerns and outcomes.”25 Some individuals prioritize giving back to their community to such a degree that they will limit career choices to those perceived as contributing to community welfare and development such as nursing, policing and social work.

Women’s roles, community ties, and an unwillingness to relocate are persistent themes in Indigenous workforce studies26 although surveys of urban Indigenous peoples and those with university degrees suggest that better pay, benefits and job satisfaction can compensate for these concerns. Working conditions play a role and the natural resources, defense, security, and policing sectors, where the great majority of positions require specific skills, shift work, harsh conditions and frequent travel or relocation, all report difficulties hiring and retaining employees from all backgrounds. Atlantic Canada has a high percentage of Indigenous people who live in families (married or common-law) however there are nearly twice as many single-parent families, usually led by women, than in the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous adults are twice as likely and Indigenous youth aged 15-34 are three times as likely to have a disability. The prevalence of diabetes in Atlantic Canada is five times the national average27 and substance abuse, poor health and lack of access to education and social services may play a greater role than community values in deterring Indigenous people from applying to more demanding positions.

Employers are aware that remote workplaces, shift-work, and other harsh environmental conditions are linked to increased mental health and safety issues and can be barriers to employment. Without proper support, the associated stress of culture shock, racism, loneliness, and being “caught in two worlds” can deter applicants and impact retention.28 Many Indigenous people experience additional challenges as ‘firsts,’ i.e.: being the first in a family or one of a small number to move away from welfare or EI dependency, to leave their community, and to be away from home for long periods of time. The CCG is committed to increasing flexibility and making it easier to transition between shore and ship, but it must also contend with a high number of positions requiring individuals to be deployed anywhere in Canada on rotational shifts 365 days per year.

**Systemic Barriers**

Overwhelmingly, public and private studies confirm that the federal government does not take an active or coordinated role in workforce development and that the lack of a holistic framework is hampering Indigenous labour market participation and economic development. Workforce planning and

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preparations to address shortages are hampered by a lack of timely and accurate data. While estimates vary, Canada could be short as many as one million skilled workers by 2020.²⁹

**Bureaucracy**

A lack of collaboration between policymakers, industry, educational institutions, and Indigenous organizations and the meshing of workforce programming with other policy goals is evident in many of the significant barriers that are faced by Indigenous people seeking to access to employment. Oftentimes to be eligible, individuals must have graduated high school, have additional sources of funding, or be in receipt of a driver’s licence, social assistance or employment insurance benefits.³⁰ In other cases, safety regulations and bond and insurance companies will not permit individuals without minimum levels of experience, certifications or who are not enrolled in a formal training program to drive commercial vehicles, operate heavy equipment or otherwise gain on-the-job experience. As an example, NWAC notes that three years’ experience is required by most insurance companies to be an AZ truck driver, which prevents companies from hiring newly licenced drivers. Other regulations, particularly in the trades require that individuals on site have special certifications (first-aid, forklift etc.), apprenticeship registration, or membership in professional organizations that are costly and difficult to acquire. Systemic discrimination in application and interview processes is common and Indigenous people are still more likely to be underemployed relative to their experience and qualifications.³¹

**Approaches to workforce development**

Recognized in the academic literature is a growing disjuncture between current skills-based education and training and the vaguely defined high tech skills required by the “knowledge economy.”³² Class and employment mobility is still quite rare in Canada and gaps stubbornly persist between certain racialized and low-income groups and access to technical jobs. On the one hand, individuals must be employable and market considerations are important to ensure that education and training aligns with industry needs. On the other hand, strategic investments in human capacity that do not have an immediate or noticeable payoff are still necessary to achieve parity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The proliferation of precarious and low-paying jobs is an aspect of the knowledge economy that remains unaddressed by policymakers. It is important to ensure that the training programs do not simply take advantage of “low hanging fruit” but also open doors to careers in finance, management, communications, the professions and technical and scientific services.³³

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Federal Workforce Development Programs

There is also a tremendous amount of duplication and overlap that conceals service gaps and results in underutilization of programs and services. Federal workforce development programs are disbursed and funded among a number of government departments, agencies and organizations with shifting criteria, deadlines and mandates. On-reserve and off-reserve Indigenous organizations devote considerable resources to help Aboriginal and industry clients navigate them. Employment counsellors and managers stress that without stable or multi-year funding agreements, it is difficult to create long-term strategies and budgets, and workforce issues often take a back seat to urgent social needs, such as housing.

Employers note they don’t know where to begin to find programs and are intimidated by the number of local communities, levels of governance, and Indigenous organizations. Short term funding and gaps in current programs has produced a proliferation of stand-alone initiatives targeting Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers administered by provinces, municipalities, communities, and not for profit organizations with too many points of entry. In Nova Scotia alone, an internet search for “Aboriginal employment” returns over a dozen websites including Women Unlimited; a non-profit that supports women in the trades that lists nearly fifty partner-organizations of their own. This has led organizations like NWAC to recommend a central database or point of entry to showcase best practices and highlight workforce concerns.

Racism

In any discussion of systemic barriers, the effects of racism, discrimination, exclusion and harassment cannot be ignored. While there is a lack of current quantitative data on the frequency and nature of racism directed at Indigenous people, it is a significant factor in their lives. A 2005 survey reported that 38% of First Nations adults had been subject to at least one racist incident in the previous year and 63% said it impacted their self-esteem. In a survey of urban Indigenous people, respondents believed that things were changing for the better however, more than half (52%) in Halifax had personally experienced racism or discrimination and believe Indigenous people are still subject to negative stereotypes. Indigenous people believe they are perceived by non-Indigenous people as addicted, unmotivated, lacking intelligence, welfare-dependent and unemployed; harmful falsehoods that can directly affect employability so long as they persist. For the most part however, respondents report that many of their interactions with non-Indigenous people had been positive.

The role of reputation in Indigenous communities is very important and networking is a key strategy to attract employees. Some individuals will not seek employment in companies or sectors that are perceived to be poor corporate citizens. As a Special Operating Agency within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), deliberate and unintentional advertising contributes to the CCG’s corporate

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34 Carolyn L. Taylor, *The Urban Aboriginal Service Delivery Landscape in Atlantic Canada: Gaps, Trends and Strengths*, Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network, October 2015, 1.
39 Environics Institute, *Urban Aboriginal People’s Study*, 73-74, 80.
image and branding.\textsuperscript{40} In addition to a historic legacy, the CCG must contend with the effects of fishing incidents such as the Esgenoopetitj First Nation (Burnt Church) conflict in New Brunswick in 2013 that continue to impact the way the Mi’kmaq and other Indigenous people perceive the organization.\textsuperscript{41} Highlighting romance, danger, excitement and adventure, once a staple of many recruiting campaigns may not appeal to women, Indigenous peoples and minorities and a conscious re-imaging may be required. In an effort to prioritize Indigenous recruitment and engagement, organizations like the RCMP and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are adding images of First Nations recruits and employees showcasing personal testimonials on their websites.\textsuperscript{42} Critics, however, insist there is still much work to be done.\textsuperscript{43}

Unequivocally, the sources consulted for this report state that any solutions or attempts to address barriers to Indigenous employment and retention have to take a holistic determinants’ of health approach. In consultation with Indigenous people, collaborative, well-thought out and long-term programs supported by all stakeholders ensure that that development, health, housing, education, employment, and other socioeconomic initiatives are integrated and work together. The high number of Indigenous people who experience racism and discrimination suggests that creating safe and welcoming workplaces is equally, if not more important, than encouraging applicants.

2. Best Practices in employer recruitment and retention

Sources overwhelmingly concur that minorities in most industries are lagging behind, particularly at the managerial and executive levels. Addressing this gap extends beyond employability and job performance suggesting that there is too much focus on recruitment, (i.e.: getting the numbers), and not enough on retention. A number of the issues and barriers discussed in this report tend to impact Indigenous peoples more frequently and severely but not exclusively. Progressive CEO’s are broadening their understandings of diversity to encompass age, family structure, gender, health needs, vacation and other differences.\textsuperscript{44} Many of the best practices outlined here to address Indigenous employment and retention are related to broader trends to improve employee relations and workplace culture that have the potential to reap benefits across organizations.

Developing a Strategy

Recruitment and retention strategies should be part of a broader strategic plan to engage Indigenous peoples. According to one Indigenous Recruitment Guide, building an engagement strategy requires vision, a commitment to work together, getting to know each other, building capacity and building a


\textsuperscript{44} “CEO’s on Diversity,” \textit{Canadian HR Reporter}, October 30, 2017, 11-12.
healthy workplace. NWAC reports that a program of Indigenous recruitment can be hard to get started. Most Canadians have a cultural deficit and find approaching different cultures intimidating. Organizations have dealt with this by taking a holistic approach, ensuring that engagement is integrated throughout the organization and clearly stated in the strategic plan, mission statement, mandate and in on boarding programs for executives and other leaders. Programs and initiatives are more successful when a majority of senior staff support and encourage them.

Reconciliation discourse has led to growing recognition that government and industry have a legacy to overcome and that employment and retention initiatives should be part of a comprehensive program to build trust and eliminate inequities within their spheres of influence. Although it lacks a target date, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has committed to creating a 50% Indigenous workforce. Institutions comparable to the CCG like the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), CAF, and RCMP have diversity statements or strategies, and commitments to increase Indigenous recruitment. Reports that include specific initiatives often do so on the basis of personal communication or staff interviews and many are outdated or defunct. It is difficult to discern what specific strategies or programs are being developed or utilized because they are not made publically available on their websites.

Liaisons & Committees

Industry and organizations tend to employ Aboriginal liaisons or Indigenous Recruitment and Retention coordinators, a dedicated person or team accountable to senior managers who facilitate communication between communities and the organization. This individual or team should be responsible for implementing and evaluating the engagement strategy. Employers tend to look for individuals who are skilled in stakeholder relations, networking, and Indigenous issues and policies. Dedicated funding for outreach and engagement programs is important however researchers stress that community involvement is vital. Programs and initiatives underperform and often fail because of a lack of consultation or miscommunication. Some organizations employ a shared governance system or have community representatives or Elders on this team who can sit on hiring committees, mentor, and provide advice on training and protocol. For example, the RCMP in Manitoba has a Commanding Officer’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee of five highly experienced Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens to guide the organization and educate employees.

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47 “CEO’s on Diversity,” 11-12.
49 S. Brascoupe & Catherine Walters, “Cultural safety: Exploring the applicability of the concept of cultural safety to Aboriginal health and community wellness.” *Journal of Aboriginal Health* (2009), 8 Retrieved from http://www.naho.ca/
51 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP in Manitoba, Commanding Officer’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee, (accessed February 6, 2018), http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/mb/about-ausujet/co-abr-adv-com-eng.htm
Cultural Awareness Training

Building relationships with community leaders, workforce development offices, economic development officers, and other staff helps the organization understand the different kinds of resources, barriers, histories and cultures in each community. Staff should be regularly involved in cultural awareness training (in-house or external) and activities in the community (formal and informal). Guides suggest that training or workshops should aim to increase “intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.” TRC Call to Action #57 requires that “all levels of government provide education and skills-based training to public servants covering the history, rights and laws of Indigenous Peoples,” however, survey recipients in many studies suggest training should also address common myths employees might have about Indigenous people (i.e.: they don’t pay taxes and other stereotypes) in order to combat subtler forms of racism that contribute to exclusion. Maintaining relationships are important and some organizations do this by sponsoring community events and activities or volunteering to sit on committees or boards. The Conference Board of Canada has reported that “businesses must commit to learning the culture, goals, history, and experiences of their Aboriginal and Northern workforce.” It further points out that “Northerners [and Aboriginal people] must also learn the business culture of their employers and understand the organization’s goals.” Achieving these goals requires a whole of organization approach steeped in relationship building.

