



Representative Workforce (Employment Equity) Strategy Guidelines

The positives of a representative workforce verses an employment equity plan are that although both strategies have the same goal, the representative workforce has no mythical backlashes of under-qualified individuals, timetables and quota systems in place.

- 1) Sign a partnership with all players – on principles only – “each partner will do what they can to employ target group individuals.”
- 2) This partnership shall dictate a committee made up of all parties which will assist in directing and letting each other know what they can do.
- 3) In many cases, the partnership would include the employer, union, funding agencies and training institutes.
- 4) Establish a working committee with all partnership signees, which will:
 - Review collective agreement language for barriers to employment of target group (employer and union).
 - Consider inclusive language to be put to both sides’ bargaining teams for approval (employer and union).
 - Develop awareness training program related to designated group (employer and union).
 - Pursue joint presentations to funders enabling backfilling while members trained, development of training material and trainers, and related special projects (employer and union).
 - Identify needs and communicate these with the community and have training institutes prepared to offer the courses (employer, union, target group community and training institutes).
- 5) The employer takes a snapshot of the workplace which will statistically prove what the shortcomings (vacancies, upcoming retirements, historical turnover rates) will be in the future. This snapshot will assist determining needs. For example, a health

care employer finds it needs to train 20 LPN's for the health district as there will be a shortfall due to turnovers, retirements and such in two years' time.

- Communities identify the target individuals, training institutes train the target individuals. Once qualified they can compete for positions as external candidates.
- One example, a special program of the representative workforce strategy in Saskatchewan, was a partnership of government and employer targeting people on social assistance. A 20-week course called "Preparing for the Workforce" was created. The targeted group, some who had never held full-time employment before, was doing practicums in the health field which led to full-time employment for quite a few individuals.

6) Another important part of retaining the newly hired is getting our workforces ready and prepared to accept newly hired target group individuals and that is where our target group specific educational courses comes into play. (3)

Saskatchewan Employment Equity/Representative Workforce Strategy

CUPE is part of a groundbreaking "representative workforce" strategy in Saskatchewan that has increased the workforce participation rate of First Peoples from less than one per cent to over six per cent, creating 2,100 new Aboriginal hires since 2003. The strategy has helped educate approximately three-quarters of the more than 29,000 health care workforce, which includes 10,500 CUPE members, preparing them for a more diverse workforce. Another important component of this strategy is retainment. Retainment statistics jumped from four per cent – only four of 100 First Peoples retained – to approximately 96 per cent. In three of the five health regions, the strategy has attained First Peoples' representative figures. (3)

NEED OF A STRATEGY

In Canada, Aboriginal women experience extreme marginalization and suffer from inequalities related to their social, economic, cultural, political and civil rights that breed violence. These issues include postcolonial structural inequalities, family violence, racialized/sexualized violence, poverty, lack of access to adequate housing, including the lack of access to matrimonial property rights, lack of access to justice, low education and employment rates, low health status and little or no political participation. (2)

Employment

- In 2001, 47 per cent of Aboriginal women aged 15 and over were employed, compared with 56 per cent of non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women were also less likely than their male counterparts to be employed, at 47 per cent and 53 per cent respectively. Fifty-seven per cent of Aboriginal women with jobs work part-time and/or part year.

- Women working full-time all year earn 70.5 per cent compared to men. Women of colour earn 64 per cent and Aboriginal women earn only 46 per cent of what men are paid. (3)
- Aboriginal woman make 24.5 per cent less than non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women make 18 per cent less than women of colour. (3)
- Annual income of First Peoples is lower than other Canadians: 42 per cent have low incomes, more than half the national average. (3)
- Aboriginal women with jobs are most concentrated in low-paying occupations: 60 per cent work either in sales, service, or in business, finance, or administration jobs. The median income for Aboriginal women is \$12,300 – \$5,000 less than non-Aboriginal women. It is also \$3,000 less than Aboriginal men. The average employment income for First Nation women in First Nation communities was approximately \$1,500 less than First Nation men and approximately \$8,400 less than the Canadian average for women. Twenty-seven per cent of income for Aboriginal women comes from unemployment insurance and social welfare benefits. In 2000, 36 per cent of all Aboriginal females were classified as living in a household with incomes below the Low Income Cutoff, which is double the figure for non-Aboriginal women.

