

# Developing Best Practices

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## RECONCILIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

There are many barriers to employment for the Indigenous population. Many of them stem from Residential schools, the Indian Act, and the effects of inter-generational trauma. For organizations to have success in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees they need to be aware of the barriers and take action to work with Indigenous communities and organizations to reduce them.

### Indigenous Barriers to Employment:

- Complicated application process and interview process
- Lack of Internet
- Mental Health Concerns
- Racism & Prejudices in the Workplace
- Geographical Locations of First Nation community
- Transportation
- Formal education
- Child Care Costs
- Family and Community Obligations

### 3 Steps before Hiring Indigenous Talent:

Effort must be made prior to hiring Indigenous Peoples: learn about the Indigenous workforce - create a connection to nearby communities, understand the culture, and establish inclusion strategies and policies that integrate Indigenous Peoples into the organization.







## 1. KNOW THE COMMUNITIES:

Learn about First Nation communities located near your organization, the Chief and Council, population, and economic development projects. Knowledge can be gained through:

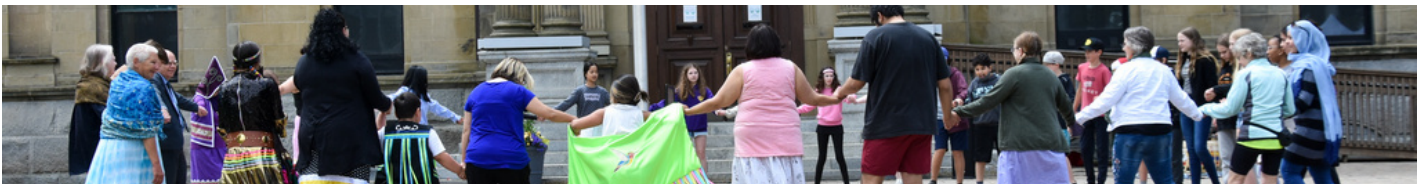
- Online research
- Attending community events
- Connecting with Indigenous organizations such as, JEDI or Tribal Councils
- Connecting with Employment Training Officers in nearby communities
- Connecting with Community Directors
- Establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with First Nation Businesses
- Supporting local Indigenous businesses
- Supporting First Nation community projects and initiatives

*It takes time to build a meaningful relationship*

## 2. UNDERSTAND AND ADAPT TO THE CULTURE

This doesn't mean completely overhaul the organization's operations. The key point here is to understand the protocols that are in place for Indigenous Peoples in your local community and adapt to the communication style:

- Take the time to complete cultural awareness training, such as JEDI's Indigenous Reconciliation Awareness Module (IRAM). To truly make change, those in leadership and management positions should set the example as they roll out the training to all employees
- Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Take the time to review how these Calls to Action are relevant to your organization. Does your organization have a strategy to address the pertinent Calls to Action?
- Learn about the importance of Elders and any protocols related to working with them prior to engaging their services
- Know the dates that are recognized for Indigenous Peoples such as **National Indigenous Peoples Day** (June 21st), **National Day of Truth and Reconciliation** (September 30th), and **Treaty Days** (October 1st - Mi'kmaq and June 4th - Wolastoqey)



## 3. DO THE WORK

RECONCILIATION BEGINS AT THE TOP, SET PRECEDENCE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

It takes more than making a few connections and attending cultural awareness training. There must be definitive change that is visible to the public and especially Indigenous Peoples. One thing that many organizations may forget is the importance of "brand" with Indigenous Peoples. If an organization has a reputation of not including Indigenous Perspective into the work that is done; hiring, or on-boarding of Indigenous workers has not gone well; or a customer service experience for Indigenous Peoples was negative – people will know. Your organization's reputation can greatly affect whether a project can be done in a local area, loss of potential sales, and hiring.

So, what can you do to mitigate this?

- Hire an Indigenous Engagement Lead to represent your organization
- Actively research and learn more about how to implement diversity and inclusion into the workplace
- Participate in or create a diversity council
- Take certifications that show your dedication to inclusion, for example the Progressive Aboriginal Relations program with CCAB
- Implement unconscious bias and anti-racism training for all staff



## RECONCILIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

- Utilize trauma-informed practices for those in service delivery
- Have a thorough on-boarding plan, including supports for Indigenous employees
- Make employees feel welcomed, use a mentorship or buddy program as part of the onboarding process. Provide a mentor who can be viewed as an equal, easily approachable, and knowledgeable of the organization, try to avoid management
- Avoid Tokenism
- Adjust leave policies to be inclusive and accommodating, especially bereavement leave – 1-2 days leave may not be sufficient as there is often additional ceremonial participation required
- Hire Indigenous Peoples into leadership positions
- Create a cultural space in your organization
- Include Indigenous cultural options in your EAP

## ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR RECRUITING INDIGENOUS APPLICANTS:

- Job advertising should include wording to suggest a diverse and inclusive workspace and be posted in First Nation communities
- Create relationships with local communities, this will open the door to community presentations, information sessions, etc.
- Create internship positions or entry-level positions for Indigenous candidates and create an upskilling plan for successful growth
- Consider the flexibility of work-from-home options
- Create an informal application and interview process
- Consider overlooking the need for a resume, especially when seeking experiential knowledge of the land or cultural knowledge
- Recognize unconventional talent
- Create a referral program in your organization

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