Capacity Building and Community Economic Development

Indigenous economies can also be supported through procurement and supply contracts. The Federal Government’s Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Businesses (PSAB) prioritizes Indigenous suppliers through set asides and contractors can award advantages to suppliers who source from third-parties or sub-contract work to Indigenous businesses or community owned Aboriginal Economic Development Corporations (AEDC’s). The CCG may be able to engage Indigenous suppliers to provide goods and services, particularly in the areas of green technology and environmental services or outsource contracts for special projects (lighthouses, derelict wreckage) to nearby Indigenous communities. Strategically designed partnerships allow communities to increase management capacity, assets, and experience so they can bid and win contracts independently.

Performance Evaluation

Setting performance targets and monitoring progress are universally recommended in the literature however there are no standard measures used to evaluate Aboriginal human resource initiatives. Most businesses track the number of indigenous applicants, hires, promotions and attrition. The CCG has a National Training Tracking tool (NTTT), for staff planning purposes and is updating job descriptions. The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business’ Progressive Aboriginal Relations program evaluates engagement in areas of leadership, employment, business development and community investment and

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55 Howard, Edge & Watt, Understanding the Value, 2.
engagement and awards bronze, silver and gold certifications based on an independent juried assessment.  

Accurate data on Indigenous hiring can be challenging to acquire and maintain. There is little in HR literature on self-identification and while disclosure can be incentivized through priority hiring and other programs organizations, many already have Indigenous employees working for them who have not self-identified. Unlike the mining sector, which produces its own annual workforce report, defense industry data is spread across the aerospace, shipbuilding, construction and other sectors. Sub-contracting and outsourcing makes it difficult to acquire workforce datasets, projections and specific job requirements from third parties. Despite challenges created by the elimination of a fixed retirement age, the Integrated Business and Human Resources Plan already conducted by the CCG for 2016-2019 shows that this is an optimum time to take advantage of an estimated 4500 retirements to create an Indigenous employment and retention strategy. Employees in General Labour and Trades, Technical, Services, Executives, and Light keepers are on average 47-50 years old and will be retiring in significant numbers in the coming years. Retired and experienced employees looking to transition to land-based roles would be ideal “ambassadors” to promote these CCG careers to Indigenous people. One source estimates that a retiring employee takes an average of 37 years of experience with them making, mentorship and growing workforce capacity vital to ensure this experience is not lost.

Assessments

Sources stress that employers must be realistic and honest about what they have to offer and what they are asking for in potential employees. Sources recommend that organizations wishing to increase Indigenous recruitment and retention should gain an understanding their own operational needs through workplace assessments and audits. This requires the identification of opportunities as well as potential barriers through an inward evaluation of power structures and their potential impact on Indigenous employees. Assessments should consider the current and anticipated workforce to evaluate gaps in skills, technology and workplace environment. Needs assessments are one best practice vital to avoiding the “checkbox syndrome” in which plans do not extend beyond meeting quick targets (HR) or publicizing results (PR). Positions, created for Indigenous people or existing within the organization also have to be integrated with distinct career trajectories so they don’t become dead ends.

Assessments can also highlight positions that would be good cultural matches or that would appeal to or attract youth, older workers or individuals with families and to determine the best and logical entry points for Indigenous workers into a career with the CCG. It can also help managers determine where opportunities might exist for mentoring, apprenticeships or on-the-job training. The mining industry for example, employs a gap analyses model that estimates the number of employees, available positions, transitions (school to employment, immigration) and compares this with forecasts for key occupations so hiring managers can plan to address gaps before they become critical.

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59 MIHR, Canadian Mining Labour Market Outlook, 2016; MIHR, Canadian Mining Labour Market Outlook, 2016, 13-14.
60 Malatest and Associates, Researching Indigenous Partnerships, 5.
61 Howard, Edge & Watt, Understanding the Value, 24.
62 MIHR, Canadian Mining Labour Market Outlook, 2016, 14.
Communication
Having a presence in communities helps to encourage applicants however communicating opportunities can be challenging. A lack of information is universally cited as one of the biggest obstacles to Indigenous employment. Some communities maintain skills and education inventories of members but they do not usually include individuals who live off reserve and will not include non-members. Local Métis or Inuit organizations may have the same however funding to create workforce datasets is often short-term and keeping them current can be a challenge.

The CCG currently produces a small book that focuses on officers and vessel crew however employers with successful recruitment programs create handbooks or directories containing lists of all positions available with detailed job descriptions, levels of education and certifications required. As these are often the outcome of workforce assessments and succession planning necessary to create engagement strategies, pay and benefits, training opportunities and career pathways are often included in them. Employers also recommend hosting lunches, information events and open houses with Indigenous communities, organizations, institutional representatives, and student associations.

Michelin’s Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative Partnership Agreement (AWPI) with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq, Union of Nova Scotia Indians, Government of Canada and Province of Nova Scotia is often cited as a good example of a successfully implemented Indigenous Employment Strategy. Michelin’s strategy includes an action plan with clear goals that offers a relocation allowance, student summer employment, pre-employment training, literacy training, on the job training, apprenticeships, professional development courses, mentoring, stay in school programs and scholarships. In 2008, the company’s Indigenous workforce was 0.8%, nearly representative of the Indigenous populations in Halifax (1%) and Nova Scotia (1.4%).

Education and Training
Early Intervention
Several studies recommend an education strategy and campaign to attract interest and promote learning to students and their families from K-12 to the post-secondary level. Limiting recruiting to university and college graduates or preparing students at post-secondary level is simply too late and employers looking for Indigenous peoples who solely meet the requirements will fail to meet hiring targets. Jobs in the knowledge economy are extremely technical and specialized; they require specific training and evolve quickly. Entry to the Canadian Coast Guard College and most positions in the organization require mastery or degrees in math, physics, chemistry and English/French The promotion of careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) needs to start with children, many of whom currently lack awareness of potential careers and the paths they need to follow to achieve them. Mendelson and others have shown that the “gateway to post-secondary education” actually begins with kindergarten and does not end until Grade 12. Because of the Coast Guard College, the CCG is in a unique position in this respect because it can tailor post-secondary programming specific to its needs and support outreach programs in primary and secondary schools.

64 Caverley, What Works: Effective Policies and Programs for Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, xvii.
65 Michael Mendelson, Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, July 2006), 35.
Studies show that students who receive support and encouragement combined with the early introduction of culturally appropriate programming and Indigenous language instruction at all levels have significantly better outcomes. Between 1991 and 2001 the Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey First Nations communities increased the number who received post-secondary degrees by nearly 10% and saw an increase in the labour force participation rate from 36% to 51% by introducing culture and language instruction at all levels. While the public school system is improving, Indigenized curriculums are still largely limited to on-reserve schools and urban Aboriginal people report receiving the least exposure to programs, particularly at the elementary level.

Universities can be a stressful environment for students who have grown up on reserve. Only one quarter of Aboriginal students who begin post-secondary studies complete them. In one study, Indigenous students said they were motivated to pursue post-secondary education because it offered better employment opportunities, financial independence, personal growth, and the ability to give back to their communities. These students also said they faced challenges related to health, addictions, time management, language, learning disabilities, and maintaining work-life balance. Going to school in the city also means that housing affordability, access to day care and transportation, and racism are issues. Among those who didn’t finish their studies, the top reasons were a lack of financial support, daycare/housing/transportation issues and a lack of academic support/motivation/counselling.

The Royal Military College (RMC) offers a one-year bridging program called the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year (ALOY). Students accepted to ALOY join the Canadian Forces and receive a salary, tuition and books at the Royal Military College of Canada. Students begin a program of academic studies and military training and can leave at any time without penalty however those who meet academic standards can choose to pursue a degree. The College considers the ALOY program a long-term investment in Indigenous communities and whether students stay or bring their skills and experience home is considered a positive way to build security capacity in communities.

STEM: Engaging Indigenous Youth and Women

According to Engineers Canada, “encouraging an interest in engineering begins with programming that engages youth in STEM activities at an early age.” The underperformance, low enrolment and interest in science, technology, engineering and math among Indigenous students is concerning as insufficient numbers will graduate with the skills necessary to access employment opportunities in STEM.

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66 The Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey communities include: Acadia First Nation, Annapolis Valley First Nation, Bear River First Nation, Eskasoni First Nation, Glooscap First Nation, Indian Brook First Nation, Membertou First Nation, Millbrook First Nation, Paqtnkek First Nation, Pictou Landing First Nation, Potlotek First Nation, Wagmatcook First Nation and We’koqma’q First Nation; Bruce, Marlin & Doucette,, Baseline Data for Aboriginal Economic Development, vi.
67 Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal People’s Study, 118
68 Bruce, Marlin & Doucette, Baseline Data for Aboriginal Economic Development, 11.
69 Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal People’s Study, 121, 126-127.
Assimilation has been a pervasive aim of education policy in Canada and studies suggest that students do not see the relevance of STEM concepts or their application in their daily lives. Integrating traditional knowledge and practices learned from Elders into the standard curriculum to teach concepts like numeration, geometry, patterning and algebra and merging Indigenous knowledge with western science in the elementary grades appears to be helping bridge these gaps.

Replacing retiring engineers and increasing diversity in the profession are key targets however proponents also recognize that that a lack of culturally relevant or decolonized curriculum and programming still exists. Engineers Canada has an agreement with the Assembly of First Nations to undertake initiatives to encourage Indigenous youth to pursue engineering careers and to partner with other stakeholders to increase opportunities. March is National Engineering month and Engineers Canada engage youth through more than 500 events that showcase technologies and careers. Backed by professional organizations, New Brunswick has committed to ensuring children receive STEM instruction and fund interactive programs such as the Eureka Club, Pumpkin Fling and soapbox derby races to introduce students to engineering in ways that are fun and practical. Many of these programs engage Indigenous students through traditional Western methods in the urban public school system and Indigenous representation in professional publications is rare. They also do not seem to offer specific engagement strategies for youth in their communities or Indigenous women. Indigenous women are underrepresented in science and technology careers although several women have credited programs offered by Indigenous organizations like the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) for their success in areas like app development and coding. Queen’s University’s Aboriginal Access to Engineering also provides an online portal that introduces youth to several Indigenous engineering student role-models and everyday examples of “Ancestral Engineering” to show how Indigenous ways of knowing and learning apply engineering concepts. Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) has also launched the “Pathways to Shipbuilding” pilot program to “create pathways and support for Indigenous Canadians to enter the shipbuilding industry.”

Work Experience and On-the-job training

76 Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology, http://www.ccwestt.org/about
78 Aboriginal Access to Engineering, Queen’s University, http://www.aboriginalaccess.ca/ancestral
Internships and co-ops are particularly important because they allow students to go to school and gain work experience. For indigenous students, paid internships and apprenticeships provide additional benefits of income support and transferrable, formal accreditations they can build on. The CCG hires students from the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) and offers the Inshore Rescue Boat Service to Innu post-secondary students.

The North Shore Micmac District Council (NSMDC) in Eel Ground, New Brunswick operates a 32-week Orientation to Trades program that combines trades and academic instruction, workforce preparedness and culture/heritage mentoring. Students have access to childcare and travel assistance and are provided with safety equipment and can earn WorkSafeNB, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and First Aid certifications. In 2014, 4 of the 14 students were hired and registered as apprentices, 5 went back to school and several others found employment. While continued evaluation is necessary, modified apprenticeship programs address many of the barriers that lead Aboriginal students to avoid or drop out of traditional programs and increase the likelihood of a successful transition into the workforce or further studies.

