

The Effectiveness of Neo-Liberal Labour Market Policy as a Response to the Poverty and
Social Exclusion of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Ph.D.

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

December 2011

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the political economy of labour market policy in Canada and its effectiveness in addressing the social and economic exclusion of Aboriginal people. For many Aboriginal people, the colonial experience has left a legacy of destruction that all too often makes the journey through life extremely complicated. Aboriginal people generally have lower education levels than non-Aboriginal people and they earn lower incomes. The Aboriginal population is growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population and is on average much younger. In provinces like Manitoba where Aboriginal people make up 15 percent of the overall population, they are an important source of labour. Yet the statistics suggest that there is much to be done to bring Aboriginal people to a state of social and economic inclusion. Low high-school completion rates imply that the primary school system is failing Aboriginal children, leaving many unprepared to enter post secondary education and the labour market. Labour market policies can help address poverty and exclusion. While they can broadly include a set of policies affecting both the supply and demand for labour, this research shows that in a neo-liberal political economy, they have come to be much more limited in scope, focusing almost solely on supply-side solutions. For Aboriginal adults, this has meant support for short-term training programs aimed at preparing them for jobs determined by the market. This creates challenges for individuals who have a host of factors standing in their way. An examination of Manitoba based initiatives shows the implications of the policy environment for Aboriginal second-chance learners. It also shows how some programs have adapted to the neo-liberal environment to better serve their students and leads to some concluding thoughts on what might be done to further improve outcomes for Aboriginal second-chance learners.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my advisors, Pete Hudson, John Loxley and Brad McKenzie for their guidance, support and patience. John, I would never have begun the process without your encouragement. I am just one in a long list of students who owe you a debt of gratitude. Pete, your willingness to take this on at the sunset of your academic career (and the sunrise of your acting career!) is appreciated more than you know. Thanks to my external examiner, Margaret Little. Margaret, I know how busy you are and I am honoured that you took this on without hesitation. I couldn't think of anyone more appropriate.

Many thanks to all of the men and women that took the time to share their adult learning experiences with me; to the teachers and program directors and other program staff that took the time to provide me with information for this research; and to the many individuals that I have collaborated with on inner-city research in Winnipeg over the past seven years. Your dedication is inspirational.

Thank you to the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council*, *Community University Research Alliance* and the Manitoba Research Alliance project *Transforming Inner-City and Aboriginal Communities*, which provided funding for this research.

Many thanks to my colleagues at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Manitoba: Lynne Fernandez, Jill Hudspith and Sarah Cooper. I couldn't dream of a better group of people to work with. To CCPA board members, especially Jim Silver and Errol Black, whose tireless commitment to social justice never fails to amaze. To my mother Cecile MacKinnon, whose memory continues to inspire me to 'care', even when the cynicism sets in. To my sister Heather, who has walked with me through thick and thin. Heather, I know that this means as much to you as it does to me--maybe more. To my aunt Morag whose premature passing gave me the nudge I needed to return to school as an adult. And last but not least, a very special thanks to my husband, Colin Kinsella. Colin, you have been a rock of support and encouragement. You really are the best. It's been a long haul but I promise now to put some order to our home office!

Dedication

I dedicate this research to the courageous Aboriginal men and women who return to school as adults. Inspired by their hopes and dreams for themselves and generations that follow, they work very hard to overcome obstacles that can seem insurmountable. Their bravery and perseverance within the context of damaging colonial policies, past and present, is nothing short of remarkable. I also dedicate this research to the many committed individuals I have come to know and respect, who work tirelessly with individuals, families and communities in the inner city of Winnipeg to undo the damage of colonialism and the unjust social and economic policies that continue to exclude and marginalize.

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1 Introduction

In a capitalist economy, participation in the labour market is the primary means by which individuals meet their economic needs. As an intervention to improve social and economic outcomes, labour market policy has an important role to play. However, in the current context of ‘neo-liberalism’, which Dumenil and Levy (2004) describe as a restoration of the “strictest rules of capitalism” (p. 1), labour market policies have particular characteristics that have had significant implications for workers and more specifically those most vulnerable to social exclusion.

Labour market policy can be broadly described as “all those actions that affect the supply and demand for labour as well as the labour process itself” (Haddow, 2000, p.29). As described by Haddow and Klassen (2006, p. 6) labour market policy includes six ‘policy domains’. These are industrial relations policy; employment standards; workers’ compensation; occupational health and safety; active measures and passive assistance policies. This research primarily looks at the changing nature and effectiveness of two of the six policy domains—active measures and passive assistance—with a particular focus on training policy because it is the primary active measure used in liberal democracies in response to poverty and social exclusion. More specifically, I examine the social and economic outcomes for Aboriginalⁱ second-chance learners in the context of a policy environment shaped by neo-liberalism.

Second-chance learners are those individuals who have failed to complete their education and training through the traditional trajectory (post-secondary education following completion of secondary education). Second-chance learners can be further characterized as individuals with low socio-economic status, minimal access to resources

and supports, and responsibilities beyond those of the mainstream student. For a host of reasons that will be described in this paper Aboriginal people in Canada are over-represented among those who fail to complete secondary schooling and post-secondary education and training through the first-chance trajectory, and are also over-represented among those who are poor.

I begin my research by testing the theory that neo-liberalism has led to a more polarized labour market that consists of a relatively small and shrinking number of what can be described as ‘high-skilled’, decent paying, secure jobs (primary market) and a growing number of precarious jobs (secondary market). Within this context I examine the neo-liberal approach to training policy that has emerged for second-chance learners and in particular Aboriginal second-chance learners, that in effect feeds the secondary labour market and likely has minimal impact on improving the social and economic outcomes for those most marginalized. While my analysis is situated in the global context, I examine more closely the implications for Manitoba.

I have chosen to focus my research on Aboriginal second-chance learners for the following reasons. First, in Canada, and Manitoba more specifically, Aboriginal people are over-represented among those who fail to complete secondary training through the first-chance trajectory. Second, they are over-represented among those most marginalized. And third, while I was able to find research discussing the challenges of Aboriginal adult learners, as well as research on the impact of neo-liberalism on education and training policy, I was unable to find research discussing the relationship between neo-liberalism and the Aboriginal adult learner.

Consistent with the features of the globally dominant neo-liberal economic model, there has been a very visible shift in labour market policy from that which is aimed at both demand and supply to a primary focus on supply-side solutions—namely education and training—to meet the needs of the labour market. Coinciding with this shift has been an increase in income disparity, which raises questions about the use, and effectiveness of, current policies as tools to address poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The central question explored here is whether or not this model is compatible with the complex needs of Canada’s colonized Aboriginal people.

In the current political milieu, education is widely viewed as the primary ‘ticket out of poverty’. This perspective often accompanies a particular worldview that embraces the idea that “the mechanisms that determine an individual’s socioeconomic prospects are largely under his or her control” (Bowles, Durlauf, & Hoff, 2006, p.1). A review of the research on poverty and social exclusion, labour market policy, and the effects of colonization and oppression shows that income determination and social inclusion are much more complicated than this.

There is significant research demonstrating that the causes of poverty and social exclusion are structural (Levitas, 2005; Townsend, 2002). A review of this literature leads to the conclusion that neo-liberal-based, short-term, supply-side strategies aimed at changing individual behaviour to adapt to the market, in the absence of demand-side strategies and comprehensive approaches that recognize the deficiency of the market, respond insufficiently to structural challenges (Bartik, 2001; Crouch, Finegold, & Sako, 1999; Hammer, 2003; Livingstone, 1998). Nonetheless, training is the primary tool used in the current political environment and a variety of models have emerged with the aim of

quickly moving people from the margins into the labour market. Examining the experiences of training participants, as I do in this study, provides instructive insight into the level of effectiveness of neo-liberal remedial interventions in comparison with models that take a long-term approach including those that integrate decolonizing pedagogy, job creation or placement of trainees into jobs that provide decent wages and opportunities for advancement. A detailed review of the literature leads me to hypothesize that the latter approaches have more positive results in addressing poverty and social exclusion and are cost effective over the long-term as they are more likely to end the inter-generational cycle of poverty that is the reality for many Aboriginal families. To my knowledge, studies testing this hypothesis, specifically related to outcomes for Aboriginal adult trainees with histories of intergenerational poverty, have not been conducted. Manitoba is a natural environment for such a study given the high Aboriginal population and the variety of training programs and other interventions designed with them in mind.

Statistics show that the neo-liberal claim that a ‘rising tide lifts all boats’ is unfounded (Yalnizian, 2007; Osberg, 2008). Many Canadians have continued to live in poverty during a time of economic prosperity. Many of these individuals have participated in remedial training because this is what they have been told they must do to escape poverty. Yet they continue to be poor. This is particularly true for Aboriginal people, for whom the median income is 30 per cent lower than that of non-Aboriginal Canadians (Wilson & MacDonald, 2010).

The reality for those who continue to struggle to find decent-paying stable work, and the policy approaches taken by the state suggest that there is a disconnect between policy and the needs of those who are marginalized. The over-representation of

Aboriginal people among Canada's poor demonstrates that Canada has thus far failed to develop policies that adequately serve this group. But closer scrutiny reveals a much deeper problem than neglect. Canada's history of colonial policies has left a legacy of damage and despair that has had a direct impact on the social and economic outcomes of Aboriginal people. This damage is extremely difficult to repair and I propose that the neo-liberal paradigm is ill equipped to adequately respond. Many would argue that until Canadian policy makers fully understand the impact of colonization and respond by sufficiently funding a network of programs that address the multiple and inter-generational challenges created by failed assimilationist policies, we as a society will continue to fail to ensure Aboriginal people are fully included and have equal access to good jobs (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2010).

My decision to focus this research on examining the effectiveness of training policy as the primary tool to address poverty and social exclusion, is premised on the understanding that while education and training are critical for social inclusion, they are but one component that cannot be used in isolation of other strategies. For example, interventions that include greater emphasis on redistribution of wealth through more equitable taxation and an increase in passive income supports, childcare supports and other social supports are also required. With this understanding my research focuses on training as well as on a particular demographic (Aboriginal second-chance learners) to examine its effectiveness and determine how outcomes might be improved. My research is theoretically situated within three linked contexts:

1. The ascendancy of neo-liberalism which is characterized by an emphasis on monetary policy to regulate inflation and control labour markets; privatization and

deregulation of industry; scaling back on social security programs (in particular for working-age adults); deregulation of labour markets and free trade agreements that constrain government interventions (Stanford, 2008, p. 48).

2. The association between the increase in neo-liberalism and the rising incidence of social exclusion, poverty and inequality.

3. The complicating context of colonization and systemic racism that continues to contribute to Aboriginal poverty and social exclusion.

I propose that the short-term, remedial skills-training approach that is central to neo-liberal policies is particularly unsuitable for Aboriginal second-chance learners as it fails to acknowledge that many Aboriginal second-chance learners require more than job-specific training to reverse the damage that results from colonial policies. As noted by Esping-Andersen (2002), a focus on remedial training is unlikely to be effective “unless participants already possess the necessary abilities and motivation” (p. 5). For many Aboriginal second-chance learners, limitations in terms of ability and motivation are the legacy of colonization and oppression that has led to internalized beliefs of inadequacy.

In the following pages I explore the limitations of the current policy framework and I contribute to further development of the existing knowledge base in three important ways. First, I make the case, through the presentation and analysis of secondary data, that an increase in income disparities in good economic times suggests that, left to its own devices, the market does not ‘lift all boats’. In practice it has instead led to greater inequality and has especially failed to bring Aboriginal people out of poverty. Second, through analysis of existing education and training programs for Aboriginal second-chance learners, and interviews with stakeholdersⁱⁱ, I begin to test the hypothesis that neo-

liberal training models do not effectively address poverty and social exclusion for Aboriginal people, but rather lead to precarious employment at best. Third, I consider the experiences of Aboriginal second-chance learners and characteristics of programs that appear to have the greatest success. This can provide insight for future policy and program development.

2 Labour Market Policy, Social Exclusion, Poverty and Inequality

Dunk, McBride & Nelson (1996) argue that training has become a very effective ideological tool for neo-liberalism in part because the idea of upgrading skills to be more competitive has a “common sense” quality consistent with the conservative preference for “active” versus “passive” measures of income support. In his analysis of this approach to training in Britain, Usher (1990) criticized ‘employability training’ for being more about socializing people to “accept [unskilled/semi-skilled] jobs that ordinarily they would not accept, for pay that employed workers have already refused” (p. 51).

Crouch, Finegold and Sako (1999) argue that the “employment-generating power of improvements in skill levels is limited” (p. vii) and that employment policy cannot depend solely on supply-side measures such as education and training. Wood (2001) suggests that a fundamental problem with labour market policy is that attempts at reform are piecemeal. He notes that reforming institutions at one level is likely to be ineffective if other systems are not reformed in a compatible manner.

This is particularly problematic for labour market policy. Labour market policy is complex, involving multiple departments and levels of governments with mandates that are not only incompatible, but arguably in conflict. For example, changes to education and training policies to encourage skill development in specific sectors are useless for individuals reliant on social assistance if ‘work-first’ⁱⁱⁱ policies create barriers for recipients to access these training opportunities.

The current approach to labour market policy is essentially rooted in the belief that education and training—learning—is an individual responsibility. Government

intervention is limited to that which responds to market need. The current paradigm has led to very minimal training for those whose need for comprehensive training is the greatest thereby contributing toward a perpetuation of poverty, inequality and social exclusion. This approach is consistent with a broad political acceptance of neo-liberal values and even though studies show that many Canadians have been increasingly excluded from the benefits of Canada's growing prosperity (Yalnizyan, 2007) the narrow approach to training that effectively reinforces the 'gap' continues to dominate.

2.1 Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion

This research examines, through a critical lens, the role of and potential for, labour market policies, and more specifically education and training policies as tools to address poverty and social exclusion. In order to do this, it is necessary to establish a working definition of these terms. What is poverty and how do we measure it? And what exactly do we mean by 'social exclusion'? There are many definitions of each of these concepts.

2.1.1 Social Exclusion

The idea of 'social exclusion' can be used to shape policy that moves us closer to equality or it can be used as a means to constrict policy (Levitas, 2005). Levitas (2003) provides a typology of social exclusion in an attempt to demonstrate how ideology influences meaning and argues that *social exclusion* should be used in its broadest sense, recognizing that while poverty is at the core of exclusion, we must also consider the *context* of income deprivation. Levitas (2005, p.14) describes the following characteristics as central to the concept of social exclusion:

- An emphasis on poverty as a prime cause of social exclusion

- The implication that poverty can be reduced through increases in benefit levels
- The potential for giving economic value to unpaid work
- The idea that citizenship is the obverse of exclusion, rather than taking a minimalist view of inclusion
- In addressing social, political and cultural, as well as economic citizenship, it broadens out into a critique of inequality, which includes, but is not limited to, material inequality
- Recognition of the causes of inequality
- Understanding of the need for a radical reduction of inequalities, and a redistribution of resources and of power

The comprehensive nature of this definition makes it particularly relevant for this research because it allows for consideration of the historical and discriminatory factors that have contributed to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people among the poor.

However, it is also worth noting, as does Levitas that ‘social exclusion’ in public policy does not always begin with this comprehensive understanding. She outlines three divergent views that can be reflected in public policy.

In its broadest sense, social exclusion is directly related to poverty. In this sense, which Levitas outlines as the *redistributive (RED)* discourse, social exclusion is a consequence of poverty. She describes this as consistent with the earlier work of Peter Townsend (1970), which understands poverty in terms of “people’s ability to participate in the customary life of society...their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (p.32).

Policy grounded in this definition of social exclusion would require comprehensive approaches that result in increased income, access to a broad range of resources including but not limited to education and training and satisfying employment.

The second view Levitas describes is the *social integration* (SID) discourse, which focuses solely on exclusion as a result of a disconnection to paid work. Getting people into the labour market is therefore the sole concern and solution to exclusion. Levitas notes that the social exclusion policy focus in the UK has reflected this particular view.

The third model, which Levitas describes as the *moral underclass* (MUD) discourse views social exclusion as the result of ‘moral and cultural causes of poverty’. Social exclusion models that focus on programming to ‘reform’ ‘youth at risk’, single mothers and others who do not fit within the mainstream ‘norm’ are often modeled on such a view.

As reflected in Levitas’ RED perspective, social exclusion speaks to the limited participation of individuals in all domains of life. The lack of income is central to all exclusion. While access to economic opportunity through employment is the focus of SID, it is but one component of a poverty and social exclusion strategy under the auspices of RED. In the case of employment, Bynner and Parsons (2001) note, “social exclusion is manifested in marginalization to the periphery of the labour market, where the only prospects on offer are casual unskilled jobs, unemployment or withdrawal from employment altogether” (p. 280).

Levitas (2005) provides a simple but useful summary of the three perspectives: “From the RED perspective, the poor and excluded have no money, in SID they have no paid work, in MUD they have no morals” (p. 3). This typology is a reminder that policy development is value laden. In Canada, the lack of initiative to address poverty and social exclusion by ensuring that all citizens have sufficient income, satisfactory housing,

accessible child care and access to education and training based on right rather than ability to pay suggests that if any model of social exclusion has influenced policy in recent years, it is certainly not the RED model. The SID framework is clearly evident through policies that aim to quickly train people for the labour market. The MUD perspective also continues to be reflected in policies that systematically create barriers as a result of expectations that are inherently classist, racist and sexist.

Because the current neo-liberal milieu embraces training as the primary means of responding to social exclusion, it is the component that I explore through this research. However, I do so within the context of understanding that poverty and social exclusion will not be eradicated without a fundamental social and cultural shift as well as a commitment to redistribution of income within the existing economic structure.

