

Why Should *First Nations* Care About Workplace Literacy?

“The Canadian portion of the 1994/96 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) did not include our Aboriginal population ... IALS ranked the literacy skills of almost half of Canadian adults as below the acceptable range, and the reality is that Canada’s Aboriginal peoples have even lower literacy rates. One indicator of this is that the proportion of Registered Indians with less than Grade 9 education in 1996 was approximately double that of other Canadians. This disadvantage is compounded by the inter-connectedness of literacy to poverty, poor health, and unemployment.”

-- *Strengthening Our Literacy Foundation is Key to Canada’s Future*, Movement for Canadian Literacy, April 2003

“Aboriginal peoples in Canada face numerous challenges in the areas of education and literacy that are unique to them as a population and as a culture. Statistics show that Aboriginal peoples are likely to have lower levels of educational participation and achievement than the average Canadian. They also experience much lower rates of labour force participation and are more likely to be employed in low-skilled occupations or to be unemployed.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003

“Among the Aboriginal population, about 39% had less than high school.”

-- *Education in Canada: Raising the Standard* – 2001 Census: analysis series, Ministry of Industry, 2003

“As the Canadian economy becomes more knowledge-intensive, Aboriginal people lacking the necessary education and literacy skills to compete in the labour market will be excluded from the new economic opportunities and will be pushed even further to the margins of society.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003

“We are resourceful and culturally rich, but at the same time the NWT is home to some of the lowest literacy rates in the country. Of our Aboriginal residents, 50% do not have the literacy skills they need to meet the complex demands of today’s world. In Canada, this is unacceptable.”

-- *Cate Sills*, Executive Director, Northwest Territories Literacy Council, March 2003

“Aboriginal people represent a critical potential labour force resource for meeting the needs of the Canadian economy in the next decade ... Enhancing the literacy skills of Aboriginal learners of all ages is an essential step toward maximizing their employment.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003