Employment and training discourse is overwhelmingly focused on formal education within recognized institutions and programs. Adult education, experiential and community-based learning opportunities allow students to remain close to home and stay in school. Syncrude has a Heavy Equipment Operator program in partnership with local college that uses simulators and equipment to train people in remote communities. “Cape Breton University, St. Francis Xavier University, and St. Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick, (UNB) all offer targeted programming on reserve or distance education which enables First Nations students to remain connected with their home communities, and often to study part-time while working.”

Recruitment Strategies

Recognizing that the CCG operates as a special agency of the DFO and is subject to staffing regulations under Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSAC), employer expectations have a tremendous effect on Indigenous recruitment. Employers are often unaware of the challenges Indigenous employees face and expect them to be already trained and workforce ready. HR Managers in search of the perfect candidate unconsciously put up employment barriers for women, disabled, Indigenous, minority and other candidates who are screened out or overlooked in early stages of the recruitment process because they do not possess all of the skills, certifications, and qualities.

Advertising

Indigenous applicants may be intimidated by harshly-worded, long or detailed job requirements. For example, CCG jobs specify applicants must meet “marine industry” and “Ships’ Crew industry standard requirements” but what these are is not clear. In Atlantic Canada, only 8% of Indigenous people have French as a mother tongue and only 15% can converse in French. Bilingualism is a barrier to Indigenous

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80 Anita Boyle, Orientation to Trades Program: Engaging Aboriginal Young Adults in the Trades Sector in New Brunswick, *Canadian Apprenticeship Journal*, 9, (Fall 2013), 56-61.
83 Shauna Mackinnon, Making the Case for an Aboriginal Labour Market Intermediary, 286-7.
recruitment and if not directly tied to safety or security regulations, arbitrary requirements like background checks and drug and alcohol testing can also discourage applicants. To create barrier-free job descriptions the HR Council recommends separating essential from non-essential qualifications and to focus on what needs to be achieved rather than how it will achieved. Knowledge and ability is more important than credentials and Indigenous applicants with the ability to learn and who are otherwise qualified may not apply if specific job experience or certification is required. Replacing industry or HR jargon with clear language and providing as much information as possible about working conditions helps an applicant to know whether they should apply.

**Application Processes**

Indigenous applicants may not have knowledge of resume and cover letter writing or protocols specific to the CCG. Complicated online application systems used by the Canadian public service and programs that scan for keywords in cover letters and resumes can screen out Indigenous applicants before they have had a chance to prove themselves. The FSWEP has a complex search and application process that relies on keyword algorithms to match students to employers. Students can be deployed anywhere in Canada and several certifications are required. Positions listed on the Public Services of Canada job site are often not for specific positions but for applicant pooling. Many have long lists of requirements that candidates must meet at the time of application and others that are not necessarily required, but may be used to assess candidates at a later date. Indigenous people are sometimes but not always considered preferred applicants although veterans and Canadian citizens are. How and where applicants are tested is not available however candidates that must travel to write them are expected to pay their own costs. Sample test questions available on the website are not culturally relevant and have not been updated in several years.

The federal public service is struggling to increase the number of Indigenous employees, particularly at the management level. Walters writes that treating everyone the same, (i.e.: “cultural blindness” or “racelessness”) does not eliminate discrimination. Indigenous people are not another ethnic group, but a founding people with distinct history, experiences and rights that needs to be “acknowledged and understood.” Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSAC) implemented a policy of name-blind assessments that has failed to impact diversity hiring because it operates on a myth that Indigenous applicants have equal opportunities and are screened out because of bias. Removing names from applications does not increase the number of applicants in the pool or

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84 Service Canada, 8; Roness Consulting, 57.
85 HR Council, Increasing Diversity through Improved recruitment and hiring efforts, http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-recruitment.cfm
88 Brascoupe & Walters, “Cultural safety: Exploring the applicability of the concept of cultural safety to Aboriginal health and community wellness,” 13.
89 HR Council, Increasing Diversity through Improved recruitment and hiring efforts, http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-recruitment.cfm
address systemic barriers that prevent candidates from applying. Instead, Indigenous and other minority recruiters recommend personal and face-to-face interaction because candidates can showcase their skills and personality allowing employers a better evaluation of their fit within the organization. Less formal application processes increase the number of potential applicants because employers can accept unsolicited resumes and assist applicants with certifications and other requirements that would otherwise prohibit them from applying or screen them out online.

**Interviews**

Informal processes and increased transparency can assist Indigenous applicants at the interview stage. Candidates should know in advance how the interview will unfold and what will happen so there are no surprises. Having resumes evaluated by an Indigenous person, liaison or Elder and having them sit on hiring committees can also bring cultural awareness and understanding to the recruitment process. Studies recommend that interviewers focus on what resumes contain rather than what they look like and to prioritize skills rather than qualifications. Potential can be undervalued and Indigenous candidates often have relevant life experience or skills gained in non-traditional ways. Candidates may need more time and support to prepare for interviews and questions should be reviewed for cultural relevance and scoring that can arbitrarily screen out Indigenous applicants. Several sources also mentioned that misunderstandings are sometimes created because certain cultures express themselves differently, avert their eyes, or are reluctant to speak about themselves in ways that can be considered bragging. Lastly, hiring managers may want to consider follow up meetings for candidates who do not get the job to help them be more successful in subsequent contests.

**Workplace Culture**

As already discussed, workplace culture can be the most difficult adjustment for Indigenous employees. Most sources report that comprehensive training or on boarding and clearly communicated expectations can eliminate many of the issues associated with transitioning to the workplace. Several resources sector companies have paid pre-employment or job readiness programs that typically run 4-6 weeks and can cover life skills, expectations, work performance and communication. In one study of employers, absenteeism, productivity/performance, skill deficits, quality of work and substance abuse ranked the highest in a list of concerns however 20% reported that they had no issues with their indigenous employees. Compensation is also an issue, particularly for Indigenous people who must relocate and for women in single parent households who require childcare, but more young men and women report that work-

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93 Howard, Edge & Watt, Understanding the Value, 20.,
94 The top responses were daycare, pre-employment training, pay, flexible work hours and a safe work environment. NWAC, Resource Sector Barriers, 27.
life balance is the top reason for staying in their jobs. Stress, feeling unchallenged and underpaid; management and workplace politics, as well as a mismatch between qualifications and were also causal factors for leaving employment. The top reasons for staying include feeling successful, being rewarded or promoted, job stability, financial stability, and the ability to give back. Sources acknowledge many factors related to retention are understudied and difficult to measure. Standard tools to measure employee perceptions of their quality of life, well-being, satisfaction and happiness simply do not exist.

**Discrimination and Harassment**

Paramilitary organizations like the RCMP and Armed Forces are under tremendous scrutiny to tackle bullying and safety in the workplace. Several of the top responses on internet media searches show this is an ongoing problem. According to one author “all too often, people who are different feel "nobodied"—that is, treated as if they are inferior, unworthy, or outsiders. It is, after all, the little things that have a cumulative and profoundly negative effect on employees' psychological, physical, professional, and spiritual well-being, making them more likely to leave the organization.” Among women, feeling devalued or unsafe drives women of the workplace. In one mining industry study, nearly half of the 19 Indigenous women surveyed had personally experienced workplace harassment, bullying or violence, and only 1 of the 9 intended to stay with the company as a result. Studies recommend a zero-tolerance policy that is clear and transparent.

**Mentoring and Advancement**

Highly motivated employees will not stay if their position offers no prospect of advancement and Indigenous employees are highly sought after by other organizations. Several studies show that mentoring is a key strategy in the retention of Indigenous employees and contributes significantly to job satisfaction. Price Waterhouse Coopers assigns a leadership team sponsor to female employees to ensure they are receiving opportunities in an employee directed framework for inclusion. Training and ongoing support for staff, as well as awards and recognition are key retention strategies in the literature. Tracking systems can also be used to ensure that succession plans, training and promotion plans are established for Indigenous employees.

Committees, groups and healing circles, are especially effective at combating isolation, particularly if they have Elders or Indigenous employees on them. Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in the Public Service can join CANE, the Committee for the Advancement of Native Employment. CANE members work with management to share ideas, voice concerns, review hiring statistics and co-ordinate training and cultural activities. These committees have tremendous power to build camaraderie and understanding as well as improve well-being and productivity. Sources also acknowledge that despite the best of intentions, service overload (mentoring, responsibility for committees etc.), or ‘cultural taxation’ can be onerous, particularly if it falls on the shoulders of Elders and Indigenous employees. Post-secondary sources suggest Indigenous and other minority employees feel obligated to meet,

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96 Environics Institute, *Urban Aboriginal People’s Study*, 111-12.
98 MIHR, Strengthening Mining’s Talent Alloy: Exploring Diversity and Inclusion, 12.
mentor and guide others and that these activities often go unrewarded. Employees should be regularly informed of their contributions and celebrated both individually and collectively for progress and results.

**Exit interviews**

When employment opportunities do not work out, Indigenous HR professionals recommend exit interviews as a process of continual improvement. But as one school board acknowledges, “people leave organizations mainly because of their boss...It’s often the relationship with the immediate supervisor which will determine how long an employee will remain...” While exit interviews can provide valuable information to improve workplace culture and organization, a power dynamic remains. If employees are to provide honest information about why they are leaving it is important that exit interviews are conducted independent of supervisors and others who could provide the departing employee with references and other valuable networking opportunities.

**Feedback from Coast Guard Staff Interviews**

In addition to the desktop research, personal interviews were conducted with seven employees of the Canadian Coast Guard to build a greater understanding of the current and future workforce needs and present-day realities facing the organization. The participants included staff from each of the following areas within the Coast Guard:

- Integrated Business and Management Services, Coast Guard Atlantic Region
  - Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit
- Workforce Development
- Coast Guard College
- Human Resources with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The interviews were conducted by phone, recorded with approval from the participants, and transcribed. The interviews were guided by a specific set of questions developed in advance and categorized into two groups: Workforce Needs and Indigenous Engagement. A full report of these interviews can be reviewed in Appendix A. The following is a summary of the findings.

**Workforce Themes**

The following workforce themes emerged from the interviews with Coast Guard staff. Overall, participants recognized the looming challenges of expansion and an aging workforce and expressed excitement at the prospect of Indigenous workers helping to fill these gaps.

**Aging Workforce**

Most of the participants identified the aging workforce as a significant challenge facing the Coast Guard moving forward. Several participants stated that the federal government did not hire for a number of years, which has led to a gap between those aged 55 and older and those aged 35-45. There is not enough experience to replace the retiring upper management. One participant said, “there’s almost a bit of an experience gap there because of what people are walking out with certainly doesn’t match the people who are coming into the [senior] positions because they just haven’t been around long enough”.

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102 Chastity Q. Thompson, “Recruitment, Retention and Mentoring Faculty of Colour: The Chronicle Continues,” *New Directions for Higher Education*, 143 (Fall 2008) 47.
This means individuals may be promoted before they are ready to fill these senior-level positions. There is capacity outside of the Coast Guard, but external recruitment has historically been a challenge.

In addition to the experience gap, the retirement levels within the Coast Guard are alarming. When an employee reaches the age of 55 with 30 years of service, they can retire without penalty. Based on current workforce demographics, this means that 57% of the Coast Guard’s workforce may retire within the next ten years. The average age for sea-going positions is currently around 45 years old for ship’s officers, and 46 years old for ship’s crew. For on-shore careers, senior management staff within the Coast Guard has an average age of 52. The Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) staff is younger, but still has an average age in the low 40s, and there are 35 current vacancies for that position.

This is where participants identified the need to engage the Indigenous workforce: “We have that gap that we’re gonna need to fill and we know the Indigenous population is the fastest growing segment in the Canadian population. There’s an opportunity there.”