2.1.2 Defining Poverty

Poverty is a highly contested concept. Those subscribing to the SID approach to exclusion view poverty alleviation in the context of the ‘achievement model of income determination’, the conventional and dominant view of poverty that is based on the idea that poverty can be escaped simply by working hard (Bowles, Durlauf & Hoff, 2006). From this perspective, poverty is also most often viewed in absolute terms— a lack of adequate food, shelter, clothing and medical care. However such a definition is inadequate when social exclusion is viewed in broader terms.

In recognition of the limitations of this definition, Lang (2007) adds a further dimension that allows us to develop measurements relative to specific economies. Lang describes poverty as the “lack of sufficient financial resources to obtain adequate food, clothing, shelter, and medical care and to participate in society” (p.35). While this

definition does not provide an exact measure of poverty, it provides a more accurate working definition and one that is compatible with the RED notion of social exclusion and the idea that poverty must be measured in relative terms. This is important because absolute definitions do not account for the significant degree of difference between countries. For example, while the World Bank definition of “a dollar a day” may be an adequate ‘floor’ from which to measure poverty in very poor nations, it is obviously not an appropriate measure for Canada given our very different social, political and economic capacity. Further, as noted by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) it is necessary that we understand income trends within countries. Relative measures that look at both before- and after-tax incomes allow us to critically analyze whether policies are effectively minimizing the negative effects, including extreme inequality, that result from unchecked capitalism.

While Canada does not have an official poverty line and there has been much debate in recent years as to how poverty is best measured, the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) has most often been used to measure poverty. The LICO is essentially an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on food, shelter and clothing than would the average family (Statistics Canada, 2010). Using data from the 1992 Family Expenditures Survey as a base, and then factoring in Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rates, Statistics Canada calculates both before and after-tax cut-offs for various family and community sizes resulting in 35 cut-offs (Statistics Canada, 2010). Both before- and after-tax calculations are currently available. Statistics Canada is reportedly phasing out the before-tax LICO arguing that it

does not accurately capture the real situation of Canadians that results from redistributive tax policies. Table 1 and 2 provide recent calculations of before- and after-tax LICOs.

Table 1
Low Income Cut-Offs (Current dollars, 1992 base) Before Tax - 2009

Size of Family	Community Size				
	Rural Areas	Urban Areas			
		Less than 30,000*	30,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 499,999	500,000 and over
1 person	15,302	17,409	19,026	19,144	22,229
2 persons	19,050	21,672	23,685	23,832	27,674
3 persons	23,419	26,643	29,118	29,299	34,022
4 persons	28,435	32,349	35,354	35,573	41,307
5 persons	32,250	36,690	40,097	40,345	46,850
6 persons	36,374	41,380	45,223	45,504	52,838
7 persons or more	40,496	46,071	50,350	50,661	58,827
*Includes cities with a population between 15,000 and 30,000 and small urban areas (under 15,000)					

Source: Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75F0002M –No. 005.

Table 2
Low Income Cut-Offs (Current dollars, 1992 base) After Tax - 2009

Size of Family	Community Size				
	Rural Areas	Urban Areas			
		Less than 30,000*	30,000 to 99,999	100,000 to 499,999	500,000 and over
1 person	12,050	13,791	15,384	15,579	18,421
2 persons	14,666	16,785	18,725	18,960	22,420
3 persons	18,263	20,900	23,316	23,610	27,918
4 persons	22,783	26,075	29,089	29,455	34,829
5 persons	25,944	29,692	33,124	33,541	39,660
6 persons	28,773	32,929	36,736	37,198	43,984
7 persons plus	31,602	36,167	40,346	40,854	48,308
*Includes cities with a population between 15,000 and 30,000 and small urban areas (under 15,000)					

Source: Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75F0002M –No. 005.

While it continues to be the measure most commonly used, the LICO is not a perfect measure and it is often criticized for its flaws. One criticism is that the LICO does not adequately capture differences in costs across the country. For example, housing costs in Winnipeg are far lower than those in Vancouver and Toronto, yet the LICO does not account for this difference. The LICO is also not applicable to First

Nations because LICOs include the cost of shelter, which is generally paid for in First Nations.

In addition to the LICO, the Canadian government uses other measures. For the purpose of making international comparisons to determine how our country ‘measures-up’ against others, Statistics Canada uses the Low Income Measure (LIM). The LIM (Table 3) is basically a fixed percentage (50 percent adjusted for family size) of median-adjusted family income using the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID).

Table 3
Low-Income Measures (LIM) for Household Size of Four Persons
2008

	Income Concept		
	Market Income	Before Tax	After Tax
	Current dollars		
2008	37,644	42,378	37,164
Note: To convert to other household sizes, divide these values by 2 (the square root of the household size of four persons) and then multiply by the square root of the desired household size			

Source: Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75F0002M –No. 005.

The Fraser Institute, a Canadian right-wing think tank has lobbied for the elimination of the LICO. It argues that this measure effectively overstates poverty in Canada by making it a ‘moving target’ and that relative measures like the LICO will not allow us to ever alleviate poverty because the threshold is simply too high and constantly rising (Sarlo, 1992). The Fraser Institute’s solution is essentially to lower the threshold so that the incidence of poverty will appear much lower than that currently shown by the LICO. In this regard, the Fraser Institute developed an absolute measure of poverty that includes only the barest of necessities and essentially shows Canada to have very little poverty.

The Government of Canada has more recently established an absolute measure called the Market Basket Measure (MBM). Governments and some analysts favour the

MBM over the LICO because it takes into account regional differences in the cost of living. The MBM includes a broader range of essential goods and services than does the Fraser Institute measure, but it is similarly flawed in that its generosity depends on what goes into the ‘basket’ and how often it is updated.

Table 4
2008 Market Basket Measure (MBM) Thresholds, Disposable Income
(current dollars). Reference Family of Two Adults and Two Children by MBM
Region

Newfoundland and Labrador	
Rural	29,978
Less than 30,000	31,205
St. John's	29,753
Nova Scotia	
Rural	29,655
Less than 30,000	31,637
30,000 to 99,999	28,798
Halifax	30,062
Quebec	
Rural	26,915
Less than 30,000	27,881
100,000 to 499,999	26,743
Montreal	28,091
Ontario	
Rural	27,759
Less than 30,000	28,904
100,000 to 499,999	28,044
Ottawa	29,797
Toronto	31,129
Manitoba	
Rural	27,246
Less than 30,000	27,779
Brandon	26,936
Winnipeg	27,444
Alberta	
Rural	29,228
Less than 30,000	31,083
Edmonton	29,685
Calgary	31,007
British Columbia	
Rural	28,217
Less than 30,000	29,409
100,000 to 499,999	28,93
Vancouver	30,038

Source: Statistics Canada catalogue no. 75F0002M –No. 005.

While the LIM can be useful when comparing different countries and the MBM is useful because it takes factors other than income into consideration, I concur with the view that poverty is not absolute and must be viewed in the context of the social and economic conditions of the nation, and social exclusion stems from a lack of access to opportunity as a result of poverty. From this perspective, the LICO, and in particular the after-tax LICO, continues to be the most suitable measurement to understand how some Canadians are fairing relative to others and how well tax policies are serving to counter labour market inequalities.

2.1.2 Inequality

As noted in the previous section, relative measures like the LICO are useful because they allow us to understand and therefore respond to the distribution of wealth within a nation. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) show that it is not only poverty and inequality across nations that we should be concerned with but rather the extent of inequality within nations. They present strong findings to support their argument that inequality within nations has the greatest impact on individual outcomes because what matters most is “whether you are doing better or worse than other people — where you come in the social pecking order” (p. 13). In effect, class very much matters. As described further in chapter 9, the second-chance learners described in this study have a host of challenges not experienced by those who are comparatively better off. Their relative poverty puts them at a disadvantage on many fronts including access to the best education opportunities and the kinds of social networks that often lead to good paying jobs.

While neo-liberals are quick to defend a free market approach as the best solution to poverty in the most absolute terms, they are less concerned with inequality. But the data presented by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) shows that we *should* be concerned. They also show that it is possible, and beneficial to all of society, for governments to respond to better improve outcomes and that social democratic countries are reaping the benefits of more equal societies in comparison to neo-liberal countries like Canada and the U.S.

The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of zero represents perfect equality and one, perfect inequality. As shown in Table 5 on page 45, social democratic countries are the most equal societies. Wilkinson and Pickett show that they are also healthier, have higher levels of trust, higher literacy and education attainment and lower crime and imprisonment.

In the late 1990s, several European countries began to recognize the societal impact of social exclusion and moved toward implementing comprehensive social inclusion strategies. As noted in section 2.1.1, the extent to which they were comprehensive in practice is debatable. Nonetheless, some European countries are now moving away from coordinated social inclusion approaches and are scaling back on social services. The new mantra is “austerity” and that means a scaling back of social programs. Proponents justify this response as necessary to reduce growing government debt and to stimulate ‘investor confidence’. For countries like Canada and the U.S, comprehensive poverty and inequality reduction approaches were never placed high on the policy agenda and it is likely that the time to do so has passed. In the most recent

2011 Canadian federal election, poverty and inequality was nowhere mentioned in the now elected Conservative government's policy platform.

2.1.3 Historical Overview of Government Actions to Address Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion

The ideological shift from Keynesian to neo-liberal government policies began in the 1980's under the Conservative government led by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Since then policies that emphasize market mechanisms and individual rather than collective approaches to solving or handling economic and social problems have become commonplace.

Government policies in neo-liberal welfare states take a narrow approach to poverty and social exclusion through policies aimed at the labour supply in direct response to labour market need. The appropriateness of work for the trainee seems to not be considered. One example of this in Manitoba was the emphasis on training women receiving social assistance as Health Care Aids (HCAs) in the 1990s. Experiments with the privatization of the publicly delivered Home Care program in the 1990s led to a shortage of workers as employment opportunities shifted to jobs with private companies that paid low-wages, provided poor working conditions and offered few benefits. Desperate for workers, the Manitoba government began to target female social assistance recipients to be trained for HCA positions. This was thought to be a win-win strategy. It would serve to meet a growing market need using a pool of labour that could be quickly trained to fill the void.

Well-intentioned community-based training organizations interested in helping their clients to move into the labour market found governments to be amenable to providing them with funds to train HCAs. However it became apparent that the HCA

jobs were less than ideal. The primary problem was that the non-standard work hours of HCAs made this work unsuitable for individuals with children to care for, which was the situation of the majority of trainees. So while in ‘theory’, this may have appeared to be a desirable and cost efficient policy move, the reality was otherwise. The jobs simply were not suitable for the target population. But suitability was not considered until it more recently became apparent that graduates were not remaining in the field.^{iv} The flaws of this strategy might have been recognized sooner had more than market need been considered.

There are other examples of failed attempts to target marginalized workers for quick training. For example, attempts to create a supply of labour for the call centre industry and in the pork-processing sector have been less than successful. For the most part, the jobs available to low-skill workers in these two industries are low-pay and stressful with few opportunities to advance. In the case of the pork-processing sector, work in plants is physically and mentally challenging and the turnover is high. In spite of government efforts to coerce marginalized workers into undesirable work by implementing punitive welfare policies, these and other sectors continue to have great difficulty maintaining staff as a result of poor working conditions and undesirable work hours. As a result it is common for employers such as those in the pork-processing industry to recruit temporary foreign workers because they are unable to maintain local workers for jobs that are “unpleasant, dirty, and dangerous” (Whittaker, 2005).

There is significant research, and in the examples described above, much anecdotal evidence, to demonstrate that quick-fix, supply-side strategies in sectors that have difficulties finding and keeping workers are an insufficient response to poverty and

social exclusion. But it is also true that addressing poverty and social exclusion are ultimately not the intent of supply-side strategies. The intent is simply to match workers with market need as efficiently as possible. The fact that the jobs created pay low-wages, provide little opportunity for advancement, and do not serve to raise the standard of living of workers is inconsequential.

As will be further described in the following section, the current policy response is grounded in neo-classical economic labour market theories that are based on narrow assumptions that disregard many non-economic factors affecting employment and income outcomes. This is important because it explains why participation in the labour market does not always lift people out of poverty in spite of dominant labour market theories that suggest it should. In Chapter 3, I examine various labour market theories to better understand how neo-liberal theories justify non-interventionist policies in contrast with less popular heterodox theories that point out the problems of the labour market as a means of income distribution and the limitations of training policy as a means of addressing poverty and social exclusion.

3 Political Economy of Labour Market Policy: Global Trends and Implications

Twenty-first century labour market policies in Canada, and in most parts of the world, have been redesigned to better align with the neo-liberal ideology that dominates public policy in the transnational political economy. Historical analysis shows that the capital-labour accord that led to policies that strengthened the position of labour during the era of regulated capitalism, has now been severely weakened. Policies under the labour market policy umbrella are currently designed to create a flexible workforce able to adapt quickly to the needs of capital in a global market. This has meant a reduction in regulations and a further shifting of power to capital.

As noted previously, in conjunction with the shift to the transnational era income inequality has increased across the globe. This clearly demonstrates that contemporary labour market policies, by design or otherwise, have failed to create a more equitable world. For example, the U.S, Canada, and the UK, among other leading countries in the western world have seen steep increases in market income inequality since the 1970s (Brandolini & Smeeding, 2007; Osberg, 2008; Yalnizian, 2007). In Canada, Yalnizian (2007) shows that the income share of the richest one percent was cut in half from 14 percent to 7.7 percent between 1941 and 1977 but the direction soon changed. By 2007 the richest 1 percent held 13.8 percent of incomes. Using statistics for the Congressional Budget Office, the Economic Policy Institutes shows that in the U.S., between 1979 and 2007, “the pre-tax incomes of the upper 1 percent grew 214 percent, while the incomes of the middle-fifth and lowest-fifth grew, respectively, 25 percent and 4 percent” (Mishel,

2010). They also shows that “38.7 percent of all of the income growth accrued to the upper 1% over the 1979-2007 period: a greater share than the 36.3% share received by the entire bottom 90% of the population” (Mishel, 2010).

The way in which governments intervene in the labour market is a critical component of the complex web of policies that are designed domestically but highly influenced by, and aligned with, international objectives that are currently dominated by neo-liberal ideals. But as the following section will show, the labour market theories so strongly influencing policy are not unanimously accepted as ‘truth’ among economists even though they are generally presented as such.

3.1 Labour Market Theories and Assumptions that Shape Public Policy

3.1.1 Economic Theories of the Labour Market

Marginal Productivity and Human Capital

Although many economists would argue otherwise, labour market policies are rooted in economic theories that are influenced by ideology. The policies that have emerged in recent years are very clearly an extension of the neo-liberal framework that now dominates social and economic policy in most parts of the world. Central to the neo-liberal rationale is the idea that labour markets, like other markets, will self regulate if allowed to operate without interference from governments. In terms of wage rates and benefits, the theory is that “the wage rate of a worker equals his/her marginal product” (Hinks, 1998, p. 4). Since profit maximization is the major objective in a market economy, firms will base human resource decisions—such as wage rates, who is hired, and the number of employees hired—on what maximizes the rate of return for the firm. In other words, it will pay to hire more labour up to the point where the value of the product produced by that labour is exactly equal to the cost of that labour. Beyond that,

profits will be lower than maximum because the value of the extra product is worth less than its labour cost. Below that, there is money to be made by hiring more labour.^v

Therefore, a price-taking firm, whose actions are determined by market prices, will base hiring decisions on an analysis that suggests the optimum number of workers to hire and at the money wage rate it must pay to achieve marginal revenue product that is equal to or less than the average revenue product. From this neoclassical economic perspective, since profit maximization is the major objective in a market economy, employers will base their hiring decisions purely on economic factors. It follows that it is the responsibility of the individual—the labour supply—to maximize productivity thereby increasing their economic value, or their *human capital*. This is the primary focus of current labour market policy. The main argument in support of supply-side strategies is that the contemporary economy —the high-tech ‘new economy’—requires skilled human resources to meet the needs of the labour market. Workers need only ‘invest’ in their ‘*human capital*’ through education and training to increase their productivity to become more competitive in the labour market and an increase in earnings will follow.

However, human capital theory and marginal productivity theory fail to explain non-economic factors. While inequality of income can in part be attributed to differences in educational attainment, there are many other factors at play. Human capital theory ignores the idea of discrimination in the labour market, arguing that people are hired based on their market value and investing in their human capital will make them more marketable. But discrimination—different treatment based on membership of a specific group—does occur as a result of prejudice based on characteristics such as race and gender (Lang, 2007, p. 266). For example, statistics demonstrate that women continue to

earn an average of 70 percent of their male counterparts. If employers, as profit maximizers, were not discriminatory and held no preference in terms of gender or race, they would choose to hire women (of equal productivity) rather than men. Theoretically, this would result in a correction in the market—women's wages would increase in accordance with the growing demand. However, this has not been the case. While the wage gap between men and women has closed somewhat, it continues to be significant, and women and specific races or ethnic groups continue to be over-represented among those lowest paid. This failure to eliminate discrimination by race, ethnicity and gender is a fundamental flaw in marginal productivity theory. It can therefore be argued that employers are not purely profit maximizers. Hiring practices can be influenced by other factors and can result in decisions that are economically inefficient.

We also know that hiring practices are influenced by factors including individual access to social networks—the idea that it is not only what you know but who you know (Harrison & Weiss, 1998). This is particularly pertinent to the population included in this study. Their social networks do not provide access to labour market opportunities that middle and upper class individuals enjoy.