Economic

- An intergenerational cycle is created. Poor children grow up to be poor adults to the tune of \$38 billion a year in Ontario for social costs. As a result, we all pay increased costs for health care, crime and social assistance. There is also the loss of tax revenue that accompanies low earnings. (1) Nineteen per cent of Aboriginal women 15 years or older head lone parents families, compared with eight per cent for non-Aboriginal women.

Health

- Aboriginal women can expect to live 76.8 years on average, versus 82 for non-Aboriginal women.
- Aboriginal women make up 29 per cent of the Canadian prison population, but only three per cent of the Canadian population overall. Unlike men, they have higher rates of mental illness, self-abuse and suicide.
- The rate of suicide is three times the national average for Aboriginal women, compared with non-Aboriginal women.
- Aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to contract AIDS than non-Aboriginal women (23.1 per cent versus 8.2 per cent).

Housing

- Eighty-seven per cent of Aboriginal women lived with family members in 2001. Because most reserves do not have shelters, women fleeing violence often escape to a friend and relative's home.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports that the main causes of family homelessness were lack of affordable housing, poverty, family violence and inadequate funding for social programs.
- For more than 40 per cent of families, family violence was among the factors that caused them to leave their homes.
- In 1997, CMHC reported that 62 per cent of Aboriginal lone-parent households (the majority headed by women) off reserve were in need of core housing.

Education

- In 2001, seven per cent of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had a university degree, compared with 17 per cent of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.
- Four-in-10 Aboriginal women have not completed high school, whereas the figure was 29 per cent among non-Aboriginal women.
- Pregnancy and the need to care for children was cited as the main reason Aboriginal women aged 15 to 19 living off reserve quit high school.
- Of Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44 living off reserve, who had started but had not completed a post-secondary program, 34 per cent cited "family responsibilities" as their reason for not completing, while 21 per cent reported "financial reasons."

Rights

- Aboriginal women living on reserve enjoy the same rights to the division of matrimonial property as their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal counterparts who live off reserve. Yet, Aboriginal women do not enjoy the same rights as Aboriginal men with respect to passing on their Indian status to their children and grandchildren.
- This discriminatory treatment of Aboriginal women at law affects their enjoyment – and the enjoyment of their children and grandchildren – of their right to culture, ancestral lands, the benefits of land claims, and other social and economic benefits provided to Indians.

Violence Against Aboriginal Women

- Aboriginal women are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to suffer violence against women, including serious forms of life-threatening violence and emotional abuse at the hands of a marital or common-law partner. The Native Women's Association of Canada and Amnesty International estimate that over the past 20 years, 500 Aboriginal women in Canada may have been murdered or have gone missing in circumstances suggesting violence.

Poverty Law

- In some jurisdictions, poverty law legal aid has also been seriously eroded, or has been eliminated. This reduction or elimination of legal aid funding means that poor women cannot access legal services when they are denied benefits to which they are entitled, such as social assistance, employment insurance, disability benefits, and workers' compensation, or when they face eviction.

Inadequate Justice System Response

- Most incidents of violence against women are not reported to the police and of those that are some are not responded to or even recorded. When reported, violence against women often does not lead to an adequate investigation, charges, or conviction, and rarely results in an appropriate sentence.
- In a 5-year national survey of 100 women who were victims of male violence completed in 2003, the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres found that the system failed women at every level.
- The fact that women are economically unequal to men, and more likely to be poor, is the result of women's work not being properly valued, of women being penalized because they are the principal care-givers for children, old people, and those who are ill or disabled, and of systemic discrimination in the workforce which devalues the work of women.
- Healthy families are the foundation for prosperous healthy communities.

Sources:

- 1 Ontario Association of Food Banks and the Saskatchewan Provincial Government.
- 2 Native Women's Association of Canada and all quoted statistics.
- 3 NAC statisticsapril08.doc.