Priority Areas
While many interviewees expressed that there are opportunities throughout the Coast Guard, four key positions stood out as priorities: 1) Marine Engineering Officer/Marine Navigation Officer; 2) Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS); 3) Environmental Response; and, 4) Search and Rescue (Inshore Rescue Boat Program). The current openings for these positions were reported to be accessible through the website: jobs.gc.ca.

A detailed breakdown of education and skills requirements for these positions is available in Appendix A.

Indigenous Engagement Themes
The interview participants universally expressed that Indigenous engagement is a priority for the Coast Guard because of the mandate of Truth and Reconciliation, looming workforce shortages and the duty to consult. In May 2017, the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit was created within the Integrated Business Management Services department of the Coast Guard Atlantic Region. This unit was formed “in an effort to help fill the Prime Minister’s mandate on Reconciliation and nation-to-nation partnerships with all of our Indigenous nations and partners”. Indigenous partnerships and recruitment is also one of the main pillars of the Ocean Protection Plan which was announced in 2017.

Reporting to the Regional Director of Integrated Business Management Services, this team consists of a manager, two senior officers, and an administrative assistant. They are tasked with exploring the following questions:

- “How do we integrate ourselves into partnerships with First Nations?
- How do we help First Nations explore opportunities of employment with the Coast Guard?
- How do we support First Nations to access procurement opportunities?
- How do we get training and capacity building opportunities in key areas?” (Participant #2)

Before moving action items forward, the team has been engaging with Indigenous communities and leadership across the region to hear their viewpoints.

The Coast Guard College has also engaged historically with five Indigenous communities on the island of Cape Breton. They are awaiting further direction from the Coast Guard Atlantic Region before expanding their current activities.
**Indigenous Leadership Engagement**

The first main theme emerging from the interviews involved Indigenous leadership engagement. Rather than developing programs and services in-house and bringing them to the Indigenous communities, the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit is engaging Indigenous leadership first to understand how they should engage with the communities.

To date, the Coast Guard has received direction on how to engage the Mi’gmaq and Wolastoq communities in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. No participants mentioned receiving direction from leadership in Newfoundland and Labrador. The following organizations have been identified by Indigenous leadership as key partners to work through:

- Mi’gmawe’l Tplu’taqnn Inc. (MTI) – Mi’gmaq in NB
- Wolastoq Tribal Council (WTC) – Wolastoq in NB
- Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI – Mi’kmaq in PEI
- Kwilmu’kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) – Mi’kmaq in NS

Those communities who are not affiliated with any of the organizations mentioned above are being engaged on an individual level. The Atlantic Policy Congress was identified as a representative organization that can help the Coast Guard engage with non-affiliated Indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada, such as Millbrook, Sipekne’katik, Elsipogtog, Esgenoopetitj and others.

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) is also a key opportunity for the Coast Guard. The ASETS holders in Atlantic Canada provide programs and services to support Indigenous job seekers in the following areas: skill development, training, job search, child care, and more. These programs could be leveraged to maximize the impact of future targeted training and hiring programs.

**Duty to Consult**

One key reason that Indigenous leadership engagement was so critical to the Coast Guard is the fiduciary duty of the Crown to meaningfully consult with Indigenous groups on issues and activities that may impact Aboriginal rights and title. The Indigenous Relations unit serves a key function by analyzing the Coast Guards’ activities and determining when and where consultation may be required.

A part of ensuring that the consultation protocols are followed is raising awareness internally with the Coast Guard, which leads to another key theme that arose throughout the interviews.

**Raising Awareness of Indigenous Peoples**

Since Indigenous engagement was reported to be limited in the past, there is also a limited understanding within the Coast Guard of Indigenous communities, peoples, Treaties, and culture. In the past year, there have been numerous training opportunities and presentations given to Coast Guard staff to educate them on Indigenous issues, however there is much more work to be done to build a common level of understanding. This was reported to be another key function of the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit.

Some Coast Guard staff were unsure of how to refer to Indigenous peoples without being offensive. They were interested in supporting the communities but never had the opportunity to learn about Indigenous peoples.
Understanding the Indigenous Workforce
In addition to the general understanding of the Indigenous communities, Coast Guard staff also mentioned how important it is to build their understanding of the Indigenous workforce. One participant stated, “If I understand correctly, there are some labour profile assessments, or labour force profiles, that can be provided to us, and that would be awesome”. These labour profiles were discussed as tools to help develop targeted training programs in Indigenous communities to fill vacancies within the Coast Guard. They would also be useful for targeted hiring campaigns.

Raising Indigenous Awareness of Opportunities in the Coast Guard
While participants expressed the need for increased awareness within the Coast Guard of Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada, they also shared that Indigenous communities need to be made aware of the workforce and procurement opportunities within the Coast Guard.

Participants also expressed the need to raise awareness about the Coast Guard College in the Indigenous communities. In addition to raising awareness in the communities, the staff of the College stated that raising awareness and recruiting in high schools is preferred, even though some adults do enter the program later in life.

Barriers to Success
The following is a list of barriers for the Coast Guard to consider moving forward in Indigenous engagement, recruitment, and retention based on the feedback received from Coast Guard staff.

Current Awareness of the Indigenous Workforce
The current understanding of the Indigenous workforce and communities was identified as a barrier facing Indigenous people trying to enter the Coast Guard. However, this could be turned into an opportunity once human resources staff and managers are educated.

Corporate Structure
One participant also felt that the corporate structure of the organization can be a barrier to effective Indigenous employment and that the silos of Integrated Business Management Services, Coast Guard management, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans HR department need to be bridged. This breakdown of silos is starting to happen through trilateral meetings at the Director level, but more work needs to be done to increase collaboration on the Indigenous file across departments.

Some other federal departments, such as DFO and INAC, have more experience working with Indigenous communities and may be able to support the Coast Guard as they develop policies and procedures to support Indigenous recruitment and retention.

Geography
Participants also mentioned how the geographical distance between most Indigenous communities and Coast Guard bases may be a barrier. The geography issue also extends to the Coast Guard College in Sydney, NS. For the major opportunities in the Coast Guard, candidates must be willing to relocate to the College. Individuals are away from home without the support that they once had. Mature students have additional challenges related to family ties.

These challenges were thought to be more applicable to Indigenous peoples compared to the rest of the population. This may be due to the fact the often there has historically been only one Indigenous
student in a cohort at the College. Participants also discussed ways to eliminate this barrier for students who have shown potential in the training programs but are struggling with the isolation from home.

Once candidates complete their training, they may be even geographically isolated from home by their job placement. This is especially true for the officers program, because graduates can be stationed to any Coast Guard vessel in Canada. This means you may not be able to stay close to home even after graduation.

**Cultural Sensitivity**
The homesickness that was reportedly faced by Indigenous candidates in training was exacerbated by the view that they are forced to adapt to a workplace and post-secondary institution that “maybe is not reflecting who they are”.

The Coast Guard College staff discussed lessons learned from a pilot project a few years ago that revealed this barrier. The College recognized that “we did not have the support network for them at the college, so they were taken out of their communities, and although they weren’t very far from their communities…we believe that they probably could have succeeded if we would have had support systems here at the college”.

The Coast Guard College management team is actively exploring several ways to provide those supports to future Indigenous students, including:

- Have Elders present on-site
- Having Indigenous student centre on-site for students to use
- Providing a space for students to practice their spirituality
- Include a cultural footprint, i.e. Indigenous art and décor, artifacts, photos
- Incorporating cultural awareness into the College curriculum

Cultural sensitivity was identified by multiple participants as an area for the Coast Guard to improve in general. The Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit has begun delivering some training and support to Coast Guard staff in Indigenous culture, but this remains one of the largest barriers facing the organization.

**The Application Process**
The process for applying to any position within the Canadian Coast Guard was identified universally as a barrier for Indigenous peoples. The Coast Guard is exploring ways to clarify the recruitment process and make it more accessible for everyone.

Participants also brainstormed ways to assist Indigenous job-seekers to overcome this barrier, including:

- developing a step-by-step booklet to guide people through the process
- Coast Guard staff to deliver workshops in communities
- working one-on-one with interested Indigenous job-seekers in filling out the application form.

The Coast Guard College has made progress in this area for their Officer Training Program (OTP). Applicants no longer need to apply through www.jobs.gc.ca, but can apply directly on their website: http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/College-and-Careers/college. This makes the application process much easier for potential officers. However, candidates still must apply through the federal website for any other career opportunity at the College or in the Coast Guard.
This barrier also extends to the students applying for the Inshore Rescue Boat Program through the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP).

**Education Requirements**
The in-demand positions within the Coast Guard lie in the STEM fields (i.e. MCTS Officer, Marine Engineering/Navigation Officer) and require high academic levels of achievement in math and science in high school. This represents a barrier, especially for Indigenous adults looking to transition into a career with the Coast Guard.

Coast Guard College staff discussed launching a mentorship program to provide additional supports for Indigenous high school students interested in joining the Coast Guard after graduation. Indigenous students in the officer cadet program at the College would work with Indigenous students in the communities to help them achieve the academic level needed for entry into the College.

Other participants emphasized the need to educate the guidance counsellors and students in high school so they are aware of the education requirements to access careers in the Coast Guard.

**Tracking Indigenous Applicants**
While the organization is committed to increasing Indigenous hiring, there is a barrier in tracking who is Indigenous within the organization. This is an issue because Indigenous employees and job-seekers need to self-identify when applying for positions within the federal government, but many do not for a variety of reasons.

One participant suggested that many Indigenous people will not identify because they thought it would be a “barrier for them to move up” within the organization. Others stated that employees may fear “racism” and being seen by coworkers as having received “preferential treatment” because they are Indigenous.

The Coast Guard has participated in targeted recruiting through Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, which includes a partial focus on Indigenous peoples. Participants also shared that specific Indigenous recruitment is being discussed nationally, so Indigenous communities need to be educated on the benefits of self-identification.

**Bilingualism**
Bilingualism, while not always a requirement, was identified as a potential barrier for some positions within the Coast Guard. This was identified mostly for opportunities in the Marine Communications and Traffic Services group. Most positions in the Dartmouth location contain a bilingual imperative, however positions in the rest of Atlantic Canada do not require it.

For the Officer Training Program at the Coast Guard College, written and oral fluency in just one official language is required for entry.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**
Engagement strategies pioneered by the resource industry were developed in a period of engagement mandated by legal agreements. Long-term relationships and strategies to build broad-based cooperation between Indigenous peoples, government, organizations and business for mutual benefit are in their infancy. The Canadian Coast Guard faces challenges similar to those in the resource sector; many jobs demand highly educated and skilled employees who are deployed in remote and potentially
dangerous roles. Nonetheless, creating and implementing an Indigenous recruitment strategy offers an opportunity to be a pioneer in post-Reconciliation Indigenous recruitment and retention and to serve as an example to other businesses and organizations who are struggling to engage. Many of the issues and best practices discussed here are not specific to the recruitment and retention of Indigenous peoples but have been implemented over many years to create diverse, inclusive and humane workplaces. “Ultimately the outcome of the culturally safe workplace is a two-way relationship built on respect and a bicultural exchange which aims for equality and shared responsibility.”104 The AAEDIRP indicates First Nations require industry and government partners to help them in their goals to provide opportunities for the number of youth who are expected to be looking for opportunities in the coming decades. With this in mind, this report provides the following recommendations based on the research of best practices and interviews with Coast Guard staff:

Considerations and Recommendations for Indigenous Individuals

- Based on the current workforce composition, the Coast Guard is actively seeking Indigenous workforce capacity in four main areas:
  - Marine Engineering/Navigation Officers
  - Marine Communications and Traffic Services
  - Environmental Response Specialists
  - Search and Rescue (Inshore Rescue Boat Program)

There are specific academic requirements for recruitment into each of these roles, so participants repeatedly emphasized the need for high school students ensure they have the necessary courses and academic achievement to access these careers.