Segmentation Theory

Segmentation theorists argue that the neoclassical assumption of purely competitive labour markets, shaped by economic factors alone, is flawed. Segmented Labour Market (SLM) theories, while varied, base their critique of neoclassical theory on the premise that non-economic factors have a central role in determining the labour market outcomes for workers. SLM theorists argue that the labour market is “divided into segments, with limited opportunity for upward mobility among the segments”

(Phillips & Phillips, 2000, p. 85). Early SLM theorists limited their analysis to class affiliation and structural segmentation (Thomson, 2003, p. 2). They noted that class affiliation would play a significant role in determining where workers were placed in the labour market and identified two segments. These are the *primary sector*, characterized by secure jobs with good wages, good working conditions and opportunities for advancement and the *secondary sector*, where jobs are insecure with low wages, and offer little opportunity for advancement. In essence, SLM “began to conceive the labour market as containing two distinct and separate groups of workers; one with privileged access to steady, skilled employment and the other confined to unskilled, insecure jobs in small firms” (Thomson, 2003, p.3). The initial ‘*dual*’ theories of segmented labour were later criticized for limiting their analysis to class and ignoring equally important determinants such as gender and race. Secondary labour markets have higher representation of racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, young people and women while the primary market continues to be dominated by white males (Phillips & Phillips, 2000, p. 85).

SLM theorists also argue that the emphasis on education as a determinant of earnings is overestimated as it ignores the non-economic factors described in SLM theory (Thomson, 2003, p. 2). The human capital analysis that “low wage jobs are occupied by low productivity workers who are unable (or unwilling) to make the human capital investments that would enable them to secure better jobs” ignores the non-economic factors described in SLM theory (Thomson, 2003, p. 4).

Human capital theory is based on the notion that “investments are made in human resources so as to improve their productivity and therefore their earnings” (Benjamin,

Gunderson & Riddell, 2002, p.245). From a SLM perspective, wage levels are not simply determined by productivity. Primary sector incomes are, by definition, superior to those in the secondary sector and are no longer a consequence of the individual characteristics of workers (Thomson, 2003; Elliott, 1997). SLM theorists conclude that it is not the inferiority of workers that affects productivity but rather the opposite—inferior jobs create inferior workers (Thomson, 2003).

Regardless of the evidence in support of a class- race- and gender-based analysis of labour market activity segmentation theory continues to be sidelined by mainstream analysis (Thomson, 2003). And while critics would not suggest that education and training is not important and agree that it should be strongly encouraged and supported through public policy, the implication that education and training is the panacea that will end poverty and social exclusion, ignores non-economic factors as well as the reality that work, by design, is increasingly precarious. There is significant research to demonstrate that labour market outcomes and human capital investment alone will not guarantee workers better, more secure employment (Livingstone, 1998; Thomson, 2003).

Structural Unemployment Theory

Much of the justification for current labour market policy focused on supply-side solutions is based on the idea that unemployment is structural. Definitions of the term ‘structural unemployment’ vary (Sharpe & Sargent, 2000). However, a common definition is the “aggregate unemployment associated with mismatches between the skills and/or the geographic location of the unemployed with the characteristics of job vacancies” (Benjamin, Gunderson & Riddell, 2002, p. 627). From this perspective, the problem is not a shortage of jobs and therefore demand-side interventions are ignored.

The Government of Canada determines that structural unemployment has occurred “when workers are unable to fill available jobs because they lack the skills, do not like where jobs are available, or are unwilling to work at the wage rate offered in the market” (Osberg & Lin, 2000, p. S150).

The notion that Canada is experiencing a severe shortage of labour is regularly presented as an undisputed truth. This commonly-held assumption is critical for current labour market policy development as it often comes with the analysis that structural unemployment is a function of an overly generous welfare state and intervention should focus on supply side-solutions. For example, Courchene (1994) prescribes “....making education more responsive to economic needs, shifting from income maintenance to retraining and mobility for the unemployed, emphasizing work incentives and employment promotion in social assistance, introducing tax reforms that lower the burden on entrepreneurial activity, and moving toward private or non-profit agencies to deliver programs” (p. 31).

Largely influenced by assumptions that the post-industrial economy is dominated by high-tech, high-skill jobs and that the main problem of unemployment is that workers are not adequately trained for these jobs, human capital theorists surmise that the central solution to inequality is greater ‘investment’ in human resources through education and training. As noted, from this perspective ‘investment’ in human resources will improve individual productivity and employability, resulting in higher wages.

However other analysts dispute the structural unemployment thesis. For example, some economists argue that “unemployment in the 1990s largely reflected deficient aggregate demand” (Sharpe & Sargent, 2000, p. S3). Similarly Osberg and Lin (2000)

concluded that labour shortages in the 1990s were evident in some sectors but mismatches between skills and labour appear to be limited to a small high-skill/ high-tech sector representing less than one-eighth of the national unemployment rate. And these are certainly not the kinds of jobs that the subjects of this study are being trained for. Gingras & Roy (2000), Livingstone (1998), and others come to similar conclusions. In fact Livingstone (1998) demonstrates that there is much evidence supporting the hypothesis that many workers are in positions that are under-utilizing their skills, and that employers are demanding skills and education levels that far exceed what is necessary to adequately perform the work required. Crouch, Finegold and Sako (1999) also point out that the emphasis on ‘high-skill’ training is problematic. While it is an important contributor to economic competitiveness in the global economy, they note that it is unlikely that high-skill jobs will employ large numbers of people. Livingstone (1998) demonstrates that while educational attainment has increased since the 1970s, average incomes have stagnated (p.164). Livingstone (1998) also points out that a growing number of Canadians who have invested significantly in advanced education are “unable to obtain commensurate jobs” (p. 169). Yalnizyan (2007), Hudson and Pickles (2008), and Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) show that stagnant incomes continue to be the trend in the 2000s.

Implications for Policy

In an analysis of labour market policy in the European Union (EU), Gallie (2002) points out that a considerable number of jobs are low-skill/low-pay and that in spite of the rhetoric of the high skill economy, training policy for low-income workers is typically short term. He notes that “the attempt to re-skill the unemployed in a relatively short

period of time can only have limited results in a context in which people have spent long periods of their working lives without learning new skills or maintaining their basic learning capacities” (2002, p.97). It is not that Gallie dismisses supply-side strategies; he simply argues that they are inadequate in isolation of other policy interventions.

In his analysis of job training policy in the United States, Lafer (2002) describes three fundamental assumptions shaping job-training policy. First, there is a sufficient supply of ‘good jobs’ available—people simply need the skills to fill them. Second, wages are primarily determined by skills. And third, the cause of poverty and its solution are “fundamentally non-political—that the root of income inequality lies in the impersonal progress of technology, a dynamic neither created by, nor responsive to, political argument” (2002, p.2).

Lafer goes on to challenge each of these assumptions. First, he provides evidence to support his argument that even at the time of his study when the economy was strong, there were not enough, ‘decent-paying’ jobs in the U.S. for the number of people who needed them. As will be explored in the following pages, there is much evidence of a similar reality in Canada. Second, Lafer argues that if an underlying assumption of training policy is that skills will enhance wages, then skills and training must be key determinants of wages for entry-level workers. However he shows that education and skills have in fact had a minimal effect, accounting for “less than a third of the overall distribution of wages” (Lafer, 2002, p. 4).

Yalnizian’s (2007) analysis of the growing income gap in Canada, contrasted with evidence of increases in educational attainment reflected in the 2006 Census suggests, as does Lafer’s findings, that there is a problem with the assumption that skills and wages

correlate in Canada (Yalnizian , 2007 as cited in Hébert, Crew, Delisle, Ferguson & McMullen, 2008). Finally, Lafer (2002) argues that policies designed to ‘address’ poverty through training are not ‘apolitical’ but serve an ideological purpose and are therefore highly political. Lafer (2002) states: “...job training policy has served to demobilize poor communities in both ideological and political terms. Rhetorically the focus on training demoralizes potential agitators by suggesting that the causes of their poverty lay in themselves rather than in any potential object of protest” (p. 9).

According to Gallie (2002), Lafer (2000), Livingstone (1998) and Crouch et al. (2001), many of the economic assumptions made to justify current policy are erroneous. Crouch et al. (2001, p. 3) describe a “pattern of bipolar growth” that is characterized by an increase in high skill/high wage jobs, a loss in mid-income jobs and a growth in insecure low wage jobs. Yalnizian’s (2007) research on the growing income gap in Canada supports this analysis. Crouch et al. (2001) add an additional concern about the emphasis on training in response to the market that is having far reaching societal implications. They stress that the focus on human capital investment has become “almost solely concerned with education that will be occupationally useful rather than as a civilizing mission or a broadening of minds” (p. 5). Crouch et al. (2001) caution that linking education so closely to economic advance comes at a cost (p. 16). Education as a valuable possession in its own right—a consumption choice as well as an investment good—has become more narrowly viewed through the human capital lens, rendering people “culturally impoverished” but also unable to find the lucrative work that they are led to believe will be their just reward.

This analysis does not suggest that investing in human capital through training, especially for groups overrepresented among the unemployed, is not essential. It does however raise questions about the effectiveness of current methods and the validity of the structural unemployment analysis. Further, it is a reminder that solutions that focus on narrowing the breadth and depth of programs such as unemployment insurance, weakening labour laws, attacking unions and reducing taxes, are not necessarily based on either empirical or theoretical ‘truths’. Yet governments are increasingly embracing these solutions and are almost entirely focused on intervening to better ready workers to meet the needs of the market.

To focus on supply-side solutions alone—such as job training—is to accept narrow economic theories that ignore factors including class, race, gender, as well as past and present policies that have further oppressed and marginalized people because of their race, class and or gender. The focus on training as the solution to unemployment and poverty also accepts neoclassical assumptions that the market—if given the freedom—will ensure that good jobs are available for all who are willing to do what is necessary to meet the requirements of the labour market. This suggests that all individuals have equal opportunity and this simply is not the case.

3.1.2 Structural Realities and Government Responses

While neoclassical economists recognize a relationship between the labour market and social policy, the focus of attention is most often on the “point at which government intervention *disrupts* the autonomous clearing-process” (Esping-Andersen & Regini, 2000, p.144). Neoclassical economists often ignore the unique characteristics of the labour market and fail to recognize that the worker/employer relationship is distinct from other economic transactions (Bowles, 2005, p. 284). The worker employer relationship

in capitalist economies, as described by Rinehart (1996), is based on the ‘structural powerlessness of labour’ (p.14). While the degree to which workers are conscious of their powerlessness can differ considerably, the fact remains that unlike the exchange of goods and services in a market economy, workers have few other choices but to sell their labour power in exchange for wages (Rinehart, 1996, p.15). Both employers and workers are compelled to compete in the market. However, their interests conflict as employers aim to maximize profit, while workers aim to improve their personal condition.

Employers require human labour to produce surplus value to allow for the greatest possible profit however such aims do not consider the best interest of workers and the result is a relationship of constant struggle for power over the labour process. Employers have much to gain from maximum worker output and minimizing wage costs. In contrast, the worker has little to gain from expending surplus labour and seeks to maximize wages and minimize work hours and effort. Workers and employers will view the role and nature of government intervention differently. Workers benefit from labour market policies that will ensure good wages and work conditions, benefits and access to decent work that provides sufficient leisure time to allow them to accommodate the needs of their families. Employers will look to governments to ensure that workers are trained to be productive and cost-efficient, but they will oppose intervention that might impede their ability to maximize profit.

Given the shift in power from workers to employers, it makes perfect sense that social policy has explicitly shifted to a narrow approach focused on supply. This is most notable in countries that have subscribed to neo-liberal welfare state regimes characterized by means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers and/or modest

social-insurance schemes, low and narrowly targeted benefits, strict entitlement rules, and the state encouragement of the market—passively and actively—through the subsidization of private welfare schemes. Countries that have embraced the neo-liberal model, as shown by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) and described earlier in this paper, have greater levels of inequality than do social democratic and corporatist countries. The *corporatist* welfare regime emphasizes a central role for the state in the provision of welfare. However while “private insurance and occupational fringe benefits play a marginal role”, an emphasis on preserving class and status differentials has resulted in “negligible redistributive impact” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27). In contrast, social democratic regimes are based on ideals of promoting “greater equality of the highest standards”, rather than a focus on minimal provision (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27). Social democratic countries have developed welfare states with highly de-commodified universalistic programs that are broadly revered. Described by Esping-Andersen (1990) as a “fusion of liberalism and socialism” (p. 28), social democratic regimes are committed to full-employment and therefore, as will be demonstrated, social democratic labour market policies are comprehensive and cognizant of a need for both demand and supply side interventions. There are very few social democratic regimes and they are geographically limited to northern Europe’s Nordic region. As noted earlier, research by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) shows that social democratic countries have been much more successful on many indicators of health and social outcomes.

In terms of labour market policy, Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that the labour market is “systematically and directly shaped by the (welfare) state” (p. 144). This suggests interventionist policies have a role to play, but this a view that departs from

neoclassical economic assumptions that “labour markets will clear and move towards equilibrium by themselves” (Esping-Andersen, p.144).

While Esping-Andersen, Wilkinson and Pickett and the many other economists and analysts cited here show the overarching benefits of state intervention to reduce inequality, the neo-liberal perspective views poverty and inequality as inevitable and necessary for economic growth. This leads to policy prescriptions that labour economist Ingrid Rima (1996) describes as “misguided and often counterproductive” (p.xix).

While fundamentally disagreeing on the *desirability* of the capitalist economic model, both neoclassical and Marxist analysts agree that capitalism requires a surplus pool of perfectly trained labour to be readily available to compete for jobs in the private market. This keeps wages low and maximizes profit. It is also in the interest of capital that the cost of training be incurred externally. As will be further discussed, past practice held that employers at least shared responsibility for training of their employees.

However the trend in an increasingly globalized world is for governments to succumb to the demands of capital and provide the human capital development function in a manner that specifically meets their needs. Within this context, governments are increasingly held hostage by threats of relocation to regions where such incentives are available.

While this practice is indeed increasing, social democratic regimes have had some success in resisting one sided policy prescriptions adopted by neo-liberal states, and they have been more committed to comprehensive policy measures that continue to aim for full employment rather than accepting the ‘trade-off’ of employment for low inflation.

The ‘trade-off’ of employment for low inflation is also central to neo-liberal labour market policy. This theory departs from Keynesian objectives of full employment

and accepts that there is in fact a ‘natural rate of unemployment’—a ‘Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment’ (NAIRU). Sawyer (2004) describes the theory behind the NAIRU as the idea that the causes of unemployment are held within the labour market. The basic premise is that inflation creates a barrier to full employment. If unemployment drops below the ‘inflation barrier’ posed by the NAIRU, inflation would accelerate because the market would no longer be in equilibrium (Sawyer, 2004, p. 34). Excess demand for labour would increase workers bargaining power, pushing up wage costs and product prices, thereby causing inflation. The implication of this theory for policy is that government should not intervene to address unemployment through demand-side measures as this disrupts the ‘natural rate’ of unemployment, gives workers too much power, and ultimately pushes up inflation. The best intervention for labour market stability from this perspective is through monetary measures to control inflation and policies that de-regulate to give the market greater freedom.

But others argue that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that inflationary pressures derive from product markets rather than labour markets (Sawyer, 2004; Bartik, 2001). For example Sawyer (2004) argues that “the inflationary barrier represented by the NAIRU is not solely or even primarily a labour market phenomenon—other economic relationships underlie labour market supply and demand, and incorporating them leads to different policy conclusions” (p. 36). This has considerable implications for labour market policy. It suggests that more effective policy “combines measures that stimulate aggregate demand with capacity creation and not through the further deregulation of labour markets” (Sawyer, 2004, p. 35).

3.1.3 Ideology and the Current Context: Contemporary Historical Overview

The preceding pages provide an overview of the current political economy of labour market policy. It is also useful to understand the historical context within which the ideological shift has emerged. Labour market policy, like other government policy, has seen many changes throughout the history of capitalism and in particular, post industrialization. McBride (2001) describes four broad periods: First there was limited activity until the 1960s followed by increased state intervention through to the late 1980's. From the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, McBride describes the emergence of neo-corporatist training institutions in support of the structural unemployment analysis described in this paper. From the mid 1990s on, the emphasis has been on de-regulation and devolution (p. 96-97). These changes have been consistent with the broader shift in political, cultural, social and economic institutions that emerged in the 1970's.

Duménil and Lévy (2004) describe the period from World War II (WWII) to the late 1970's as characterized by developed societies with:

...institutional frameworks that were on the margin of the fundamental rules of straight-laced capitalism...more advantageous financing conditions for the nonfinancial economic sector, a high degree of state interventions in industrial policy, and an international monetary framework favourable to development, which placed certain limits on the freedom of decision for the owners of capital (p.1).

But this has all changed in the context of neo-liberalism. Following a long period of economic growth after WWII, an international, structural crisis evidenced by a decline in capital profitability and a long deep recession marked the beginning of the end of the 'Keynesian compromise' that was institutionalized from the 1940s through to mid-1970. While the shift was initially slow to emerge, by the 1980s the political-economic climate was ripe for massive restructuring and a new social structure of accumulation (SSA)^{vi}

began to take shape. The Republican governments in the U.S and the Conservative government in Britain led the movement to reject the Keynesian economic policies that dominated postwar. The combination of a weak world economy and the predominance of conservative-minded governments opened the door for business elites to push forward an agenda that would increase their ability to accumulate wealth. A central requirement of maximizing this earning potential was an increase in control over the labour process. As unemployment soared, the labour movement and other progressive movements weakened, making it possible for neo-liberal proponents to influence the introduction of policies that would have been previously rejected as draconian during the Keynesian years.

In Canada, the global downturn in the economy during the 1970s also sparked a business lobby for massive institutional change. In the early 80s, the *Task Force on Labour Market Development* put forward the idea that the focus should be on labour market flexibility based on the analysis that governments “could do little to effect the aggregate level of employment which was set by market forces” (Albo, 1993, p. 121). The Task Force’s Report recommended that flexibility could be improved through supply-side strategies such as reducing disincentives to work, eliminating job creation programs and by focusing on industrial training rather than institutional training (Albo, 1993, p.121). The Commission presented three central policy arguments (Drache & Cameron, 1985, p. xvi). One is that public policy is insufficiently attuned to the need for efficiency and increased international productivity. The market must be allowed to operate freely. The second is that there is a need for greater international competition. Canada needs to seek new markets and seek a new trade relationship with its major

trading partner, the US. And finally, the size of the public sector deficit is choking private initiatives and enterprise, calling for a fundamental re-examination of the role of the state in the economy.

These policy positions, which were fully embraced by the federal government, marked a fundamental turning point in public policy. Liberalization, deregulation, privatization and globalization were to be fundamental to the new hegemony and a central component of this new economic order would be an increase in the ‘flexibility’ of the labour market. The actual impact of ‘flexibility’ and ‘deregulation’ has been significant and detrimental for most Canadians. ‘Deregulation’ has not meant *less* government intervention, but rather a *different* direction in intervention, as public policy is now designed to favour the needs of the market rather than workers. While ‘flexibility’ may have expanded opportunities for employers, it has resulted in a more ‘rigid’ situation for workers. Weakened labour laws and reduced unemployment supports along with the acceptance of a ‘natural’ rate of unemployment in effect forces workers to succumb to the needs of the market (Stanford & Vosko, 2004).

Also important to the Canadian context was the introduction of *The Canada Jobs Strategy* (CJS) in 1985. A major policy initiative introduced by the Mulroney government, the CJS replaced former employment programs and fundamentally shifted the emphasis of employment policy from demand- to supply-strategies. The development of the CJS was guided by five principles (Prince & Rice, 1989, p. 248-249):

- Focus on the real, continuing needs for the labour market with greater emphasis on small business and entrepreneurship;
- Allow flexibility to meet changing regional and local needs, with room for innovation;

- Provide simpler, less confusing and more accessible programs, with clearly defined objectives;
- Recognize the shared responsibilities of the federal government, the provinces, and the private sector;
- Extend equal opportunities for all Canadians, particularly those at a disadvantage in the labour market.

This shift in policy reflected the Conservative government's preference for private sector job creation and rejection of Keynesian interventions. A change in direction was first highlighted in the 1984 throne speech noting "government will pursue approaches....to improve job opportunities through responsive market-oriented training programs" and "...this innovative employment strategy....will be cost effective and oriented to the private sector" (Prince & Rice, 1989, p. 249). This was to be a major turning point for Canada as supply-side interventions would now dominate labour market policy replacing fiscal policy as the primary tool to address unemployment. Supported through the *Canadian Jobs Strategy*, employment policy turned its focus on "work experience for youth and workers re-entering the labour market, and less on the development of specific or formal skills, especially skills associated with worker credentials in apprenticeship or technical training, which increased their leverage in the labour market" (Albo, 1993, p. 123).

In 1989, the federal government further reformed policy with the Labour Force Development Strategy (LFDS). Albo (1993) notes that, to some extent, the LFDS was a response to the failure of the market driven CJS (p. 122). But neo-liberal elements remained as Unemployment Insurance (UI), the primary Passive Labour Market Policy (PLMP) and Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) objectives were linked and cuts in Unemployment Insurance (UI) were used to finance an expansion in training and job

creation activities (Haddow, 2004, p. 248).^{vii} The LFDS also tightened eligibility requirements and left privatized training structures intact (Albo, 1993, p. 122).

At the international level, the liberalization of labour market policy was clearly articulated within the 1994 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) *Jobs Study*. This was critical to the evolution of labour market policy as it captured the essence of neo-liberalism and shaped a "unified and intellectually coherent policy agenda" (Vosko & Stanford, 2004, p.11). The OECD *Jobs Study* set out a framework that resulted in a shift in power over the labour process back into the hands of capital.

The *Jobs Study* emphasized nine central policy recommendations that continue to shape labour market policy worldwide (OECD, 1994, p.47).

1. Set macroeconomic policy such that it will both encourage growth and, in conjunction with good structural policies, make it sustainable i.e. non-inflationary.
2. Enhance the creation and diffusion of technological know-how by improving frameworks for its development.
3. Increase flexibility of working-time (both short-term and lifetime) voluntarily sought by workers and employers.
4. Nurture an entrepreneurial climate by eliminating impediments to, and restrictions on, the creation and expansion of enterprises.
5. Make wage and labour costs more flexible by removing restrictions that prevent wages from reflecting local conditions and individual skill levels, in particular of younger workers.
6. Reform employment security provisions that inhibit the expansion of employment in the private sector.
7. Strengthen the emphasis on active labour market policies and reinforce their effectiveness.
8. Improve labour force skills and competences through wide-ranging changes in education and training systems.
9. Reform unemployment and related benefit systems—and their interaction with the tax system—such that societies' fundamental equity goals are achieved without impinging on the efficient functioning of labour markets.

While the *Jobs Study* has been highly influential, it has also been highly criticized.

For example, Crouch et al. (2001) argue that "although a large amount of sophisticated

empirical evidence is deployed in the *Study*, in most instances the results of this are inconclusive, and the authors often fall back on a priori reasoning” (p. 32).

There is no doubt that the *Jobs Study* has influenced the shape of policy in Canada. As described by Haddow (2004, p. 250), “this has been seen in a shift in emphasis from passive to active labour market measures; substantial cuts concentrated almost entirely on passive measures in labour market program spending; devolution of ALMP to provinces; and efforts to strengthen intergovernmental coordination in the labour market field”.

Domestically the *Macdonald Commission* articulated the foundation from which labour market policy such as the CJS and the LFDS would evolve; the OECD *Jobs Study* reinforced the neo-liberal vision that had already begun to take shape in Canada; and the vision was further supported by the changing political and economic discourse internationally. In particular, Canadian public policy was highly influenced by the U.S. and Britain. These two powerful nations, led by conservative governments, steered the way for a new transnational model. International economic institutions changed to reflect the ideals of neo-liberalism and globalization, and labour market policy took shape within this context. For example, the U.S. Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) instituted in 1982 was based on the notion that the high unemployment facing the United States was the result of a mismatch between the skills of the unemployed and the human resource needs of the new high-tech economy. Similar to Canada, the US focused on supply-side interventions, moving policy in a different direction from the Keynesian economic strategies of the 1970s. At that time, the Carter administration had responded to high unemployment by targeting public sector job creation for economically disadvantaged

Americans (Lafer, 2002, p.156). The Reagan government of the 1980s wholeheartedly embraced neo-liberalism and denounced Keynesian demand-side strategies. The JTPA was fully a supply-side intervention designed to train unemployed workers to better prepare them for private sector jobs. In spite of the reality of a flailing economy with 10 percent unemployment, the JTPA was based on Republican beliefs that work was indeed available for those who were willing to do what was necessary to develop the skills desired by the private sector. The idea that workers simply needed re-skilling (the ‘skills mismatch’ theory) remained the primary labour market development intervention during the Reagan administration and the primary tool that has been used through subsequent administrations, including both Republican and Democratic governments.

As noted, there is an increasing body of literature pointing out the weaknesses of supply-side strategies in the absence of demand-side intervention, (Bartik, 2001; Cazes, Verick & Heuer, 2009; Crouch et al, 2001; Dunk, McBride & Nelson, 1996; Freeman & Gottschalk, 1998; Lafer, 2002; Livingstone, 1998). However, policies in countries with neo-liberal welfare states, such as Canada, the US and the UK, continue to focus on supply-side strategies supplemented with negative incentives through punitive welfare reform measures and scaling back of unemployment supports. In the 1990s, Britain’s Blair government quite brilliantly popularized the ‘Third-Way’ political model. Esping-Andersen (2002) describes the ‘Third-Way’ as an example of policy that aims to integrate the popular aspects of neo-liberalism including “individual responsibility and a more competitive reward structure” with social democratic values of collective responsibility (p.4). But the ‘third-way’ response to labour market policy is very much in line with that

outlined in the *Jobs Study*—individual-focused, supply-driven policy, with training and lifelong learning at its core.

While Nordic social democratic countries have long included supply-side ‘activation’ policies as central to their social welfare model, they have done so in combination with demand-side measures and complementary social supports. Their policies are quite different than the third-way model which Esping-Andersen (2002) criticizes for “its unduly selective appropriation of social democratic policy” and its tendency to replace conventional income maintenance programs with supply side, remedial policies, rather than integrating a combination of supply- and demand-interventions with the broad range of preventative programming seen in Nordic models (p.5).

Neo-liberals on the other hand, criticize the Nordic countries for having ‘excessive’ welfare states and ‘over-regulation’ of labour markets. Yet Denmark, Norway and Sweden consistently rank among the most equal countries in the world with low-levels of unemployment, stable economic growth and generous social benefits (Jackson, 2001; Egger & Sengenberger, 2003; Auer, 2001; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). For example, while Canada provides replacement wages through Employment Insurance at 55 percent of earnings (to a maximum of \$39,000 earnings), Denmark and Sweden provide replacement wages up to 90 percent and 80 percent respectively.

As shown in Table 5, GDP growth was weak at the height of the economic crisis in 2008 in most OECD nations. Most recently available social expenditures pre-date the recession; however they demonstrate the generosity of OECD countries’ safety nets. In 2008, social spending as a percentage of GDP was highest in Scandinavian countries and

some European countries; however, unemployment was lowest in Denmark and Norway and comparable in Sweden and Finland. In the mid 2000s, Denmark and Sweden continued to be the most equal of OECD countries while the US and the UK were among the most unequal. Historically, the Scandinavian countries have successfully implemented policies that create a better balance between equality and growth.

Table 5
Country Comparisons- Growth, Inequality, Unemployment and Social Spending

Country	GDP growth percent change 2005-2008*	Unemployment as percentage of labour force**		Gross Social Expenditure as percent of GDP (Public) – 2007 (latest available)**	Gini (mid-2000s)**	
		2005	2009		Level	Rank
Australia	25.2	5.1	5.6	17.9	0.30	16
Austria	16.2	5.2	4.8	29.6	0.27	4
Canada	16.4	6.8	8.3	18.9	0.32	18
Denmark	12.6	4.8	6.0	30.8	0.23	1
Finland	17.3	9.5	8.3	28.2	0.27	7
France	12.8	9.5	9.1	32.8	0.28	13
Germany	10.6	4.3	7.7	28.4	0.30	15
Ireland	10.8	4.6	12	18.6	0.33	22
Norway	29.3	4.6	3.2	23.3	0.28	11
Sweden	15.7	7.7	8.3	32.1	0.23	2
UK	15.2	4.7	7.7	23.3	0.34	23
US	13.6	5.1	9.3	17.4	0.38	27

Source: OECD Data

*Authors calculations from OECD.StatExtracts

**OECD Social Expenditure Data Base (SOCX)

The Scandinavian countries' success in balancing equity and efficiency is instructive for OECD countries seeking a way forward as they continue to struggle through the worst economic crisis in decades. As noted, Keynesian strategies were

universally used at the height of the crisis, though some countries are now scaling back on fiscal measures aimed at stimulating the economy and are returning to the same neo-liberal principles that caused the problems in the first place. This is quite amazing, given the damage caused by an economic model that even Alan Greenspan, past Chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve, and one of the most powerful and highest profile advocates of the free market model, admits to have failed. At U.S. hearings on the economic crises, Mr. Greenspan admitted to having “put too much faith in the self-correcting power of free markets” (Andrews, 2008). Yet in 2011, emphasis continues to be on market-driven solutions as opposed to scaling up public investment in job creation.

But as is so often the case, historical analysis of past recessions shows us that this approach is ill advised. In an analysis of unemployment during the height of the world economic crisis in the 1980s, Therborn (1986) examines the policy responses in 15 OECD countries including Canada. Therborn (1986) argues that contrary to the supply-side theories that began to push out Keynesian strategies, unemployment statistics in the countries studied show that “what matters is not so much anti-inflation or growth policy but employment policy” (p.21). He notes that the five countries with low-unemployment during the crisis were also those with an “institutionalized commitment to full employment”. They made a commitment to maintain/achieve full employment through the use of counter cyclical mechanisms and policies. They used mechanisms to adjust supply and demand in the labour market to achieve full-employment; and made conscious decisions not to use high unemployment as a means to secure other policy objectives (Therborn, 1986, p. 23).

International full-employment objectives came under attack in the 1980s with the introduction of the NAIRU. Full-employment objectives date back to the 1964 International Labour Organization (ILO) Employment Policy Convention (No. 122). In keeping with Keynesian theory, the ILO Declaration embraced the objective of ‘full, productive and freely chosen employment’ and emphasized that member countries should take the steps needed to ensure that “there is freedom of choice of employment and the fullest possible opportunity for each worker to qualify for, and to use his [sic] skills and endowments in, a job for which he is well suited, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin” (p.2). In 1995, the Copenhagen Declaration further committed governments “to promote full productive and freely chosen employment, in line with the ILO convention” (Rubery, 2001, p. 116).

Peter Auer (2003) points to Denmark as a model of employment policy that holds up the ILO ‘Decent Work’ objectives. Endorsed by the ILO in 1999, the concept of ‘Decent Work’ outlines four strategic objectives—the promotion of rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue. Writing in 2003, Egger shows that Denmark, in comparison with other countries in the EU, continued to have high levels of income, security, social and gender equality, and labour standards (Egger, 2003, p. 1). What is most important about the Denmark experience, and that of other Scandinavian social democratic models, is that policy has evolved very differently than in neo-liberal nations that chose to decrease government intervention as a means of increasing labour market flexibility in keeping with the ‘wisdom’ of the OECD Jobs Strategy. Egger’s study shows that Denmark has maintained a traditional welfare model while adapting to the realities of the global economic context. Denmark has successfully balanced high

employment rates, fiscal budgets, a trade surplus, and low and stable inflation (Egger, 2003, p.1). According to the OECD, in 2009 Denmark had an overall employment rate of 77.3 percent with a rate of 74 percent for women. And while Denmark, like other countries, has been affected by the recent global economic crisis, its unemployment rate remains lower than most OECD countries at 6 percent in 2009. Canada's employment rate in 2009 was 73.5 percent and 70.5 percent for females, and Canada's unemployment rate was 8.3 percent in 2009.

Denmark's employment policies continue to be comprehensive in breadth and depth and are complemented with far-reaching social policies such as childcare and other social services that increase opportunity for participation in the labour market. The Denmark model is an example of the Scandinavian welfare state model, which takes an active role in the labour market, possibly mitigating some of the pressures felt by the economic crisis.

As noted, the Canadian experience has been quite different than that of the Scandinavian countries. In the period following WWII until the end of the Keynesian era in the late 1970s, Canada was "at least nominally committed to the goal of full employment as its No. 1 economic priority" (Stanford, 1998, p.185). During that period, government intervention helped to minimize the effects of short-term downturns but in the 1980s, when Canada began to feel the effects of the world economic downturn, the fragile commitment to full-employment and Keynesianism was replaced with monetary supply-side strategies. It was at this time that the concept of the NAIRU came into favour. Unemployment became officially acceptable—the price we had to pay for economic growth. The focus of policy shifted from fiscal to monetary policy with an

emphasis on controlling inflation at all costs. While monetarism dominated policy in many OECD countries, some continued to implement fiscal policy in an effort to meet their full employment objectives. For example, Therborn's (1986) analysis shows that Austria, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland had firmly entrenched full employment policies, albeit for different ideological reasons. While Sweden and Norway's social democratic governments and relatively strong labour movements were instrumental factors in how public policy would continue to evolve, other full employment countries had different motivation. The Japanese and Swiss governments were primarily motivated by "conservative concerns with order and stability" (Therborn, 1986, p. 24), and Austria maintained a commitment to full employment based on "working class assertion" as well as a concern for "order and stability" (Therborn, 1986, p. 25).

During the 1990s, Canadian policy continued to evolve within a neo-liberal framework and ironically, it was under the leadership of the Liberal government that Canada made radical changes to policies developed post-war, including unemployment insurance and social assistance. As noted earlier, an emphasis on ALMP came at the expense of PLMP as unemployment insurance benefits were scaled back, eligibility was tightened and welfare policy was redesigned allowing provinces to introduce punitive welfare measures.

While several changes effectively compromising the breadth and depth of the unemployment insurance program can be traced back to 1976, the most significant and damaging changes were introduced in 1997 as part of a shift in policy outlined in the Liberal government's 1994 *Agenda: Jobs and Growth– Improving Social Security in Canada*. These changes included renaming the program *Employment Insurance* (EI) and

scaling it back to be far less accessible and helpful to workers. The focus is now less of an insurance scheme to protect from loss of employment than it is an active policy measure aimed at getting people back to work quickly. The percentage of unemployed people receiving unemployment insurance has dropped significantly. As seen in Table 6, 74 percent of the unemployed received Employment Insurance in 1990, declining to 39 percent in 2001 and further to 36 percent in 2007 (Hayes, 2003).