- Individuals should frequently check for opportunities through the federal jobs website: www.jobs.gc.ca.

- For Indigenous post-secondary students interested in Search and Rescue through the Inshore Rescue Boat Program, they should apply to the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) through their website: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/jobs/services/recruitment/students/federal-student-work-program.html.

- Indigenous peoples applying for jobs with the Coast Guard should self-identify through the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program.

- The staff of the Canadian Coast Guard and the College also recommended that individuals who are interested in careers with the Coast Guard reach out to them directly by phone or email.

Considerations and Recommendations for Indigenous Groups

- The CCG is at an opportune time in its organizational development to develop a real and meaningful Indigenous employment strategy in Atlantic Canada. Indigenous groups should take advantage of current and future opportunities within the CCG by creating a working group to connect and share information, interest, training, and needs assessments. This could include the development and sharing of community labour force profiles so the Coast Guard can effectively

104 Brascoupe & Walters, 15.
target positions for Indigenous workers. This could also include business development opportunities with the CCG or its suppliers.

- Indigenous groups should develop targeted training programs to meet workforce needs within the Canadian Coast Guard.

- Indigenous groups should ensure they have current economic development plans, as well as updated skills inventories, community and workforce needs assessments, and demographic data that can be shared with the CCG for planning purposes.

- Indigenous groups should continue to encourage and develop STEM-based curriculum and activities at all levels that integrate Elder and traditional knowledge, and language instruction.

- The Conference Board of Canada and a number of studies recommended that Indigenous organizations partner to streamline workforce programs and to create a central system or single point of entry for employers wishing to engage with Indigenous employees and communities. Indigenous groups should continue to lobby and work with the Federal government to increase funding, close gaps, and simplify application and reporting procedures.

- Indigenous groups and the Atlantic Policy Congress could address quantitative research gaps by working with the CCG to develop a research strategy focused on best practices in Indigenous education, training and employment. Partnership and data-sharing agreements would allow Indigenous groups to invite partners to conduct longitudinal studies and trace the outcomes of workforce cohorts that could then be shared.

- Indigenous groups should work collaboratively with Coast Guard staff to offer training workshops for community members on applying for jobs with the federal government. The federal government application process is different from private industry and there are numerous factors that could filter qualified candidates out of job opportunities with the Coast Guard. This was the top recommendation that came from Coast Guard staff for communities.

**Considerations and Recommendations for the CCG**

- The CCG is at an optimum time in its organizational development to take advantage of retirements, growth and program development in the CCG College to create meaningful-long term career development plans for Atlantic First Nations, Métis and Innu peoples, and to develop a post-Reconciliation strategy in concert with Indigenous communities and organizations in the Atlantic Region.

- The Canadian Coast Guard has to take the first step to promote and raise awareness of career opportunities available for Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada. This involves the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit, HR, and Coast Guard College staff “explaining to First Nations, to the leadership, to students, who the Coast Guard is, what it does, our mandate, and what opportunities are available”. Once Indigenous communities and individuals are aware of the opportunities, then they can prepare to capitalize on them. Raising awareness can be done in numerous ways:
  - Meeting with secondary school staff (guidance, principals, First Nations student support)
  - Coast Guard participation in community career fairs
Hands-on tours in communities with Coast Guard vessels
Meeting with community administration (Chief and Councils, Employment and Training Officers, Native Employment Officers)
Continued engagement of Indigenous leadership

Some of this work has been started by the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit but must be expanded to include key staff from the Coast Guard College and other relevant departments.

- The interview participants recognized that promoting job opportunities solely through www.jobs.gc.ca was insufficient to reach the young Indigenous population. It was recommended that job opportunities be advertised through non-traditional platforms, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).

- The CCG has to find new ways of appealing to local Indigenous communities by developing partnerships of shared protection and stewardship over the water; in search and rescue, and to develop a broader identity that incorporates First Nations knowledge and culture. First Nations in Atlantic Canada place particular value on giving back to the community, it is important that they see careers with the CCG as a way of doing this. One strategy could include engaging Indigenous communities (fishers, fire chiefs, etc.) for volunteer opportunities in search and rescue.

- The Inshore Rescue Boat Program was identified as a key opportunity for Indigenous post-secondary students. It was recommended that an Indigenous cohort be piloted for this program within, or nearby, an Indigenous community.

- Individual marine and health and safety certifications are costly and complex to obtain and prohibit Indigenous people from applying to opportunities at the CCG. The CCG should explore ways to help Indigenous youth and adults acquire them in their community by partnering to host online, distance or in-class sessions and expand summer camps, internships, co-ops and apprenticeships that will give them the hours and experience necessary to pursue careers within the CCG. In this respect, the Coast Guard Auxiliary seems to be an underutilized resource.

- The CCG should consider having a permanent Elder (the Canadian Forces have an official Elder and Chaplain), create an Indigenous engagement (advisory) team and employee committees to assist with implementing an engagement plan and act as a resource and support for Indigenous employees. Interview participants also recommended having an Elders’ committee to advise the Coast Guard, as well as ensuring Indigenous culture is represented at events and ceremonies.

- The CCG should also continue to build an Indigenous “cultural footprint” in all aspects of the organization. This includes cultural awareness training, Treaty education, and building a common understanding of Atlantic Canadian Indigenous communities. Participants identified the human resources department and managers responsible for hiring as first priority for cultural awareness training. Most of the participants who were not a part of the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit expressed ignorance of the Indigenous communities in the region. One participant stated: “I don’t have a real understanding of where these folks are, how we access them, how we communicate with them”. There were repeated instances where participants stated that educating HR and management will contribute positively to increasing
Indigenous hiring in the CCG. Once HR and management are educated on Indigenous histories and culture, this awareness training should be expanded to the entire CCG workforce.

- An Indigenous “cultural footprint” also applies to the work environment. Culturally relevant spaces should be included in workplaces and at the College to build a sense of belonging for Indigenous recruits. These could include: a place to practice spirituality, having Indigenous décor and artwork in prominent places, celebrating Indigenous histories through artifacts and photos.

- Indigenous engagement and competency training is offered by the School of Public Servants and INAC possesses extensive knowledge and resources. As a branch of the Federal Government, the CCG is in a position to develop a multi-departmental group to investigate and share gaps and best practices in the DFO, Canadian Forces, RCMP, and across the Public Service. Understanding these entities are bound by Federal Government Public Service recruitment and hiring protocols, the CCG should be an advocate for reforms that make Indigenous recruitment easier and fairer.

- Based on workforce assessments, the CCG should expand/merge current workforce documents into comprehensive manuals or guides for CCG staff and Indigenous groups modeled on those in resource industry. These would include the data necessary for effective planning and the execution of career pathways for students, parents and counselors. One other suggestion from interview participants was to include a how-to guide and tips for applying through the federal jobs website: [www.jobs.gc.ca](http://www.jobs.gc.ca).

- CCG staff should work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to offer training workshops for community members on applying for jobs with the federal government. The federal government application process is different from private industry and there are numerous factors that could filter qualified candidates out of job opportunities with the Coast Guard.

- The CCG should build partnerships with the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) agreement holders throughout Atlantic Canada. These organizations will be valuable partners to support the recruitment and delivery of training programs for Indigenous Peoples in Atlantic Canada. The ASETS agreement holders are listed below:
  - New Brunswick
    - Mawiw Council Inc.
      150 Cliffe Street, Box R12
      Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3A 0A1
      (506) 458-8124
    - New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council
      320 St. Mary’s Street
      Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3A 2S4
    - North Shore Micmac District Council Inc.
      38 Micmac Road
      Eel Ground, New Brunswick, E1V 4B1
      (506) 627-4611
    - Wolastoqey Tribal Council
      150 Cliffe St. 2nd Floor
      Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3A 0A1
(506) 459-6341

- Prince Edward Island
  - Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI
    200 Read Drive
    Summerside, Prince Edward Island, C1N 5N7
    (902) 436-5101

- Newfoundland and Labrador
  - Qalipu Mi'kmag First Nation Band
    P.O. Box 956
    Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, A2H 6J3
    (709) 634-0996
  - Miawpukek First Nation
    P.O. Box 10
    Conne River, Newfoundland and Labrador, A0H 1J0
    (709) 882-2470
  - Mushuau Innu Band Council
    P.O. Box 190
    Natuashish, Newfoundland and Labrador, A0P 1A0
    (709) 478-8827
  - Nunatsiavut Government
    P.O. Box 116
    Makkovik, Newfoundland and Labrador, A0P 1J0
    (709) 922-2942
  - NunatuKavut (formerly Labrador Métis Council)
    P.O. Box 460, Station C
    Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, A0P 1E0
    (709) 896-0592
  - Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
    P.O. Box 160
    Sheshatshiu, Newfoundland and Labrador, A0P 1M0
    (709) 497-8522

- Nova Scotia
  - Mi'Kmaq Employment & Training Secretariat
    87 Millbrook Avenue, Apartment 112
    Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, B2V 0A1
    (902) 405-8963
  - Native Council of Nova Scotia
    129 Truro Heights Road, P.O. Box 1320
    Truro, Nova Scotia, B2N 5N2
    (902) 895-1523

In addition to ASETS agreement holders, Indigenous organizations like the Joint Economic Development Initiative Inc. (JEDI) and the Mi’kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBO) are creating partnerships with industry to support training and entrepreneurship for Indigenous peoples in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, respectively. These organizations should also be engaged to support Indigenous training, employment, and business development in the CCG.
- Human resources staff recommended that hiring managers ensure their job postings are accessible, even for candidates without on-the-job experience. If a candidate has the skills and education then they should be considered, even if they do not have direct experience in the Coast Guard. This would assist new candidates to successfully apply for entry positions within the Coast Guard.

- There must be a continued commitment to fulfilling the duty to consult, as it relates to Coast Guard activities in Indigenous lands and waters.

- Indigenous businesses should be given equal opportunity to bid on contracts with the Coast Guard. Indigenous set-asides may also be an option to consider, if sufficient business capacity is demonstrated.

- The Canadian Coast Guard should commit to increased collaboration between departments, specifically: Human Resources (through DFO), Integrated Business Management Services, the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit, the Coast Guard College, and hiring managers.

**Recommendations Specific to the Canadian Coast Guard College**

- Targeted recruitment strategies at the university level and for admission into CCG college are reaching Indigenous students too late. The CCG should work with Indigenous communities and schools at the primary and secondary levels as well as professional organizations like Engineers Canada to develop interest in STEM subjects and to sponsor students, create experiential learning opportunities, and develop curriculum.

- There is tremendous opportunity to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into CCG College curriculum and involve Elders and community members. It is anticipated that 50% of the CCG College faculty will retire in the next five years. The CCG College should begin searches for Indigenous faculty now and work with communities to identify Indigenous students who might be interested in careers in education at the College, and to facilitate their educations accordingly through bursaries, scholarships, mentorships and other supports.

- The Coast Guard College should evaluate curriculum and training standards to see if bridging programs, distance education, co-ops, internships or opportunities can be developed that build community capacity in marine ecosystems, pollution response, rescue, traffic and conditions monitoring.

- Studies such as *What Works* as well as the TRC *Calls to Action* suggest that industries and organizations are and will be struggling to engage Indigenous peoples. The CCG should commit to being a leader in the region by allocating resources to research, promote and celebrate best practices and to enable an engagement team to work with Indigenous communities. There is an opportunity to develop a longitudinal research infrastructure (with Indigenous organizations, colleges and universities) to develop and evaluate CCG methodology and recruitment and retention strategies. The Coast Guard College could spearhead this research.
- It was recommended that an Indigenous Mentorship Program be started within the Coast Guard College to support Indigenous high school students to achieve the necessary academics for admission.
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Appendix A:

Coast Guard Staff Interviews - Themes and Recommendations
Canadian Coast Guard Staff Interviews
Themes and recommendations arising from participant interviews.

Introduction
In addition to the desktop research, personal interviews were conducted with seven employees of the Canadian Coast Guard to build a greater understanding of the current and future workforce needs and present-day realities facing the organization. The participants included staff from each of the following areas within the Coast Guard:

- Integrated Business and Management Services, Coast Guard Atlantic Region
  - Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit
- Workforce Development
- Coast Guard College
- Human Resources with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The interviews were conducted by phone, recorded with approval from the participants, and transcribed. The interviews were guided by a specific set of questions developed in advance and categorized into two groups: Workforce Needs and Indigenous Engagement.

Workforce Needs
1. Tell me a little bit about yourself (name, position, areas of focus).
2. To your knowledge, what is the current composition of the workforce in the Canadian Coast Guard in Atlantic Canada?
3. Based on this, what are the future career opportunities with the CCG?
4. What qualifications are required to access these careers?

Indigenous Engagement
5. How has the CCG worked with Atlantic Canadian Indigenous Peoples in the past?
6. How can the CCG improve their work with Indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada?
7. What are the barriers and opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in the CCG in Atlantic Canada?
8. How can Indigenous Peoples prepare to access opportunities with the CCG?

The following is a summary report of the findings of these seven interviews. The report will conclude with a list of recommendations for the Coast Guard to consider moving forward in Indigenous engagement, recruitment, and retention.

Workforce Themes
The following workforce themes emerged from the interviews with Coast Guard staff. Overall, participants recognized the looming challenges of expansion and an aging workforce and expressed excitement at the prospect of Indigenous workers helping to fill these gaps.

Current Workforce Composition
Participants, particularly those in Workforce Development and Human Resources, provided an overview of the current workforce of the Canadian Coast Guard Atlantic Region. The Canadian Coast Guard is a large employer in Atlantic Canada with approximately 1,807 employees in the region: 1,172 sea-going
and 635 on-shore. A provincial breakdown shows that these positions are primarily located in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) and Nova Scotia (NS), however there are small contingents in New Brunswick (NB) and Prince Edward Island (PEI).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Sea-going Positions</th>
<th>On-Shore Positions</th>
<th>Total Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>1,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These positions are mainly located in four primary Coast Guard bases located in St. John’s, NL; Dartmouth, NS; Saint John, NB; and, Charlottetown, PEI. In all four provinces, there are lifeboat stations (or “star stations”) which contain small search and rescue vessels and employ up to eight people at each station. These are scattered along the coastline in each of the four Atlantic provinces.

In order to fulfil its mandate, the Coast Guard requires a wide variety of positions, which participants segmented into sea-going and on-shore:

- **Sea-going**
  - Ships officers/captains
  - Engineers (marine, nautical)
  - Electronics
  - Informatics
  - Marine Navigation
  - Cooks
  - Deckhands
  - Superintendents/supervisors

- **On-Shore**
  - Lighthouse keepers
  - Marine Communications and Traffic Services
  - Search and Rescue Specialists
  - Star Supports/Maritime Star Coordinators
  - Environmental Response
  - Electronics
  - Engineers

There were also a number of positions identified at the Canadian Coast Guard College, including: instructors, cafeteria staff, administrative support, librarians, etc.

In the future, there is also a plan in place to expand the workforce. One participant stated, “...we are growing through the Ocean Protection Plan, we’re probably going to bring on about a couple hundred more people in the coming years”. This future expansion, combined with an aging workforce, necessitates increased engagement with the Indigenous communities of Atlantic Canada.

**Aging Workforce**

Most of the participants identified the aging workforce as a significant challenge facing the Coast Guard moving forward. Several participants stated that the federal government did not hire for a number of years, which has led to a gap between those aged 55 and older and those aged 35-45. There is not
enough experience to replace the retiring upper management. One participant said, “there’s almost a bit of an experience gap there because of what people are walking out with certainly doesn’t match the people who are coming into the [senior] positions because they just haven’t been around long enough”. This means individuals may be promoted before they are ready to fill these senior-level positions. There is capacity outside of the Coast Guard, but external recruitment has historically been a challenge for the Coast Guard.

In addition to the experience gap, the retirement levels within the Coast Guard are alarming. One participant provided an informative breakdown of the current workforce demographics (see below).

Age Breakdown of the Coast Guard Workforce

When an employee reaches the age of 55 with 30 years of service, they can retire without penalty. This means that 57% of the Coast Guard’s workforce may retire within the next ten years. The average age for sea-going positions is currently around 45 years old for ship’s officers, and 46 years old for ship’s crew. For on-shore careers, senior management staff within the Coast Guard has an average age of 52. The Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) staff is younger, but still has an average age in the low 40s, and there are 35 current vacancies for that position. One participant said:

“I think that there’s opportunity in every single unit, group, sector, whatever you call it, in the Coast Guard. There’s opportunities and there’s always going to be. Right now, we can’t recruit people as quickly as they’re retiring...I see it every single day. I see retirement letters coming across my desk...It’s shocking how many a week I actually see, and I’m only seeing them for fleet. I don’t actually see them for the other programs in Coast Guard.” (Participant #6)

One participant in HR emphasized the need to move from reactive staffing practices, where “you come to me today and tell me what you needed yesterday”, to a more proactive approach. Preparing for these looming retirements is a part of this approach. This is where participants identified the need to engage the Indigenous workforce: “We have that gap that we’re gonna need to fill and we know the Indigenous population is the fastest growing segment in the Canadian population. There’s an opportunity there.”
Priority Areas

While many interviewees expressed that there are opportunities throughout the Coast Guard, four key positions stood out as priorities: 1) Marine Engineering Officer/Marine Navigation Officer; 2) Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS); 3) Environmental Response; and, 4) Search and Rescue (Inshore Rescue Boat Program). The current openings for these positions were reported to be accessible through the website: jobs.gc.ca.

**Marine Engineering Officer/Marine Navigation Officer**

This position was mentioned as the top priority for recruitment within the Coast Guard Atlantic Region. These positions are staffed through the training provided at the Coast Guard College in Sydney, NS. The Canadian Coast Guard Officer Training Program is a four-year program and successful recruits must also commit to spending a minimum of four years with the Coast Guard after graduation.

“It’s a four-year program. You’re paid to go to school. You’re paid all your room and board. Everything is taken care of and you get a weekly allowance. So that’s all paid and all you’re required to do is sign a four-year contract when you finish. So, you’re guaranteed a job and all you have to do is work for four years to replace the four years of training. That’s one key area because engineers are at a premium...Without an engineer on the ship, the ship can’t go in the water, and we have a lot of engineers approaching retirement.” (Participant #2)

Although no post-secondary education is required for entry, this opportunity requires the most time commitment (eight years total) and academic excellence in high school. The online job posting for this position states that applicants must have successfully completed high school with the following advanced/university preparatory courses with a minimum grade of 70%:

- Grade 11 Chemistry
- Grade 12 Advanced Mathematics
- Grade 12 Physics
- Grade 12 English or French

Other essential skills and characteristics include: effective oral and written communication, judgement, adaptability, teamwork, and leadership.

The Coast Guard College is currently recruiting for 24 English engineers. There has historically been a challenge to recruit an equal number of French candidates, so they are admitting as many as possible at this time. The process for recruitment is extremely competitive, with approximately 350 applicants per year.

**Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS)**

While ships officers are in high demand, there seemed to be more of a pressing need for MCTS Officers. MCTS Officers monitor vessel traffic and respond to emergency distress calls. Participants repeatedly described these positions as the “air traffic controllers of the sea”. As with the officer positions, these also require a high school diploma. The qualities and interests essential for this position is: “interest in the marine field, good oral communication skills, initiative, judgement, tolerance to stress, ability to multi-task, teamwork, and interest in using highly advanced equipment”. There is also a bilingual imperative in some cases, and these positions require the successful candidates to work in 12-hour shifts.
While the position requires just a high school education, the recruitment process is intensive. An initial application is reviewed and candidates then must write an aptitude test. This test ensures that candidates can perform well in a high-stress environment. This test is the main screening tool for applicants. One participant described it this way: “There is a fairly intensive...I wrote the test at one point and I failed it miserably. But there is a fairly intensive aptitude test.” Once candidates pass this test, there is an interview. If they are selected after that, then they enter the Marine Communication and Traffic Services Training Program at the Coast Guard College in Sydney, NS. Once again, the costs of training are paid for and a stipend is provided for the students. This is a 25-week program, after which the individuals are placed in one of the five MCTS Centres in Atlantic Canada: Goose Bay, NL; Placentia, NL; Port aux Basques, NL; Halifax, NS; and, Sydney, NS. After a short period as a trainee, they are elevated two pay levels. “These jobs start somewhere in the range of $65,000-$70,000, and with overtime you’re up into the 70s, 80s, 90 grand a year range.”

As of March 2018, Coast Guard staff reported that there were 35 current vacancies within the Marine Communication and Traffic Services group.

Environmental Response Specialists
This third priority was identified because the environmental response group has been growing in recent years. The heightened awareness and commitment to the environment through the Ocean Protection Plan has spurred this growth and is projected to continue in the coming years. These specialists are highly trained in techniques and equipment to respond to various oil spills, mystery spills, and dealing with derelict ships. They are trained to assess the incident, determine what type of situation is facing them, and respond appropriately. Even if a polluter is not able to respond, the Coast Guard would be responsible to do so.

These positions generally require a post-secondary degree or diploma in environmental studies, which is not delivered through the Coast Guard College. They may also look for individuals with certifications in marine diesel mechanics as it relates to oils and other pollutants.

Search and Rescue
Participants shared that opportunities in Search and Rescue with the Coast Guard begin with the Inshore Rescue Boat Program. Up to 70 post-secondary students are hired and trained each summer to work in one of the 39 inshore rescue stations across Atlantic Canada. They work in groups of three, with one leader to guide and train them should there be a search and rescue incident. One participant stated that, “many of the permanent staff for search and rescue came from being a student in the Inshore Rescue Boat Program”. This is an easy entry point into the workforce for youth currently enrolled in post-secondary education which could lead to a career in the Coast Guard as a Search and Rescue Specialist.

In order to access these opportunities, candidates must apply to the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) and complete several courses, including: a radio course, first aid, and recreational boaters license course.
Indigenous Engagement Themes

The interview participants universally expressed that Indigenous engagement is a priority for the Coast Guard because of the mandate of Truth and Reconciliation, looming workforce shortages and the duty to consult. Historically, Indigenous engagement has been “piecemeal” and “ad hoc”.

“That’s a story we’re trying to piece together. I know our ships captains, our fleet captains, they work in First Nations communities all the time. They go wherever the call is... Our icebreakers are always around breaking ice in communities. There’s a lot more formality up north because of the isolation factor of northern communities... So one of the stories we’re trying to tell is, you know, what has been our past interaction, and there’s been lots because we do have some auxiliary members that are First Nations members that joined to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, but we haven’t really had a strong ongoing working relationship.” (Participant #2)

In May 2017, the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit was created within the Integrated Business Management Services department of the Coast Guard Atlantic Region. This unit was formed “in an effort to help fill the Prime Minister’s mandate on Reconciliation and nation-to-nation partnerships with all of our Indigenous nations and partners”. Indigenous partnerships and recruitment is also one of the main pillars of the Ocean Protection Plan which was announced in 2017.

Reporting to the Regional Director of Integrated Business Management Services, this team consists of a manager, two senior officers, and an administrative assistant. They are tasked with exploring the following questions:

- “How do we integrate ourselves into partnerships with First Nations?
- How do we help First Nations explore opportunities of employment with the Coast Guard?
- How do we support First Nations to access procurement opportunities?
- How do we get training and capacity building opportunities in key areas?” (Participant #2)

Before moving action items forward, the team has been engaging with Indigenous communities and leadership across the region to hear their viewpoints.