Table 6
Impact of Higher Eligibility Requirements on
Employment Insurance (EI) Coverage Ratios

	1990	1993	1994	1996	2001	2007
Legislative Change	Bill C-21	Bill C-113	Bill C-17	Bill C-12		
Percentage of Unemployed Receiving EI	74	57	51	42	39	36

Source: updated from Hayes, Kevin. (2003) Canadian Labour Congress. Retrieved from http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/unemployment_inuran

While access to EI has decreased, the surplus in the EI account grew from \$0.67 billion in 1995 to \$51 billion in 2007.^{viii} This is due to the tightening of eligibility rules, the shorter duration of coverage and the narrowing breadth and depth of EI since the 1970s, but in particular since the 1990s. Fewer workers are eligible, waiting periods are longer, benefit rates are lower and duration of eligibility is shorter.

In addition to a radical overhaul of unemployment insurance, the federal government began to make radical changes in other social policy areas. For example, while social assistance has long been the responsibility of provincial governments, the federal government became an active player with the establishment of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) in 1966. Through CAP, the federal government reimbursed provincial governments for 50 percent of social assistance expenditures as long as the

provinces complied with national standards. But a review of this and other aspects of the social safety net as laid out in federal government's *Agenda: Jobs and Growth* led to the elimination of CAP and a shift to a new funding formula through the *Canada Health and Social Transfer* (CHST) beginning in 1996. The argument for the change was that the new model would give provinces greater flexibility in program design. But the federal government would no longer share equally in the costs and they would no longer hold provinces accountable for spending on social assistance. Rather, the new scheme would see transfers in the form of a block grant to be used for health, social assistance and post secondary education. The CHST was later separated into two block grant programs. The Canada Health Transfer (CHT) is a block grant that provides funds specifically for health programming, and the Canada Social Transfer (CST) is the mechanism that funds both post secondary education and income security programs. A major concern with the CST is that social assistance is inevitably short-changed. This is because social assistance tends to have the least 'political clout' among those programs that fall under the broader social safety net. It is therefore not surprising that policy post-CAP has placed a greater emphasis on active versus passive programming, and this has led to changes in social assistance policy that are based on the pre-welfare state notion that the less the state provides to the poor, the more they will be willing to accept whatever employment is available.

While evidence shows that welfare enrolment has decreased across the nation, there is no evidence to suggest that previous recipients are better off than before. A relatively strong economy until 2008 resulted in jobs for some previously on welfare, but others have fallen off welfare as a result of tighter eligibility requirements resulting from

the change from CAP to the CST. The long-term outcomes for past welfare recipients and the factors contributing to those outcomes are difficult to determine. A longitudinal study conducted by Frenette and Picot (2003) found that about 30 percent of individuals registered significantly lower incomes after initially leaving welfare. Frenette and Picot also caution that comprehensive studies of ‘welfare leavers’ are difficult to administer because there is no ‘fail-safe’ mechanism to determine outcomes for the many that fall through the cracks.

In sum, data clearly shows that since *Agenda: Jobs and Growth* was first released, fewer people are able to access programs. Criteria have become more rigid and there is more pressure on workers to accept whatever employment is available—whether or not they deem that employment suitable or it pays adequate wages.

***Agenda Jobs and Growth* and the Impact on Training Policy**

As part of the new social policy vision, the federal government began to withdraw from involvement in training policy and began a process of devolving responsibility to the provinces. Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) were initially negotiated with all provinces with the exception of Ontario and British Columbia. The federal government continues to have a more direct role in youth and Aboriginal training programs. In the case of Aboriginal training programs, the federal government has negotiated various partnership agreements with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations to manage training funds and to deliver training to their constituents.

Early on, provincial governments found LMDA agreements limited because they focused solely on individuals who are eligible for EI and were therefore not accessible to the long term unemployed. Labour Market Partnership Agreements (LMPA) were later

negotiated to fill this gap and to allow provincial governments some flexibility in providing training opportunities for welfare recipients and individuals with multiple barriers. Manitoba's LMPA specifically targets:

“social assistance recipients, immigrants, persons with disabilities, older workers, youth, Aboriginal people, new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market, unemployed individuals previously self-employed, women and employed individuals who are low skilled, employed individuals who do not have a high school diploma or a recognized certification, or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills” (HRSDC, 2011).

But as will be discussed further, the LMPA, like the LMDA, limits support to short-term training and the only outcome of concern is that trainees attain employment at completion. All and any employment is deemed a positive outcome.

While the details of LMDAs and subsequent LMPAs vary from province to province, some common neo-liberal principles are typical (McBride, 2001, p. 98). They emphasize quick turn-around, moving people into the workforce in as brief a period as possible. Accountability measures for longevity of employment and skill development are weak and there has been concern expressed that only those individuals ‘most ready’ to enter the labour market will be served (Klassen, 2000, p.185), while those with multiple labour market barriers will remain un-served and on the welfare rolls. Further, provincial delivery of LMDAs is dependent upon federal transfers over which the provincial government has no control.

This is particularly pertinent in the current economic climate. In 2010 the federal government ran a deficit upwards of \$40 billion. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has pledged to reduce the accumulating debt to zero by 2015. This will likely mean spending cuts, and transfers to provinces are just as vulnerable as other programs.

The spirit in which federal/provincial bi-partite labour market agreements have evolved exemplifies the neo-liberal approach to training. Initiatives funded through agreements are evaluated on their success in moving trainees into employment. But the extent to which poverty and exclusion are addressed through agreements is a question that remains unanswered and unexplored. In spite of the very thorough and time-consuming reporting requirements placed on training initiatives, the question of whether individual social and economic circumstances have improved—either short term or long term—is impossible to determine in part because the question is never asked.

But there is much evidence to demonstrate that employment outcomes have not improved overall when we look at LICO data. We also know that inequality in Canada has increased. This brings into question not only the effect, but also the intent^{ix}, of labour market policies in terms of poverty and inequality reduction. It also brings into question how we measure policy success. I examine this issue further in Chapters 9 and 10.

As I have described in this chapter, the manner in which governments intervene in the labour market is a critical component of the complex web of policies that are designed domestically, but one that is highly influenced by, and aligned with, international objectives that are currently dominated by neo-liberal ideals. In the previous pages I traced Canada's journey down the neo-liberal path, but I also showed that in spite of the pressures, some other nations have resisted. These countries are not without their challenges, especially in the current economic climate. But the evidence very clearly shows that they have done a much better job balancing equity and efficiency (Brooks & Wong, 2006). In terms of labour market policy, social democratic countries are much more inclined to adopt policies that Esping-Andersen (1990) describes as responding to

the market while also influencing the shape that they take (p. 4). In contrast, the neo-liberal paradigm is premised on the idea that left to its own devices, the market will provide opportunities for everyone—the key to success is that we invest in our human capital to meet the demands of the market. However, it is also true, and particularly pertinent to this research, that neo-liberals emphasize education and training as the key to success, but are loath to invest government resources to assist individuals to access the education they require. Education and training, or human capital development, is an individual responsibility within the neo-liberal paradigm. From this perspective, state intervention should be minimal and targeted to market needs.

As noted earlier, neo-liberal theories fail to acknowledge labour market realities as well as non-economic factors that result in unequal access to the limited supply of good jobs. In this regard, my research builds from the hypothesis that an emphasis on education and training policy, in the absence of demand-side strategies, cannot effectively address the challenges for those who have been excluded from prosperity. If this hypothesis is correct, how then can supply and demand interventions be more effectively designed, in a complementary manner, to improve employment and income outcomes for marginalized workers?

What About Demand?

Canadian policy has abandoned demand-side strategies in favour of a narrow focus on labour supply. The implications are significant, as supply-side strategies aim to change the behaviour of workers, while demand-side strategies focus on the behaviour of the market and employers (Table 7). Characteristics of labour market policies most in line with the neo-liberal paradigm include minimal state intervention, focused on very

short-term supports at the level of supply. The result for those most marginalized are policies that are increasingly punitive and provide less protection, to effectively force people into low-wage precarious employment.

Table7
Labour Supply and Demand Policies

Intervention	Labour Supply Policies	Labour Demand Policies
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Job Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity training • Job retention services to help employers reduce turnover
Information Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour exchange services/ job development services • Providing information to workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour exchange services/job development services • Helping employers find qualified employees
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage subsidies to workers • Increased earned income • Subsidies for child care and other work-related expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage subsidies to employers • On-the-job training subsidies to employers • Economic development programs
Sanctions (limiting benefits from income support programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare job search requirements • Work requirements • Welfare time limits • Unemployment insurance restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-discrimination laws • Affirmative action • Employment standards • Industrial relations
Direct Public Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-service employment • Sheltered workshops • Supported work experience programs
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social assistance • Unemployment insurance • Workers compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers compensation

Source: adapted from Bartik, 2001 and Haddow and Klassen, 2006

Education and training are a primary focus of supply-side strategies, which are almost always seen as the solution to the tradeoffs of deregulation and flexibility (Esping-Anderson, 2000, p. 4). Within a neo-liberal framework, training policies are narrowly targeted to meet the needs of the market based on the premise that the market provides employment and therefore knows best what skills are required. To further support the needs of the market, punitive supply measures, including reduced protection and support for workers, are often implemented to ‘push’ people into the jobs that the market creates, regardless of their desirability. The emphasis on ‘*active labour market policies*’ (ALMP) and a reduction in ‘*passive labour market policies*’ (PLMP) are examples of policies that leave workers with fewer choices. For example, I described the major changes to unemployment insurance and social assistance—the primary PLMP—that resulted in reduced eligibility and duration of unemployment benefits and increased provincial flexibility to impose punitive measures in the case of social assistance (Haddow, 2000).

In terms of demand-side measures, only those directly beneficial to employers appear to be considered. For example, it is common for provincial governments to entice companies to relocate to Manitoba by providing them with funds for training and wage supplements for new hires. But overall, there has been a move away from demand-side measures as an integral component of labour market policy, which makes little sense when we consider the increasingly polarized market and growing income inequality that we know to have been “significant and widespread over the past 20 years” (OECD, 2009).

While redistributive policies have served somewhat to minimize inequality, it is also the case that redistribution through tax and transfers has declined in many OECD

countries during this period. As noted previously, Scandinavian countries remain an exception. For example, the bottom 2 quintiles in Denmark, Sweden and Norway earn over 10 percent of the national income compared with less than 10 percent in Canada, the US and UK (OECD, 2009). The ratio of earnings between the richest 10 percent and the poorest 10 percent in Canada, the US and UK is significantly higher than in Denmark, Sweden and Norway (OECD, 2009). It should also be noted, as shown in Tables 8 and 9, that in comparison with Canada, the US and the UK, the Scandinavian countries invest significantly in public policy including labour market policy—both supply and demand.

Table 8
Public Unemployment Spending (PUS)
Public Social Expenditures (PSE) as percentage of GDP

	2000		2003		2007	
	PSE	PUS	PSE	PUS	PSE	PUS
Australia	17.3	0.9	17.2	0.7	16.0	0.4
Canada	16.5	0.7	17.2	0.8	16.9	0.6
Denmark	25.7	3.0	27.9	3.3	26.1	1.9
France	27.7	1.5	28.9	1.8	28.4	1.4
Japan	16.5	0.6	18.1	0.5	18.7	1.3
Norway	21.3	0.5	24.6	0.7	20.8	0.2
Sweden	28.4	1.4	30.1	1.2	27.3	0.7
UK	18.6	0.3	19.8	0.3	20.5	0.2
US	14.5	0.2	16.0	0.3	16.2	0.3

OECD (2010), "Public unemployment spending", *Social Issues: Key Tables from OECD*, No. 5.

doi: [10.1787/20743904-2010-table5](https://doi.org/10.1787/20743904-2010-table5)

OECD (2010), "Government social spending", *Social Issues: Key Tables from OECD*, No. 1.

doi: [10.1787/20743904-2010-table1](https://doi.org/10.1787/20743904-2010-table1)

Table 9
Expenditures on Active labour Market Policies as percentage of GDP

	2000	2003	2007
Australia	0.4	0.4	0.3
Canada	0.4	0.4	0.3
Denmark	1.9	1.8	1.3
France	1.2	1.0	0.9
Japan	0.3	0.3	0.2
Norway	0.6	0.8	0.6
Sweden	1.8	1.2	1.1
UK	0.2	0.2	0.1
US	0.2	0.2	0.1

OECD (2010), "Public expenditure on active labour market policies", *Employment and Labour Markets: Key Tables from OECD*, No.

9. doi: [10.1787/20752342-2010-table9](https://doi.org/10.1787/20752342-2010-table9)

The gap in market income continues to grow in Canada. In 1997, the top 10 percent of families earned an average income 31 times higher than those in the bottom 10 percent (Yalnizian, 2007). Statistics Canada census data shows very clearly the growing income disparity (Table 10). While those in the top 20 percent have done well with an increase in earnings of 16.4 percent between 1980 and 2005, those at the bottom have lost ground by 20.6 percent. By 2006 these high income families were earning 82 times that of the bottom 10 percent (Yalnizian, 2007). Market income for the poorest 10 percent of Canadians fell by 45 percent between 1980 and 2000. In stark contrast, market income for the richest 10 percent rose by 18 percent (Green & Milligan, p.1, 2007).

Table 10
Median Earnings, in 2005 Constant Dollars,
Full-Time Full-Year Earners by Quintile, Canada, 1980-2005

Quintile	Year – 2005 (constant dollars)				Percentage Change	
	1980	1990	2000	2005	1980-2005	2000-2005
Bottom 20 percent	19,367	16,345	15,861	15,375	-20.6	-3.1
Middle 20 percent	41,348	40,778	40,433	41,401	0.1	2.4
Top 20 percent	74,084	76,616	81,224	86,253	16.4	6.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Earnings and Incomes of Canadians Over the Past Quarter Century, 2006 Census Catalogue no 97-563-X

There is also evidence to support assertions that our economy is increasingly polarized and that much promised high-skill, high-wage jobs are in scarce supply. The incidence of low-paid work^x is high in Canada compared with many OECD countries. For example, less than 10 percent of workers in Finland, Italy, Denmark and Sweden earn low wages while more than 20 percent of Canadian, Hungarian, American, Korean, British and Irish workers earn low wages and Canada ranks among the worst in terms of upward mobility of low-paid workers (OECD, 2006, p. 175-176).

Picot and Myles (2005) report that changes in income inequality in Canada have been mixed. Overall, the percentage of low-income earners^{xi} in Canada has dropped since the late 1970s from 13.9 percent to 11.9 percent in 2004. However, Picot and Myles (2005) note that these statistics are somewhat misleading, as the incidence of low-income families with children increased from 14.4 percent in the late 1970s to 15.7 percent in the late 1990s. Elders in Canada have fared much better with a decrease in the incidence of low-income from 34.7 percent to 5.4 percent (Picot & Myles, 2005, p. 9). Canada's comparatively comprehensive programs for seniors, although arguably under attack, have contributed to improved financial outcomes for seniors.

Economic expansion during the 1990s has benefited higher income families while the incomes of the poor have stagnated. Family incomes among lower-income families between 1990 and 2000 changed little while higher income families saw increases between 7 percent and 16 percent (Picot & Myles, 2005, p.9). Picot and Myles point out that countries, including Canada, with higher levels of family income inequality in the 1970s, continue to have high levels even after tax and transfers.

In relation to the implications for labour market policies, it is important to differentiate between short-term low-income earners and persistent low-income earners^{xii}. Persistent low-income earners are concentrated among a few demographic groups (Picot & Myles, 2005, p. 25). Fully 62 percent of persistent low-income earners were concentrated in one of five groups—lone-parents; unattached persons aged 45 to 64; recent immigrants; persons with work-limiting disabilities; and off-reserve Aboriginal people^{xiii} (Myles & Picot, 2005, p. 25; Hatfield, 2003). This would suggest that the current design and delivery of labour market policy is particularly inadequate for some

groups including Aboriginal people. It also raises the question as to whether supply-side strategies alone will serve to reduce poverty and social exclusion in any meaningful way.

3.2 The Labour Market, Policy and Canada's Aboriginal Population

As education and training is increasingly targeted toward the needs of the labour market, and as the market is increasingly polarized, there have been considerable implications for who is trained and for what. As I will explore further, the shrinking support is of particular concern for those most marginalized, such as Aboriginal second-chance learners. This demographic is particularly vulnerable because in a constricted policy environment, only those with the means to invest in their human capital have access to education and training that leads to high-skill/high-pay jobs. Not only do Aboriginal second-chance learners lack the financial means to invest in their human capital, they have a host of additional challenges that keep the best jobs far from their reach. So the neo-liberal achievement model of income determination—the notion that the mechanisms that determines an individuals' socioeconomic prospects are largely under his or her control, fails to consider the reality that for marginalized populations, 'achievement' is much more difficult (Bowles, Durlauf, & Hoff, 2006, p. 1).

While we would like to believe that class and race hold no barrier to education and employment attainment in the 21st century, evidence suggests that the high-skill/high-pay employment trajectory continues, in effect, to be reserved for the most privileged while the poor are increasingly left to vie for low-wage, precarious employment. This becomes very evident when we examine the employment and income attainment of the Aboriginal population.

Educational attainment continues to be comparatively low for Aboriginal people. For example, high school education is a minimum requirement for most jobs in the current market; however the percentage of Aboriginal Canadians not completing high school continues to be very high. According to the 2006 census, one in three Aboriginal people between 25 and 64 reported having not obtained a high school certificate.

The considerable inequality experienced by Canada's Aboriginal population calls for special attention when examining the design and delivery of government policy. In the previous pages, I showed a policy environment that is increasingly constricted, with fewer and fewer supports to address the poverty and social exclusion that so deeply affects Aboriginal people.

The level of unemployment and poverty among Aboriginal Canadians is an important indicator of the inadequacy of Canadian labour market policy and the prevalence of racialized poverty and inequality. According to the 2006 census, the most recent data available comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employment data, the unemployment rate in Canada was 6.6 percent in 2005. The rate was more than double for Aboriginal Canadians at 14.8 percent. For Aboriginal Canadians earning income from employment, the inequity was also considerable. As shown in Table 11, both male and female Aboriginal Canadians earned significantly less than non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Table 11
Income Distribution
Aboriginal and Total Population in Canada
15-years and older

	Aboriginal Male	Total Male	Aboriginal Female	Total Female
Median earnings	\$22,386	\$32,874	\$16,079	\$21,543
Median earnings full year/full time	\$39,501	\$46,778	\$30,938	\$35,830
Median income	\$18,714	\$32,224	\$15,654	\$20,460
Earnings as percent of income	82.4	79.7	70.3	71.
Unemployment Rate	16.1	6.5	13.5	6.6
Participation Rate	56.5	72.3	51.1	61.6

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

A more detailed description of the situation for Manitoba's Aboriginal population is provided later in this paper; however the national statistics show very clearly that inequality between Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations continues to exist. The central question to be explored is what governments are doing to rectify this injustice and the effectiveness of the emphasis on supply-side approaches for this particular population. But before doing so, it is imperative to better understand the characteristics of the labour market to get a better sense of what types of jobs are available.

3.3 Sector Analysis – Canada and Manitoba

As described in section 3.1, much of the justification for supply-side labour market interventions is built around the 'mismatch theory'—the idea that the future of the Canadian economy will depend on the availability of a highly skilled workforce and that we currently have a shortage of such workers. But an analysis of industrial activity in Canada suggests that there is some weakness in this argument. This is important for at least two reasons. One, since training is focused on the labour market, it is important to know where the jobs of the future are, and two, given the limitations of the policy

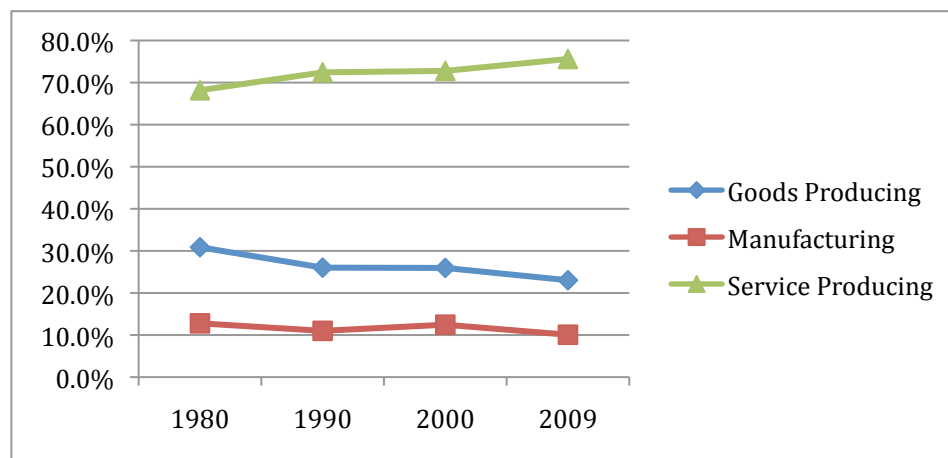
environment, trainers will seek out individuals that require the least training for their students. Commonly known as ‘creaming’, this policy comes out of a necessity to meet government’s stringent funding rules. Knowing what the future holds in terms of employment opportunity for individuals with limited resources and opportunity is essential to the shaping of future public policy.

As noted earlier in this chapter, some economists have argued that the structural mismatch between skills and labour market needs is overstated (Osberg & Lin, 2000). An analysis of labour market trends throughout the 90s and into the 21st century provides further evidence of this. We have seen an increase in the number of jobs in the service industry and a decrease in the number of jobs in the goods-producing sector. This can in part be attributed to trade agreements that have resulted in goods-producing jobs relocating to regions where labour is cheaper. While not all service sector jobs are low-wage and precarious, many are. According to Cranford and Vosko (2006), sectors including sales and service, health, social science, education, government service and religion have relatively high proportions of part-time temporary employees (p. 53). While precarious service sector jobs are on the increase, there has been a general decline in the manufacturing sector since 1987. The percentage of the employed working in manufacturing dropped from approximately 16 percent in 1987 to 14 percent in 2003. According to Statistics Canada, 322,000 manufacturing jobs were lost between 2004 and 2008. This is a concern because jobs in this sector have been generally full-time and higher wage (Cranford & Vosko, 2006, p. 53). In the service and goods-producing sectors, the greatest employment increases have been in the health and social services

sector, science and professional, and construction. However the service sector has seen a decline in public administration and education services.

A similar situation has emerged in Manitoba. As shown in Figure 1, since the 1980s there has been an increase in the number of jobs in the service industry and a decrease in the number of jobs in the goods-producing and manufacturing sectors.

Figure 1
Manitoba Labour Market



Statistics Canada Labour Force Review. 71F0004X_Table-008ivt

While not all service sector jobs are low-wage, many are. For example much of the growth in this sector has been in the accommodation and food sector (16.3 percent in 1980 to 26.4 percent in 2009) where jobs are precarious. In Manitoba, an increase in service sector jobs, low unemployment levels and low wages suggests that much of the employment most recently created in Manitoba is low-wage. It is also notable that there has been a decrease in well-paying public administration jobs (6.7 percent in 1980 to 5.8 percent in 2009) and while there has been an increase in professional, scientific technical sectors from 2.8 percent to 4.0 percent during this period, they continue to represent a very small percentage of jobs and they require significant levels of education and are not easily accessible to a good number of individuals in Manitoba's labour force.

3.3 Manitoba's Labour Force: Who They Are, Where They Live and What They Earn

The development of labour market policy in Manitoba has evolved in the context of an economy that has been relatively healthy since the latter part of the 1990s. Only very recently has Manitoba begun to feel the impact of the global recession, having weathered the storm much better than most provinces. At approximately 5.7 percent, the official unemployment rate in 2009 was lower than the national average of 8.5 percent (Statistics Canada, Cansim Table 282-0002). As illustrated in Table 12 and Figures 2 & 3, while unemployment has increased in the current economic downturn, it remains among its lowest since the 1970s and participation rates are at an all time high.

Table 12
Manitoba Labour Force

Year	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2005	2009
Unemployment Rate	4.7	5.5	8.6	7.7	9.3	7.3	5.0	4.8	5.7
Participation Rate	61.8	64.3	65.8	66.8	66.5	66.4	67.9	68.6	69

Source: Statistics Canada Cansim Table 282-0002

Figure 2

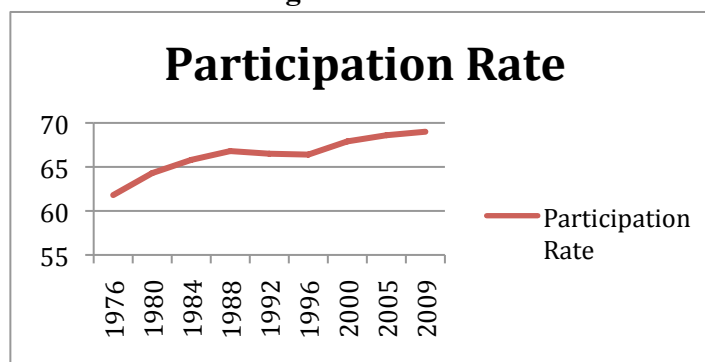
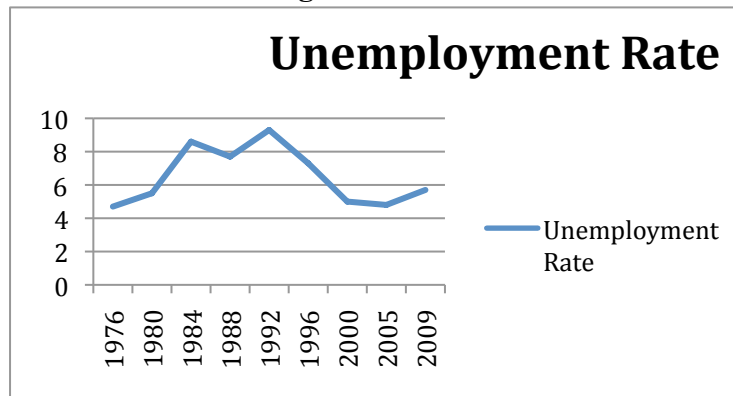


Figure 3



Relatively low unemployment rates for the past decade have raised concerns of labour shortages, skill shortages and wage pressures. The Government of Manitoba has responded by increasing immigration targets and implementing training policy designed to address skills shortages within the existing market. Although not yet to a level that would raise low-wage earners out of poverty, the current government has consistently increased the minimum wage since elected in 1999.

While low unemployment rates in Manitoba should mean an improved situation for everyone, many Manitobans have seen few benefits from the province's relatively good fortunes. Inequality of income continues to be a growing reality and many low-income Manitobans continue to be stuck in low-wage, precarious jobs with little hope for advancement.

The number of Manitobans living in poverty continues to be significant and the income gap continues to grow. The bottom 40 percent of Manitoba families earned less in the mid-2000s than they did in the late 1970s (Hudson & Fernandez, 2010). As seen in Tables 13 and 14, the share of income for the top quintile grew by 2.3 percent while those in the lowest quintile saw a very slight increase of 0.05 percent during this period. Income earners in the middle three quintiles saw a decrease in the share of income.

Table 13
Distribution of Income by Quintile—Manitoba (after tax)
2007 Constant Dollars (Economic Family—all units)

Year	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
1980	4.8	11.4	17.7	25.2	40.8
1990	5.9	11.6	17.9	25.1	39.5
2000	5.6	11	17.1	24.8	41.5
2004	5.5	11.2	16.9	24.2	42.1
2007	5.3	10.9	16.6	24.0	43.1

Table 14
Change in Percent of Income Share After Tax—Manitoba

Year	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
1980	4.8	11.4	17.7	25.2	40.8
2007	5.3	10.9	16.6	24.	43.1
Percentage change	0.5	-0.5	-1.1	-1.2	2.3

Source: Statistics Canada Cansim II Table 202-0701

Manitoba's poverty rate as measured by the LICO is consistently higher than the national rate. As shown in Table 15, Figure 4, and Figure 5, both the national rate and the Manitoba rate have declined in the past twenty years; however, Manitoba's rate declined more significantly (3.7 percent compared with 2.4 percent) until 2007, when both Canada and Manitoba rates dropped by 0.9 percent. The after-tax poverty rate decreased for Manitoba and Canada during this period. It is also notable that the gap between Canada and Manitoba has closed significantly since 1992, when it was widest.

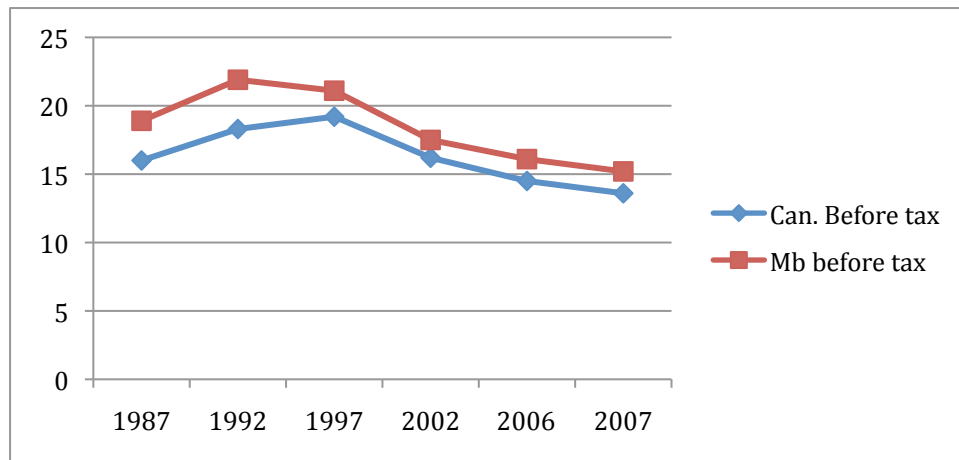
In 2007, Manitoba's before-tax poverty rate was higher than the national average, and the third highest rate of all provinces after British Columbia and Quebec. However it is also notable that the after-tax rate was slightly lower than the national average.

Table 15
Canada and Manitoba Poverty Rates
Percent Below LICO1987 - 2007

	1987	1992	1997	2002	2006	2007	Change1987-2007	Change 2006-2007
Can. before tax	16.0	18.3	19.2	16.2	14.5	13.6	-2.4	-0.9
Mb before tax	18.9	21.9	21.1	17.5	16.1	15.2	-3.7	-0.9
Can after tax	13.6	16.1	15.8	12.2	11.4	9.8	-3.8	-1.6
Mb after tax	11.9	13.3	15.2	11.6	10.5	9.2	-2.7	-1.3
Gap before tax	2.9	3.6	1.9	1.3	1.6	1.6		
Gap after tax	1.7	2.8	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.6		

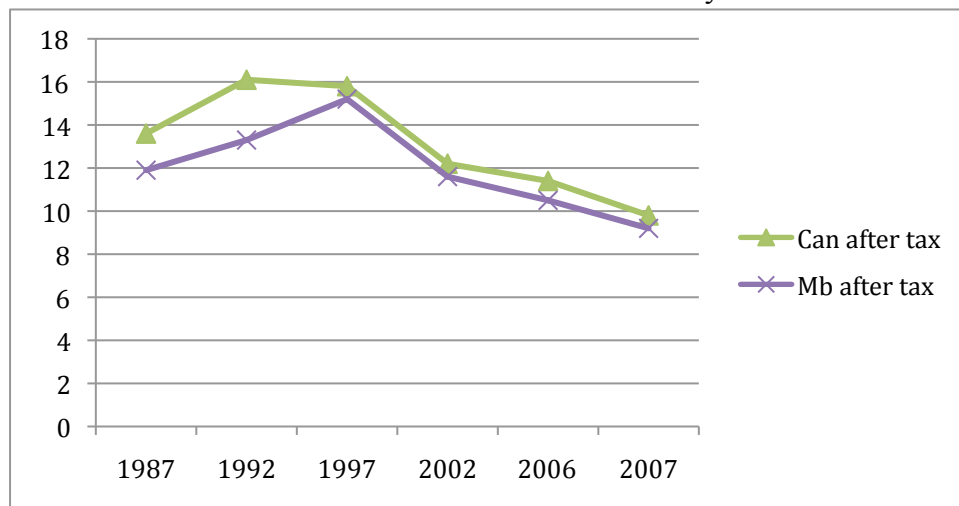
Source: Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-0802

Figure 4
Canada Manitoba Before Tax Poverty



Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-0802

Figure 5
Canada Manitoba After Tax Poverty



Source: Statistics Canada Cansim Table 202-0802

In addition to the number of people living in poverty at a particular time, it is also important to know poverty's depth and duration. In 2006, the average poor person in Manitoba had a yearly income that was \$7,700 below the after-tax LICO. In 2007, this improved somewhat with an average earnings \$6,400 below the LICO. Despite this improvement, many Manitobans continue to live *far* below the LICO.

3.3.1 Geographic and Demographic Context

An understanding of the Manitoba labour market requires further analysis of the geographic and demographic dynamics within the province, especially as it pertains to Aboriginal people. Acknowledging that labour market statistics generally tell a very limited story, they can be broken down regionally and demographically to provide a more accurate picture of the employment situation in Manitoba.

Poverty in the North

Disparities in Manitoba are most pronounced when comparing north/south regions and communities heavily populated by Aboriginal vs. low-Aboriginal populated regions. In Northern Manitoba there is a high incidence of unemployment. According Census 2006, unemployment in the northern Burntwood region is 15.7 percent, compared with 5.5 percent in all of Manitoba. Unemployment is especially high in northern First Nations. Census data (2006) also shows that Manitobans living in southern Manitoba do better generally; however, this is not the case with southern First Nations. For example, the southern First Nation of Roseau River had an unemployment rate of 32.5 percent, while the nearby City of Winkler had a rate of 3 percent.

In spite of the higher costs associated with living in the North, 2006 Census data show a definite north/south divide when it comes to incomes. For example, the median

income of all individuals 15 years and over in Northern Manitoba's Burntwood region is \$15,395, compared with \$24,194 in all of Manitoba. However there is also a significant gap in incomes in northern communities where mining is the dominant industry. For example, in the mining community of Thompson, 13 percent of individuals over 15 years of age reported income exceeding \$80,000 in 2005 while 25 percent earned less than \$15,000. It is also notable that the median age in the Burntwood region is 24 years, compared with 38 years across Manitoba. There is a further gap in educational attainment. According to Census 2006, 47.7 percent of individuals between 25 and 34 years in the Burntwood region "have no certificate, diploma or degree", compared with 16.4 percent of the same age cohort in all of Manitoba.