The Coast Guard College has also engaged historically with five Indigenous communities on the island of Cape Breton. They are awaiting further direction from the Coast Guard Atlantic Region before expanding their current activities.

“So as far as how the Coast Guard College [has engaged] with the Atlantic Indigenous peoples, I mentioned five communities. I’d also like to mention that they’ve come here [to the College] several times... In addition to that, Stephen Augustine, who’s at the Unama’ki College at Cape Breton University, he’s come here several times to give us cultural awareness sessions, and they also participated in our grad last year with a smudging ceremony, and we will be continuing that tradition in the future... We’re getting there.” (Participant #4)

Indigenous Leadership Engagement

The first main theme emerging from the interviews involved Indigenous leadership engagement. Rather than developing programs and services in-house and bringing them to the Indigenous communities, the
Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit is engaging Indigenous leadership first to understand how they should engage with the communities.

“We don’t move anywhere without talking to leadership. It’s critical. We’re not going to develop an engagement strategy or plan to work with First Nations without seeking guidance from the leadership.” (Participant #2)

The Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit is the focal point for the relationship between the Coast Guard Atlantic and Indigenous communities, ensuring that the Coast Guard understands the view of Indigenous communities, and vice versa.

“We provide that support to relationship-building and really trying to work with an approach that has Indigenous groups, sort of, telling us how they want to be engaged... and making sure that’s understood within the Coast Guard.” (Participant #1)

To date, the Coast Guard has received direction on how to engage the Mi’gmaq and Wolastoq communities in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. No participants mentioned receiving direction from leadership in Newfoundland and Labrador. The following organizations have been identified by Indigenous leadership as key partners to work through:

- Mi’gmawe’l Tplu’taqnn Inc. (MTI) – Mi’gmaq in NB
- Wolastoq Tribal Council (WTC) – Wolastoq in NB
- Mi’kmaq Confederacy of PEI – Mi’kmaq in PEI
- Kwilmu’kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) – Mi’kmaq in NS

Those communities who are not affiliated with any of the organizations mentioned above are being engaged on an individual level. The Atlantic Policy Congress was identified as a representative organization that can help the Coast Guard engage with non-affiliated Indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada, such as Millbrook, Sipekne’katik, Elsipogtog, Esgenoopetitj and others.

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) is also a key opportunity for the Coast Guard. The ASETS holders in Atlantic Canada provide programs and services to support Indigenous job seekers in the following areas: skill development, training, job search, child care, and more. These programs could be leveraged to maximize the impact of future targeted training and hiring programs.

Duty to Consult

One key reason that Indigenous leadership engagement was so critical to the Coast Guard is the fiduciary duty of the Crown to meaningfully consult with Indigenous groups on issues and activities that may impact Aboriginal rights and title. The Indigenous Relations unit serves a key function by analyzing the Coast Guards’ activities and determining when and where consultation may be required.

“Leading and advising is another function on the duty to consult. Much of what the Coast Guard does is gonna be more about supporting engagement and partnerships, but there’s a small component of what we do where the duty to consult could arise, like, to do with properties and land and things like that. So, in terms of duty to consult analysis and making sure everyone knows about the various protocols that exist with each of the groups and ensuring we’re respecting the protocols when we have a duty to consult.” (Participant #1)
“In Labrador, we will be involved in a little bit of treaty negotiation and ensuring that we’re implementing and respecting treaties as well... Historic treaties, but also, we have the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, so we would be the ones responsible for making sure, for instance, ice breaking’s aware of the marine zone and there may be a need to consult.” (Participant #1)

A part of ensuring that the consultation protocols are followed is raising awareness internally with the Coast Guard, which leads to another key theme that arose throughout the interviews.

Raising Awareness of Indigenous Peoples

Since Indigenous engagement was reported to be limited in the past, there is also a limited understanding within the Coast Guard of Indigenous communities, peoples, Treaties, and culture. In the past year, there have been numerous training opportunities and presentations given to Coast Guard staff to educate them on Indigenous issues, however there is much more work to be done to build a common level of understanding. This was reported to be another key function of the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit.

“Raising awareness internally to the Coast Guard, so, we’ve been bringing in Indigenous trainers and elders... and [we] do one-on-one presentations that are more about the demographics than who the groups are, just giving a sense of who they are. But really, raising cultural competency and awareness is another big function of [the Indigenous Relations] group.” (Participant #1)

Some Coast Guard staff were unsure of how to refer to Indigenous peoples without being offensive. They were interested in supporting the communities but never had the opportunity to learn about Indigenous peoples.

“In terms of...the Indigenous peoples portfolio, and I don’t mean to sound disrespectful or disingenuous when I use the terminology because, again, I mean, I’ve been here 17 years. There’s not been any tutoring or anything on what appropriate terminology is, and so apologies if I’m not using the appropriate words.” (Participant #6)

Understanding the Indigenous Workforce

In addition to the general understanding of the Indigenous communities, Coast Guard staff also mentioned how important it is to build their understanding of the Indigenous workforce. One participant stated, “If I understand correctly, there are some labour profile assessments, or labour force profiles, that can be provided to us, and that would be awesome”. These labour profiles were discussed as tools to help develop targeted training programs in Indigenous communities to fill vacancies within the Coast Guard. They would also be useful for targeted hiring campaigns.

Raising Indigenous Awareness of Opportunities in the Coast Guard

While participants expressed the need for increased awareness within the Coast Guard of Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada, they also shared that Indigenous communities need to be made aware of the workforce and procurement opportunities within the Coast Guard.
“Without that outreach, that’s first and foremost. Without that outreach to First Nations, everybody sees that red and white ship, but nobody thinks any more about it than that.” (Participant #1)

“It’s about understanding what we do as the Coast Guard, I mean, not everybody has to be on a ship... So if we can help people better understand, you know, you might want to be an electronic technologist, you might want to climb the tower, you might want to head up the Indigenous Relations Unit someday, or you might want to be in the Inshore Rescue Boat Program...so perhaps just how we better communicate who we are and what we do, and honestly, we haven’t been doing a very good...we’re getting better...” (Participant #7)

Participants also expressed the need to raise awareness about the Coast Guard College in the communities.

“I don’t think nearly as many people know about Canadian Coast Guard as they actually should... My husband works in Coast Guard, so he’s often telling individuals about the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard College, and it’s quite shocking how many youngsters, individuals who are getting ready to go off to university or college or think about careers, have no idea what the Coast Guard College is. Most of them have never even heard of it. So, I think that whole piece in terms of going to the college, what that looks like, that’s definitely not well-known.” (Participant #6)

In addition to raising awareness in the communities, the staff of the College stated that raising awareness and recruiting in high schools is preferred, even though some adults do enter the program later in life.

“So, because of the training program, there’s a lot of math and physics, it’s best to recruit them when they’re still in school or just out of school, or have gone to post-secondary as well, just because they’re still in the learning mode. People who have been out of school for a long time do find it difficult to get back into study mode.” (Participant #4)

**Barriers to Success**

One of the final questions in each interview addressed barriers and opportunities facing Indigenous peoples who wish to access opportunities with the Canadian Coast Guard. The following barriers were identified.

**Current Awareness of the Indigenous Workforce**

The current understanding of the Indigenous workforce and communities was identified as a barrier facing Indigenous people trying to enter the Coast Guard. However, this could be turned into an opportunity once human resources staff and managers are educated.

“I think the education piece for human resources would be incredibly important... Right now, it’s probably a barrier, but it’s something that could become an opportunity because we [Human Resources Advisors] have the ability to talk to management in a way that not anybody else does as it relates to staffing of their positions. So, managers...bring their opportunities to HR, opportunities, how do I staff these positions? Where do I get these
people? And so, if the HR community is not knowledgeable about the Indigenous communities, and I, for one, am not... If you would educate the HR community on who this community is, what they can do, where they are, how do we get to them, I think that’s a wonderful starting point.” (Participant #6)

“At the same time, I think management needs to be educated in the same way because, at the end of the day, I can provide advice and guidance to a manager...the manager can turn around, walk out of my cubicle...and do whatever they want because they are the delegated authority.” (Participant #6)

Corporate Structure

One participant also felt that the corporate structure of the organization can be a barrier to effective Indigenous employment and that the silos of Integrated Business Management Services, Coast Guard management, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans HR department need to be bridged. This breakdown of silos is starting to happen through trilateral meetings at the Director level, but more work needs to be done to increase collaboration on the Indigenous file across departments.

“It is true that there are often things being done in IBMS from an administrative or a corporate function that DFO HR knows nothing about, even though we, DFO HR, support the same managers in staffing and all things HR.” (Participant #6)

“Coast Guard has hired their own people to do a lot of what HR in DFO actually does, minus the actual authority to help you staff. That still rests directly with HR.” (Participant #6)

Some other federal departments, such as DFO, have more experience working with Indigenous communities and may be able to support the Coast Guard as they develop policies and procedures to support Indigenous recruitment and retention.

Geography

Participants also mentioned how the geographical distance between most Indigenous communities and Coast Guard bases may be a barrier.

“One of the challenges would be the fact that we are somewhat centrally located... specifically in Newfoundland and Labrador... We don’t have a significant Coast Guard presence on the west coast of our province, you know, and I think there is a substantial Indigenous population there.” (Participant #3)

The geography issue also extends to the Coast Guard College in Sydney, NS. For the major opportunities in the Coast Guard, candidates must be willing to relocate to the College. Individuals are away from home without the support that they once had. Mature students have additional challenges related to family ties.

“You live at the Coast Guard College... You’re away from your family. You know, some of the more mature students, they were away from their kids... So, to undertake the [MCTS] training, you are there for 25 weeks... So the barriers would be, you know, is it tough living away from your family? Certainly is.” (Participant #7)
These challenges were thought to be more applicable to Indigenous peoples compared to the rest of the population. This may be due to the fact that often there has historically been only one Indigenous student in a cohort at the College.

“I hear from First Nations students about, you know, they like to be near their communities often... They can get homesick, you know, like most people but maybe more so, especially if they are one Indigenous person amongst a whole group.” (Participant #1)

Once candidates complete their training, they may be even geographically isolated from home by their job placement.

“The other barrier is you can be stationed to any Coast Guard vessel across Canada. So, it doesn’t mean you’re going to be in your immediate area.” (Participant #4)

Participants also discussed ways to eliminate this barrier for students who have shown potential in the training programs but are struggling with the isolation from home.

“It they’re at week 23 and they’ve been a great student all along, and it looks like that they’re gonna be on a good path, but yet they have a couple of tough weeks. You know, we can perhaps support people with extra training at night, or maybe some personal one-on-one instruction, those types of things to help what may be a barrier for not being successful in the program.” (Participant #7)

Cultural Sensitivity

The homesickness that was reportedly faced by Indigenous candidates in training was exacerbated by the view that they are forced to adapt to a workplace and post-secondary institution that “maybe is not reflecting who they are”.

The Coast Guard College staff discussed lessons learned from a pilot project a few years ago that revealed this barrier. The College recognized that “we did not have the support network for them at the college, so they were taken out of their communities, and although they weren’t very far from their communities...we believe that they probably could have succeeded if we would have had support systems here at the college”.