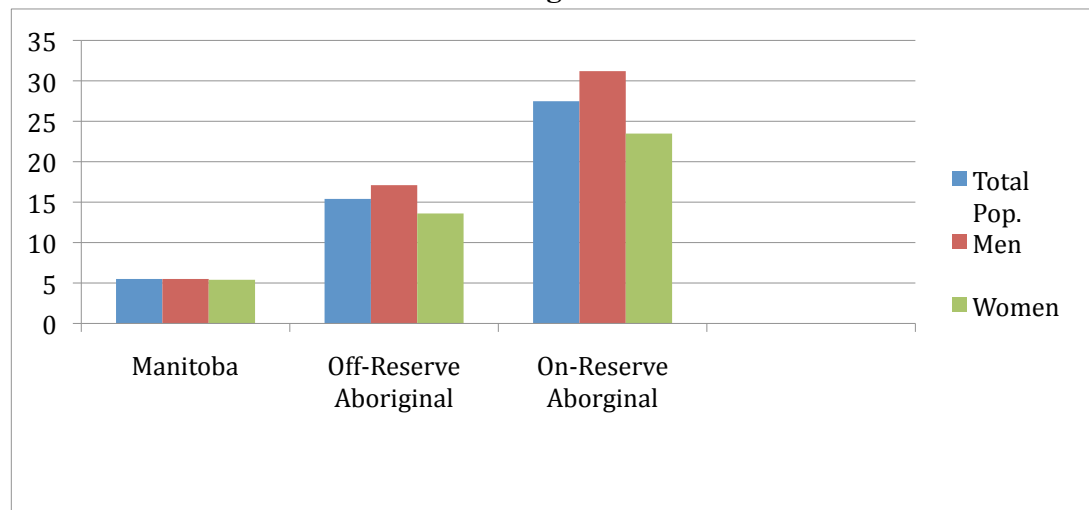
Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Comparisons

The reality remains that there is a dramatic difference in unemployment when comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations both on- and off-reserve. There is also a very different reality for those in northern regions vs. Manitoba as a whole. Northern communities have both large Aboriginal populations and high unemployment. So, while official numbers show that Manitoba is doing well compared to other provinces, when regional and Aboriginal statistics are considered, the picture becomes quite different.

Manitoba's Aboriginal people do not participate in the labour force at the same rate as the total population: in 2005, 67.3 percent of the total population participated, while only 59.2 percent of the Aboriginal population participated (Statistics Canada n.d. [b]).

On-reserve Aboriginal workers have particularly high unemployment rates. As an example, data was collected for six Manitoba First Nations, including some remote northern reserves and some in the south. Figure 6 shows the results. Although the results are based on averages of only six of a total fifty-five First Nations they do reveal the severe depth of unemployment on Manitoba reserves.

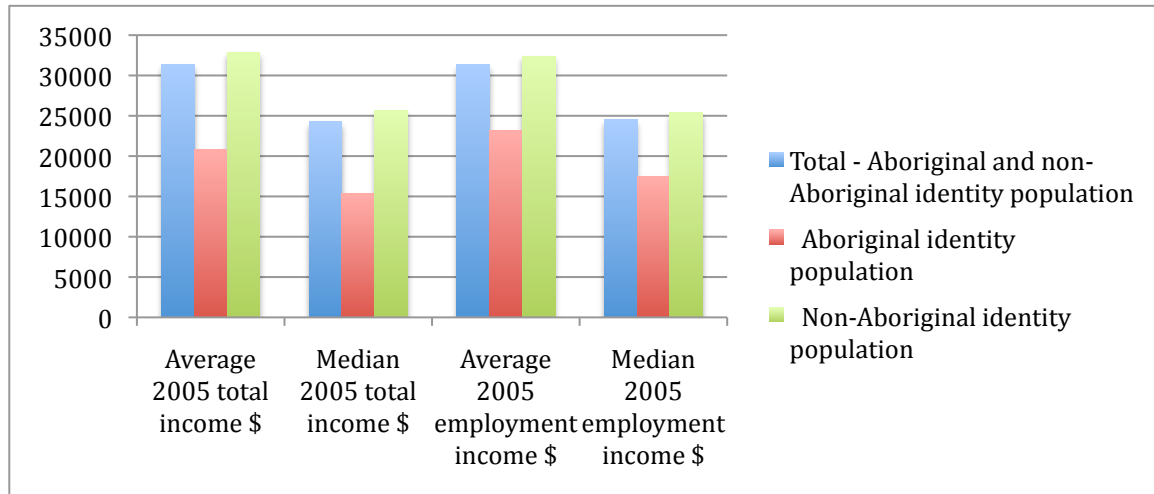
Figure 6
Comparison of Unemployment Rates: Manitoba; Off-reserve Aboriginal and On-reserve Aboriginal



Source: Fernandez and MacKinnon, 2010

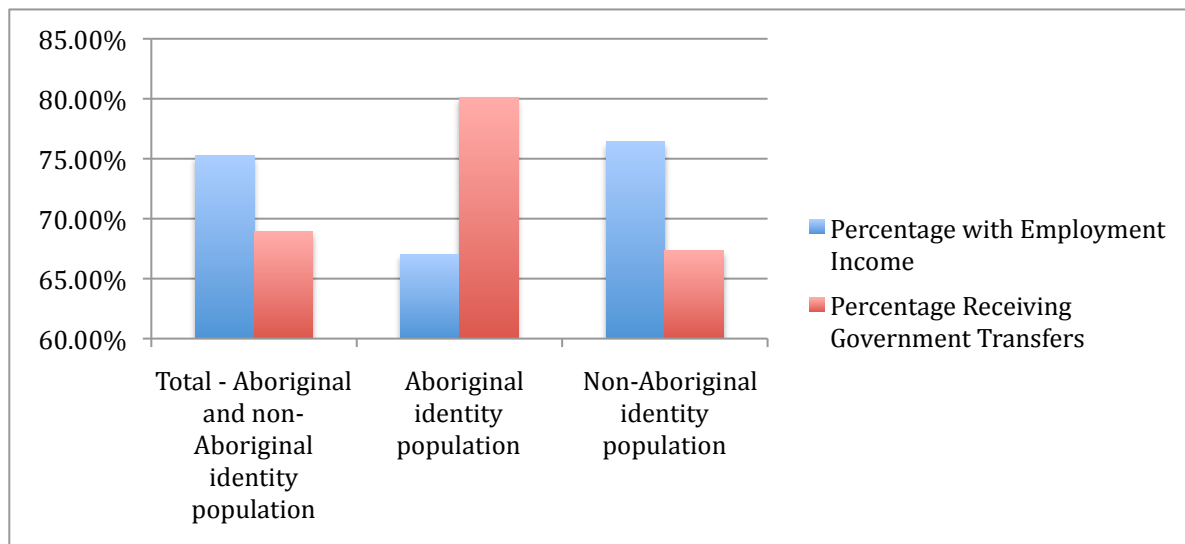
Figure 7 shows median incomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identity populations as well as average income from employment. These data demonstrate the continued income disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Figure 7
Manitoba Average Income - Aboriginal Identity and Non-Aboriginal



Census Canada 2006 Community Profiles

Figure 8
Employment Income and Government Transfers
Aboriginal Identity and Non-Aboriginal



Census Canada 2006 Community Profiles

Regional disparity between the northern and southern regions of the provinces is an ongoing reality in Manitoba. It is not coincidental that the North is also home to a

high percentage of Aboriginal people. For example, the northern Burntwood region includes a high representation of Aboriginal people living both on and off reserves—76 percent of those living in the Burntwood region identify as Aboriginal, compared with approximately 15.5 percent of the Manitoba population generally (Statistics Canada 2006 Census Community Profiles). Aboriginal people are dramatically over-represented among those living in poverty. The rate of Aboriginal poverty is 29 percent, almost three times Manitoba's overall poverty rate (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Aboriginal people make up approximately 10 percent of Winnipeg's population yet constitute 25 percent of those living in poverty (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). The median annual income for Aboriginal workers aged 15+ in Manitoba was \$15,246, a mere 63 percent of the median income of \$24,194 for the overall population (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). The Aboriginal unemployment rate was 15.4 percent in Manitoba, almost three times the rate for the overall population (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). The situation was worse on reserve where the unemployment rate was 26 percent (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Although they make up less than 13 percent of the working-age population, Aboriginal people represent over 30 percent of the total unemployed in Manitoba (Statistics Canada 2006 Census).

As shown in Figure 11, Aboriginal women are consistently the poorest of the poor and in 2006, Aboriginal children were almost three times more likely to be poor than non-Aboriginal children (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Aboriginal children under six had a poverty rate (based on before-tax LICO) of 56 percent compared to 19 percent for non-Aboriginal children under six (Statistics Canada 2006 Census).

As will be further discussed, Aboriginal people face many barriers to gaining access to and retaining adequate employment, including lower completion rates of formal education. In an economic climate in which education is critical to securing well-paid employment, 38 percent of Aboriginal people aged 25-34 years have no certificate, degree, or diploma, compared with 16 percent of the overall population (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Thirteen and a half percent of the Aboriginal population has a university certificate, diploma, or degree, compared with 23 percent of the general population (Statistics Canada 2006 Census).

Gender, Age and Family Type

Although overall poverty rates have decreased in recent years, the gender gap in poverty persists. There are more women than men living in poverty in Manitoba. This holds true for all family types and age groups (except for males under eighteen). Elderly and Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and mental illness, and female newcomers are among the poorest of the poor in our province. The gender gap in poverty within the overall poor population is relatively narrow, with 68,000 women living in poverty compared to 58,000 men (Donner, Isfeld, Haworth-Brockman & Forsey, 2008, as cited in Fernandez & MacKinnon, 2010). However, the gender gap among seniors is much wider for senior women compared with senior men, and for women aged 18-64 in families where women are the main earner (Donner et al. as cited in Fernandez & MacKinnon, 2010).

There continues to be disparity in incomes between men and women. In 2005, women's employment income was 66 percent of that earned by men—women earners fifteen years and older earned \$21,543 compared to \$32,874 for men (Statistics Canada,

2006 Census). Aboriginal women, immigrant women and women living with disabilities earned even less (CCPA, 2009).

For too many women, living in poverty means not being able to provide a safe, secure home and adequate nutritious food for their children. This in turn means living with the constant fear of having their children placed in government care. Poverty also makes women more vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Among all economic family types, two-parent families with children and with a single-earner were the most likely to be in poverty in 2007, with 26.4 percent living below the after-tax LICO. Female lone-parent families were next, with 21.9 percent living in poverty. In most other Canadian provinces, female lone-parent families had higher rates of poverty than two-parent families with children. This is also the case in Manitoba, but only when looking at the before-tax poverty rate. This is because the province has made significant progress, particularly over the last decade, in reducing the poverty rate for female lone-parent families. The before-tax rate fell from 69 percent in 1996 to 37.5 percent in 2006, but increased to 40.7 percent in 2007 (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). Manitoban's tax and transfer system has played an important role in lowering the poverty rate for female lone-parent families. In this same period, the tax and transfer system helped reduce the poverty rate for female lone-parent families from 57.9 percent in 1996 to 21 percent in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2006 Census). The Manitoba rate was significantly below the national rate of 28 percent in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2006 Census).

Between 1990 and 2006, Manitoba had the highest child poverty rate of all provinces five times out of seventeen (MacKinnon, 2010b). Between 1999 and 2005, 38

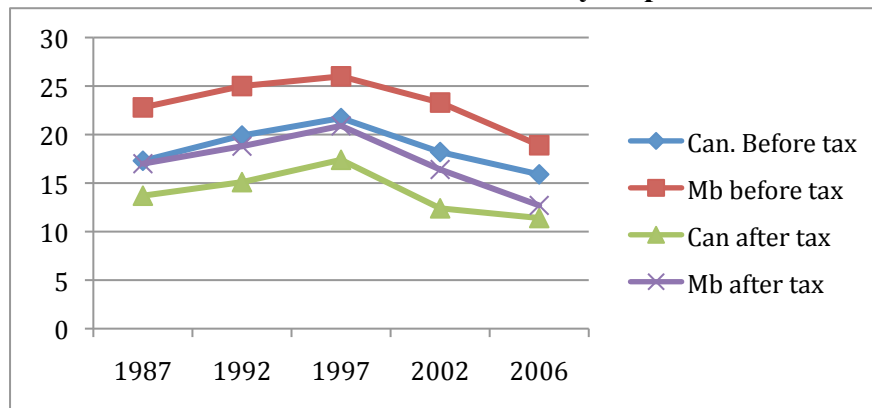
percent of all Manitoba children lived in poverty for at least one year, 27 percent lived in poverty for one to three years, and 11.3 percent for four or more years (MacKinnon, 2010b). Manitoba was among the three worst provinces every year except 1992 and 2004 (MacKinnon, 2010b). In 1991, the child poverty rate peaked at 24.2 percent, the worst in Canada, and hovered around 20 percent for much of the rest of the decade (MacKinnon, 2010b). By 2006, when the national average was 11.3 percent, Manitoba's rate of child poverty had dropped to 12.4 percent, the third worst in Canada (SPCW 2008, as cited in MacKinnon, 2010b). In 2007, Manitoba's rate was 11.1 percent, compared with 9.5 percent nationally (MacKinnon, 2010b). Manitoba had the second highest after-tax rate in 2007, second to British Columbia. However, as shown in Table 16 and Figure 10, the Manitoba/Canada before- and after-tax gap is closing (Statistics Canada Table 202-0802).

Table 16
Child Poverty (LICO)—Canada and Manitoba 1987-2007

	1987 (%)	1992 (%)	1997 (%)	2002 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)
Can. Before tax	17.3	19.9	21.7	18.2	15.9	15.0
Mb before tax	22.8	25.0	26.0	23.3	18.9	18.8
Can after tax	13.7	15.1	17.4	12.4	11.4	9.5
Mb after tax	17.0	18.8	20.9	16.4	12.7	11.1
Gap before tax	5.5	5.1	4.3	5.1	3.0	3.8
Gap after tax	3.3	3.7	3.5	4.0	1.3	1.6

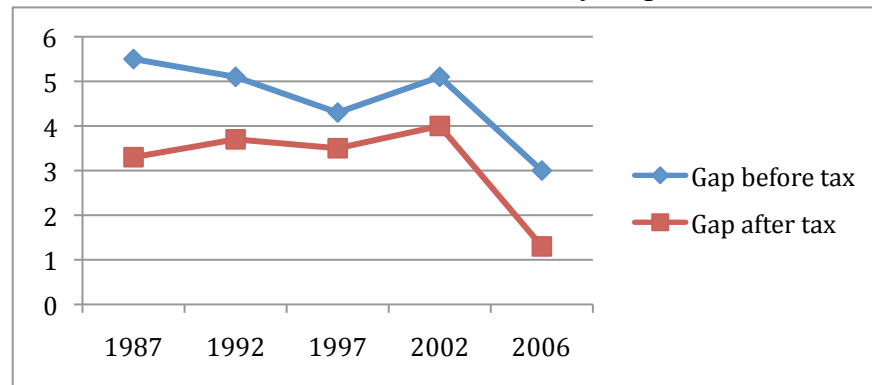
Source: Statistics Canada. Cansim Table 202-0802

Figure 9
Canada Manitoba Poverty Gap



Source: Statistics Canada. Cansim Table 202-0802

Figure 10
Canada Manitoba Poverty Gap



Source: Statistics Canada. Cansim Table 202-0802

High rates of child poverty matter because, as Ross and Roberts (1999) have shown, children who grow up in poor families are, on average, less likely to do well in life than are children who grow up in non-poor families (p. 36). The lasting effects of child poverty include poor health and hygiene, a lack of a nutritious diet, absenteeism from school and low scholastic achievement, behavioural and mental problems, low housing standards, and in later years few employment opportunities and a persistently low economic status.

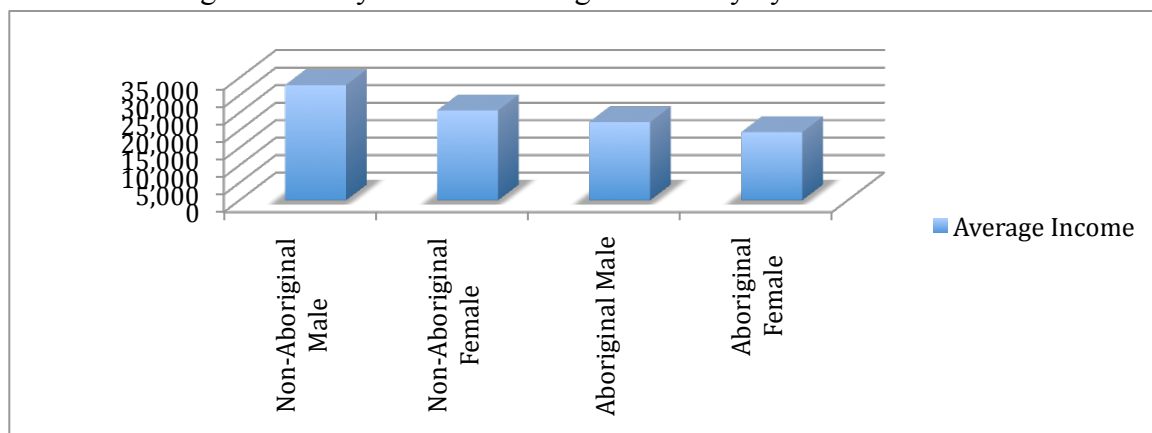
Urban Poverty

Just as poverty is concentrated in First Nations, it is also concentrated in cities. Pockets of poverty are found in Winnipeg neighbourhoods as well as in smaller cities like Thompson and Brandon. However, the most concentrated urban poverty can be found in Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods. Spatially concentrated poverty is particularly damaging as individuals and their families are more likely to be trapped in an intergenerational cycle of poverty that becomes particularly difficult to escape (Sampson 2009; Silver 2010).

For those low-income Manitobans whose major source of income is through employment, there have been some improvements. For example, the rate of full-time workers earning under \$10 dropped from 13.5 percent in 1993 to 11.6 percent in 2004 (JIC, 2005). However, the overall rate remains high with 27.2 percent of all workers and 17 percent of workers 25 years and over, earning less than \$10.25 per hour (JIC, 2005).