“Part of our need from a recruitment perspective is ensuring that, when you go to the Coast Guard College, you’ll feel a sense of belonging because there are those supports in place. Whether it be an Elder’s committee or a legacy room or a place that you can practice your spirituality. Right now, none of those exist.” (Participant #2)

The Coast Guard College management team is actively exploring several ways to provide those supports to future Indigenous students, including:

- Have Elders present on-site
- Having Indigenous student centre on-site for students to use
- Providing a space for students to practice their spirituality
- Include a cultural footprint, i.e. Indigenous art and décor, artifacts, photos
- Incorporating cultural awareness into the College curriculum
Cultural sensitivity was identified by multiple participants as an area for the Coast Guard to improve in general. The Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit has begun delivering some training and support to Coast Guard staff in Indigenous culture, but this remains one of the largest barriers facing the organization.

“We don’t have the cultural knowledge within the Coast Guard. It’s at the beginning stages and one of the things that I’m doing is actually doing cultural awareness training, raising peoples’ awareness and understanding of who our Indigenous partners are; the cultures, the history, the traditions, the rights. And we’re doing that through a series of training opportunities... We bring in the community Elders to talk about their histories and their cultures and their traditions and who they are. It has gone really well” (Participant #2)

The Application Process

The process for applying to any position within the Canadian Coast Guard was identified universally as a barrier for Indigenous peoples. The Coast Guard is exploring ways to clarify the recruitment process and make it more accessible for everyone.

“It’s really tough to apply for a government job... We’ve got to be able to almost sit with people and help them through that process, or somehow simplify it... If you tick the wrong box, your application’s gone, boom, over to a box that we’ll never see, so it’s really unfortunate.” (Participant #7)

“There’s certainly little things you need to know when you’re applying to the federal government, and the whole rule about keeping your cover letter short...no, not so much, unfortunately. We seem to run counter to everything people are taught about brevity and applying to the government.” (Participant #1)

“If the opportunity presents to go into an Indigenous community, navigate them through the process of applying for a federal government job, because it’s quite different from private industry, you know. It’s detailed and there’s multiple steps in the process... The process itself has been described as a potential barrier, you know, because unless you work in the federal government, you know, you may not have a good understanding of how to do this.” (Participant #3)

Participants also brainstormed ways to assist Indigenous job-seekers to overcome this barrier, including:

- developing a step-by-step booklet to guide people through the process
- Coast Guard staff to deliver workshops in communities
- working one-on-one with interested Indigenous job-seekers in filling out the application form.

The Coast Guard College has made progress in this area for their Officer Training Program. Applicants no longer need to apply through www.jobs.gc.ca, but can apply directly on their website: http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/College-and-Careers/college. This makes the application process much easier for potential officers. However, candidates still must apply through the federal website for any other career opportunity at the College or in the Coast Guard.

This barrier also extends to the students applying for the Inshore Rescue Boat Program through the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP).
“The Federal Student Work Employment Program is often the mechanism the Coast Guard and many departments are using, so we can work with people in the community. Sometimes it’s a bit intimidating for students. Just in general, it can be a bit of a difficult process, but we want to be able to work with communities...be more accessible to support, you know, that application to that program. So, knowing where the website is, knowing what you need for a good cover letter, right, and your resume and making sure you get everything into the system.” (Participant #1)

Education Requirements

As outlined in the Workforce Themes section, the in-demand positions within the Coast Guard lie in the STEM fields (i.e. MCTS Officer, Marine Engineering/Navigation Officer) and require high academic levels of achievement in math and science in high school. This represents a barrier, especially for Indigenous adults looking to transition into a career with the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard College ran a pilot project a few years ago to help Indigenous candidates overcome this barrier. A group of Indigenous students were brought in to upgrade their math and physics, and then pursue STEM opportunities. Two of these students were then selected to attend the Coast Guard College, however they were unable to complete the program due to other factors.

Coast Guard College staff also discussed launching a mentorship program to provide additional supports for Indigenous high school students interested in joining the Coast Guard after graduation. Indigenous students in the officer cadet program at the College would work with Indigenous students in the communities to help them achieve the academic level needed for entry into the College.

“Cadets here [at the College] working with Indigenous students [in communities] to help them achieve the mark that they require, either in math, or physics, or chemistry... Once or twice going physically to meet each other, but then have the mentorship at a distance. So, either doing it through FaceTime or Skype, and assisting, you know...to make sure that they achieve at least 70% in that mark.” (Participant #5)

Other participants emphasized the need to educate the guidance counsellors and students in high school so they are aware of the education requirements to access careers in the Coast Guard.

Tracking Indigenous Applicants

While the organization is committed to increasing Indigenous hiring, there is a barrier in tracking who is Indigenous within the organization. This is an issue because Indigenous employees and job-seekers need to self-identify when applying for positions within the federal government, but many do not self-identify for a variety of reasons.

“One of the challenges is that people only need to self-identify, so there’s no requirement to say, ‘I’m an Indigenous and I’m working with the Coast Guard’. So, it’s very difficult to track, so, what we find is we mostly end up, through word of mouth...They just come in and tell us.” (Participant #1)
One participant suggested that many Indigenous people will not identify because they thought it would be a “barrier for them to move up” within the organization. Others stated that employees may fear “racism” and being seen by coworkers as having received “preferential treatment” because they are Indigenous.

The Coast Guard has participated in targeted recruiting through Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, which includes a partial focus on Indigenous peoples. Participants also shared that specific Indigenous recruitment is being discussed nationally, so Indigenous communities need to be educated on the benefits of self-identification.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism, while not always a requirement, was identified as a potential barrier for some positions within the Coast Guard. This was identified mostly for opportunities in the Marine Communications and Traffic Services group. Most positions in the Dartmouth location contain a bilingual imperative, however positions in the rest of Atlantic Canada do not require it.

For the Officer Training Program at the Coast Guard College, written and oral fluency in just one official language is required for entry. All students are taught a second language over the course of the four-year program.

Recommendations for Individuals and Communities

While there are many barriers to entry for Indigenous peoples with the Coast Guard, there are also numerous opportunities for individuals and communities. One participant stated that there had never been a more positive focus on Indigenous recruitment in their entire tenure with the organization. The following is a summary of recommendations for individuals and Indigenous communities to overcome the barriers and capitalize on the opportunities. They are listed in order of frequency and importance based on the interviews with Coast Guard staff.

For Individuals

1. Based on the current workforce composition, the Coast Guard is actively seeking Indigenous workforce capacity in four main areas:
   - Marine Engineering/Navigation Officers
   - Marine Communications and Traffic Services
   - Environmental Response Specialists
   - Search and Rescue (Inshore Rescue Boat Program)
   There are specific academic requirements for recruitment into each of these roles, so participants repeatedly emphasized the need for high school students to ensure they have the necessary courses and academic achievement to access these careers.

2. Individuals should frequently check for opportunities through the federal jobs website: www.jobs.gc.ca.

4. Indigenous peoples applying for jobs with the Coast Guard should self-identify through the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program.

5. The staff of the Canadian Coast Guard and the College also recommended that individuals who are interested in careers with the Coast Guard reach out to them directly by phone or email.

**For Indigenous Communities**

1. Communities should work collaboratively with Coast Guard staff to offer training workshops for community members on applying for jobs with the federal government. The federal government application process is different from private industry and there are numerous factors that could filter qualified candidates out of job opportunities with the Coast Guard. This was the top recommendation that came from Coast Guard staff for communities.

2. Communities should develop targeted training programs to meet workforce needs within the Canadian Coast Guard.

3. Communities should develop and share community labour force profiles so Coast Guard staff can effectively target positions for Indigenous workers.

4. Communities should promote Indigenous businesses to the Canadian Coast Guard so procurement set-asides can be established to maximize Indigenous business contracting.

**Recommendations for the Coast Guard**

While there are numerous ways for Indigenous individuals and communities to take advantage of the opportunities with the Canadian Coast Guard, the participants also provided numerous recommendations for the Coast Guard to consider to help eliminate the barriers for Indigenous peoples. They are listed below in order of frequency and importance based on feedback received through the interviews with Coast Guard staff.

1. The Canadian Coast Guard has to take the first step to promote and raise awareness of career opportunities available for Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada. This involves the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit, HR, and Coast Guard College staff “explaining to First Nations, to the leadership, to students, who the Coast Guard is, what it does, our mandate, and what opportunities are available”. Once Indigenous communities and individuals are aware of the opportunities, then they can prepare to capitalize on them. Raising awareness can be done in numerous ways:
   - Meeting with secondary school staff (guidance, principals, First Nations student support)
   - Coast Guard participation in community career fairs
   - Hands-on tours in communities with Coast Guard vessels
   - Meeting with community administration (Chief and Councils, Employment and Training Officers, Native Employment Officers)
   - Continued engagement of Indigenous leadership

Some of this work has been started by the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit but must be expanded to include key staff from the Coast Guard College and other relevant departments.
2. The Coast Guard should also continue to build an Indigenous “cultural footprint” in all aspects of the organization. This includes cultural awareness training, Treaty education, and building a common understanding of Atlantic Canadian Indigenous communities.

Participants identified the human resources department and managers responsible for hiring as first priority for cultural awareness training. Most of the participants who were not a part of the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit expressed ignorance of the Indigenous communities in the region. One participant stated: “I don’t have a real understanding of where these folks are, how we access them, how we communicate with them”. There were repeated instances where participants stated that educating HR and management will contribute positively to increasing Indigenous hiring in the Coast Guard. Once HR and management are educated on Indigenous histories and culture, this awareness training should be expanded to the entire Coast Guard workforce.

An Indigenous “cultural footprint” also applies to the work environment. Culturally relevant spaces should be included in workplaces and at the College to build a sense of belonging for Indigenous recruits. These could include: a place to practice spirituality, having Indigenous décor and artwork in prominent places, celebrating Indigenous histories through artifacts and photos. Participants also recommended having an Elders’ committee to advise the Coast Guard, as well as ensuring Indigenous culture is represented at events and ceremonies.

Finally, the College should explore ways to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and culture into the curriculum. Each of these steps would help instill a “cultural footprint” within every level of the organization.

3. Coast Guard staff should work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to offer training workshops for community members on applying for jobs with the federal government. The federal government application process is different from private industry and there are numerous factors that could filter qualified candidates out of job opportunities with the Coast Guard. This was the top recommendation that came from Coast Guard staff for communities, but it also applies to the Coast Guard.

4. The participants recognized that promoting job opportunities through www.jobs.gc.ca was insufficient to reach the young Indigenous population. It was recommended that job opportunities be advertised through non-traditional platforms, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).

5. The Inshore Rescue Boat Program was identified as a key opportunity for Indigenous post-secondary students. It was recommended that an Indigenous cohort be piloted for this program within, or nearby, an Indigenous community.

6. It was recommended that an Indigenous Mentorship Program be started within the Coast Guard College to support Indigenous high school students to achieve the necessary academics for admission.

7. The Coast Guard should consider developing bridging programs to assist Indigenous adults to upgrade academically and access careers and/or programs at the College.
8. Human resources staff recommended that hiring managers ensure their job postings are accessible, even for candidates without on-the-job experience. If a candidate has the skills and education then they should be considered, even if they do not have direct experience in the Coast Guard. This would assist new candidates to successfully apply for entry positions within the Coast Guard.

9. The Coast Guard should engage Indigenous communities (fishers, fire chiefs, etc.) for volunteer opportunities in search and rescue.

10. The Coast Guard should produce a formal public document containing information on career opportunities and is required/beneficial in order to access them. This includes a guide for applying through the federal jobs website: www.jobs.gc.ca.

11. There must be a continued commitment to fulfilling the duty to consult, as it related to Coast Guard activities in Indigenous lands and waters.

12. Indigenous businesses should be given equal opportunity to bid on contracts with the Coast Guard. Indigenous set-asides may also be an option to consider, if sufficient business capacity is demonstrated.

13. The Canadian Coast Guard should commit to increased collaboration between departments, specifically: Human Resources (through DFO), Integrated Business Management Services, the Indigenous Relations and Partnerships Unit, the Coast Guard College, and hiring managers.