There have been some improvements for Aboriginal Manitobans as well. In 2009, the employment rate among Aboriginal people rose while it fell among their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Aboriginal people living in Manitoba had the highest employment rate of all the provinces at 71.8 percent (Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey). However the unemployment rate continues to be close to double that of the non-Aboriginal rate with an increase from 7.3 percent in 2008 to 8.6 percent in 2009 compared with 4.2 percent to 5.2 percent for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey). As shown in Figure 11, Aboriginal people continue to earn less than non-Aboriginal people in general, with Aboriginal women faring the worst.

Figure 11
Average Income
Aboriginal Identity and Non-Aboriginal Identity by Sex



Source: Census of Canada, 2006, Profile of Income and Earnings

The above data very clearly shows that disparity continues to exist in Manitoba and Aboriginal people are among those most affected by persistent poverty that has intergenerational effects. As I will demonstrate further, it takes much more than short-term training to break the cycle of poverty that so many Aboriginal families find themselves caught in. The following section will examine how the provincial government has responded to poverty through labour market policies.

4 Manitoba's Policy Response

As noted, while decentralization of labour market policy theoretically gives provinces room to manoeuvre, poorer provinces like Manitoba are highly dependent upon the assistance of the federal government. Provinces are also highly influenced by policies in other regions and for Manitoba, this means a relentless pressure to conform to the neo-liberal framework. In this regard, Manitoba provides an interesting case example given its historical shifts between Conservative and NDP governments. One might expect significant shifts in policy after the NDP gained power in 1999 following a Conservative government throughout the 1990s. With regard to labour market policy, the NDP has introduced some interesting initiatives integrating demand-side strategies. These are described in chapter nine. At the same time it can be argued that the provincial NDP government has not strayed far from the neo-liberal short-term, supply-focused punitive approach that was set in motion federally and embraced provincially by their Conservative predecessors.

4.1 Manitoba Embraces 'Workfare'

Manitoba's Conservative government took full advantage of the 'flexibility' created when Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) was eliminated in 1996 and replaced with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). These changes allowed them to further cut back supports to the poor, a process that begun in 1993. At that time the Conservative government began to reduce assistance, justifying their action as an effort to standardize provincial/municipal welfare rates. In 1993, the Province of Manitoba amended the Social Allowances Act by:

- Reducing exemptions from \$240 a month to \$130 for families and from \$125 to

\$95 a month for single people (exemptions refers to the amount of money social assistance recipients are able to earn in addition to their assistance. Money earned beyond the exemption amount is deducted in full from the recipient's social assistance payment.)

- Eliminating the \$205 monthly exemption on child support payments received during their first three months on welfare.
- Eliminating income tax refunds from the list of exempt income.
- Eliminating provincial income supplements of up to \$30 a month per child in low income families and a provincial supplement of more than \$100 every three months for people 55 and older from the list of exempt income. (Mackinnon, 1999)

Also in 1993, supplemental health insurance coverage for welfare recipients was cut back; medication and services previously covered for recipients were trimmed; major restorative dental services were subject to new dollar limits and new welfare recipients had a three month waiting period imposed on them for non-emergency dental and vision care. As will be further described, special welfare programs for students ended, resulting in the return of over 1,000 people to social assistance.

Cutbacks continued to mount in 1994. Shelter allowances were cut by \$14 a month for employable single people; the \$30 supplement received monthly by single people and childless couples was cut; the income definition used to determine tax credits was broadened to include incomes previously exempt (including Social Assistance). In effect, tax credits for welfare recipients were reduced and therefore the supplement paid directly to Social Assistance clients through Family Services was reduced. Grants to welfare organizations, day care facilities and nurseries were cut; special needs policies which included newborn allowances, assistance to purchase appliances, moving expenses, school supplies, household start up needs, bedding, beds and other extraordinary expenses were eliminated; there were further cuts to the range of

prescription medication covered by social assistance.

The long list of cutbacks to an already meagre program was highly criticized by anti-poverty activists as being punitive and mean spirited. The Conservative government's perception of the poor became most evident with the creation of the Welfare Fraud Line in 1994—a 'service' designed to encourage the reporting of suspected fraudulent welfare clients. Following U.S. example, in 1995, single mothers became the target of future cuts and administrative controls with the inception of welfare reform programs designed to move single mothers into the workforce.

On June 4, 1996, the Minister of Family Services introduced Bill 36, the *Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act*. The intent of the Bill was to amend the Social Allowances Act in three ways.

1. To provide for a one-tier system in the city of Winnipeg, which would transfer responsibility for City of Winnipeg welfare recipients to the provincial system.
2. To provide direction for welfare reform and,
3. To update the Act with regard to the elimination of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP).

The name of the Act was changed to the *Employment and Income Assistance Act*, reflecting the ideological shift and the emphasis on work that has been characteristic of 'welfare reform'. Section 5.4 of the Employment and Income Assistance Act gave the provincial government the power to implement 'work for welfare' policies, previous not allowed under CAP but fair game with the passing of the CHST. With regard to obligations regarding employment, Section 5.4(1) states that

an applicant, recipient or dependant as specified in the regulations has an obligation to satisfy the director or the municipality, as the case may be, that he or she (a) has met the employment obligations set out in the regulations that he or she is required to meet and (b) has undertaken any

employability enhancement measure as set out in the regulations that he or she is required to undertake... [Where employment obligations are not met section 5.4(2) allows the director to] ...to deny, reduce, suspend or discontinue the income assistance, municipal assistance or general assistance otherwise payable, in accordance with the regulations.

The passing of Bill 36 meant that individuals could be denied assistance if they failed to “meet the employment obligations to the satisfaction of the director or municipality” and this was a fundamental change from previous policy. Several other changes were introduced in 1996 including:

- A reduction of rates from \$458 to \$411 per month for single employable people and from \$774 to \$692 for childless couples.
- A reduction in benefits for clients who did not meet “reasonable” training or employment expectations. All new applicants were now required to sign personalized training and employability plans.
- A potential loss of up to \$100 a month for heads of families who did not meet work expectations.
- A reduction of \$23 million in welfare spending was announced in the 1996 Manitoba budget.^{xiv}
- The exemption of provincial tax credits paid to about 18,500 people on welfare in Winnipeg was reduced.
- The City of Winnipeg reduced its enhanced social assistance rates for children in 1996. They eliminated Christmas allowances for municipal welfare recipients and instead donated \$135,000 to the Christmas Cheer Board.

In 1997 municipal rates for children were reduced to provincial rates.

In 1999, the provincial government introduced Bill 40, bringing in changes that would allow the government to deny financial assistance to individuals refusing to participate in addiction treatment when ordered to do so and requiring recipients to attend parenting programs and training and/or formally volunteer in the community up to 35 hours per week, in exchange for their benefits. But the Conservative government was defeated later that year and the New Democratic Party (NDP) chose not to implement Bill

40. They cancelled the welfare fraud line and expressed their intent to implement policies that would support and encourage, rather than punish the poor. However, as will be demonstrated later in this paper, the punitive nature of the program remains intact.

4.2 Shifting Priorities—Emphasis on Active Policies

With the reduction in passive assistance came a shift to active measures based on a policy of ‘work first’, to ‘encourage’ the unemployed to find paid work as quickly as possible. This policy remains in place. Only when EIA participants demonstrate that they do not have ‘marketable skills’ will they be supported through training, though not necessarily the training of their choice. This is indicative of the emphasis on creating a flexible and mobile work force with the skills that the market demands. While the idea of focusing training efforts to meet labour market needs is not new, the promotion of supply-side strategies complemented with de-regulation, and scaling back on supports, has given employers greater power in the worker/employer relationship. As previously discussed, in an increasingly polarized economy, supply-side strategies are far from a sufficient solution to poverty and inequality. Nonetheless, there are things that governments can do on the supply-side that have proven to be effective in improving outcomes for the poorest and most marginalized. But it will require governments to embrace long-term strategies that may not show quick results.

As noted in chapter 3, it is also helpful to know where ‘good’ labour market opportunities exist so that training resources can be allocated toward programs that train in those sectors. But the extent to which Manitoba is targeting training resources in this direction is not clear. In fact an assessment of the types of training available to marginalized workers shows that priority seems to be given to those sectors where

training is quickest, and this leads many second-chance learners into low-wage jobs in the service sector.

For example, in the late 1990s, the number of customer contact centres—otherwise known as ‘call centres’, exploded in Manitoba. According to the Province of Manitoba, there are currently 10,600 persons employed in the industry in Manitoba (Government of Manitoba, Entrepreneurship Training and Trade, 2010). The Manitoba government has provided the sector with millions of dollars in training supports over the past ten years. Provision of training dollars has been central to enticing large customer contact firms to locate their businesses in Manitoba (Guard 2006).

But as Guard (2006) shows, this employer-provided training is expensive and the outcomes are not clearly evident (p.17). The cost of a four-six week program at the time she conducted her research was “about \$2,825 per person—\$430 more than the \$2,395 the University of Manitoba charges for six twelve-week courses that comprise its program in Customer Contact Centre Management. At the conclusion of that program, a U of M graduate has a university certificate whereas a graduate of employer-run training has, at best, a call-centre job” (Guard 2006, p.12).

In 2011, we hear less about the call centre industry as a panacea for the Manitoba economy. While there are a variety of call centre jobs and wage ranges, the companies that received the bulk of attention and government support in the 1990s failed to bring the prosperity they promised. For example, millions of dollars were invested in Fanueil (now Inspyre Solutions) with the promise of bringing in excess of four hundred jobs to Winnipeg. Inspyre now employs less than two hundred workers. Recent job postings are limited to short-term and part-time positions paying \$10.05-\$11.55 per hour. Convergys,

another major centre lured to Manitoba in the 1990s with millions in provincial training dollars, has since closed their doors in both Brandon and Winnipeg.

For EIA clients, opportunities to be trained for good jobs are very limited and the emphasis is on jobs that require less than one year training (Manitoba Family Services, 2009). While more recently the Province has introduced programs that appear on the surface to be more flexible, agencies report that they have yet to see this improve opportunities for their ‘clients’. In particular, it remains near impossible for single ‘employables’ on EIA to obtain financial support for training of any kind.

Training focused at the low-wage service industry is in part a result of the shifting market. Essentially, this is where jobs are being created. While trends in Manitoba confirm the concerns raised by many analysts who have been sceptical of the promise of the new economy, Manitoba implemented a Training Strategy in 2001 reflecting something very different. In effect, Manitoba policy falls in line with the aspirations articulated by virtually every other province—the desire for a high-skill workforce that embraces ‘lifelong learning’.

The Strategy articulates three goals:

- Goal A Build a Skilled Workforce Aligned with Labour Market Needs and Emerging Opportunities**
- Goal B Enhance Access to Relevant Learning Opportunities for All Manitobans**
- Goal C Create an Integrated and High Quality Education and Training System** (Education and Training, 2001, p.2)

The thrust of the Strategy is not surprising given its general non-partisan appeal. But it is difficult to see how this strategy aligns with the short-term emphasis on programming available to the poorest Manitobans who would arguably be the biggest

benefactors of each of the goals outlined in the Strategy if policy and programs were developed with them in mind. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. In spite of goals like those outlined in the Manitoba strategy, which are similar to goals outlined by other governments, policies and programs suggest that governments of all stripes are less concerned with learning for its inherent value than they are with the practicality of learning as it relates to employability. As described earlier, in the current political economy, learning is centrally focused on knowledge that is of value to the labour market. Learning for learning sake is less valued—unless you have the resources to pay for it on your own. It is also interesting that training strategies like the Manitoba strategy emphasize aims to develop a high-skill workforce, when this market for such workers is quite limited. While there may be some specific labour shortages in such sectors, Manitoba's problem is not as much a problem of a shortage of workers as it is the predominance of a low-wage labour market, and the lack of willingness to adequately train those most in need for good paying jobs in sectors where there is a shortage. This raises some important questions about how well government strategies are responding to both the needs of workers and the market.

In terms of demand, the manner in which governments respond to the reality of the growing low-wage market is where ideology becomes transparent. For neo-liberals, the answer lies in further de-regulation, privatization, lower corporate taxes and the development of a skilled flexible labour force. This would theoretically entice high-skill industries and good paying jobs to Manitoba. But the reality in 2011 is that in spite of a very competitive environment, Manitoba has not become a centre of high-skill/high-paying jobs. Instead, income disparity continues to grow, Aboriginal Manitobans

continue to experience high rates of unemployment, and many new immigrants and women are stuck in low-wage jobs with little hope for advancement. This would suggest that the current approach to labour market policy requires a sober second thought. On the supply side, Manitoba's Training Strategy will need to be reviewed to determine what changes are necessary to more effectively improve outcomes for excluded populations. On the demand side, a more concerted effort is required to align job creation to broader poverty reduction goals.

4.3 Privatization of Training

Another important dynamic worth noting is the increased presence of the private sector in training design and delivery which began in the 1980s. This surge coincided with the Mulroney Government's Canadian Jobs Strategy and their "preference for the private sector to create job opportunities and offer training" (Prince & Rice, 1989, p. 249). Most interesting, however, is that this does not mean that the private sector scaled up their investment in training their workers. In fact a 1990 report titled *Good Jobs Bad Jobs* showed that firms provided very little training for their employees, and that which was provided was "heavily concentrated on high-skilled, well-educated male workers" (Economic Council of Canada, 1990, p. 11; Swift & Peerla, 1996, p. 32). What changed with the Jobs Strategy, consistent with the ideological shift generally, was a change in policy direction that promised to create a more flexible and regionally responsive policy environment with a focus on private sector job creation.

The argument in favour of encouraging the private sector to become engaged in training was, and is, that industry knows best what skills they require and therefore are in the best position to develop and deliver training programs. From this perspective,

governments can best encourage the private sector to create jobs by giving them access to training resources. As a result, public funds were increasingly redirected from public to private spheres with emphasis on developing firm specific skills.

The shift to private sector training in Manitoba is reflected through an increase in the number of Private (for profit) Vocational Institutions (PVI) beginning in the early 1980s (see table 17). These for-profit establishments offer short-term training that is specifically designed to fit the parameters of government programs such as Employment Insurance and Employment and Income Assistance, where they receive their funding.

Table 17
Manitoba's Private Vocational Institutions (PVI)
of Registered Institutions 1981–2006

YEAR	# OF INSTITUTIONS
1981	28
1982	33
1983	35
1984	36
1985	38
1986	38
1987	42
1988	43
1989	45
1990	42
1991	40
1992	37
1993	43
1994	41
1995	44
1996	47
1997	53
1998	56
1999	51
2000	49
2001	50
2002	49
2003*	41
2004	38
2005	38
2006 (as of Aug. 23/06)	35

Source: Government of Manitoba Department of Advanced Education and Training, 2006

*New legislation, *The Private Vocational Institutions Act*, came into effect and excluded the registration of correspondence/distance education institutions that did not maintain a head office in Manitoba.

Building from the ideological perspective that the private sector can always do better than the public sector, the federal government opened the doors to the private sector. Entrepreneurs quickly responded with a variety of short-term training opportunities, including modelling, bartending, law enforcement and security, truck driver training, hairstyling and office administration training. It is notable that Gary Filmon served as vice-president and president of the private for-profit Success Business College in Winnipeg between 1969-80, before serving as the Premier of Manitoba between 1988 and 1999. The number of PVIs was at its highest under the Filmon government.

It should also be noted that a wide variety of vocational training, including much of what is offered by PVIs, has in the past and is currently offered at Manitoba's three community colleges and technical vocation schools, as well as by a number of non-profit institutions. There is no evidence that the private model has been more effective than the public model and it is more difficult to access information about private entities than it is for public and non-profit entities, even though both models rely heavily on public funds.

Whether through private for-profit or non-profit, the trend toward industry-designed training is pervasive. Crouch et al. (2001) argue that the increasing presence of industry in the design and delivery of training is misguided and will not serve public interest well—it will not have an “overall effect on the vocational ability for a whole society except for serendipitous fallout” (p. 8). In fact, emphasis on industry as the deciding force of who gets trained for what and how they get trained has serious implications. As noted by Crouch et al. (2001), “Business firms are equipped to maximize not collective objectives, but their own profitability...There is therefore a

dilemma: achievement of a collective goal depends on actions by private actors who have no necessary incentive to achieve that goal” (p. 8).

In terms of offering consumers ‘more choices’, another argument for private training, it appears that marketing may have more of an influence on potential trainees’ selection than actual educational outcomes. The promise of training that will result in high-paying jobs, in as little as a few months, can be hard to resist for unemployed and/or low-wage workers, even if similar training is available through public institutions.

In an effort to regulate the PVI sector, Manitoba’s NDP government introduced the Private Vocational Institution Act in 2003. However, the primary purpose of the Act is to protect students from losing their tuition should the institution dissolve. The Act is silent about evaluation of outcomes. Although consumers might be led to believe that to be a registered PVI means that the organization has passed some stringent tests, this is not the case. Registered PVIs are not necessarily endorsed by government. Nonetheless, the 2003 Act may have had some impact on the industry as the number of PVIs declined significantly from 49 in 2002 to 35 in 2006 after the legislation took effect (Table 17).

Public delivery of training continues to be the dominant model in Manitoba, although it has become increasingly common for adult education and training to be delivered through smaller, non-profit community-based training models. Some of these models have shown to be especially effective for Aboriginal adult learners (Silve, Klyne & Simard, 2006), and they are increasingly seen as valid alternatives to mainstream models. The provincial government recognizes their importance and includes them in the Manitoba Adult Literacy Act. This legislation, enacted in 2009, ensures that the delivery of adult literacy will remain in the non-profit sector.

It is also notable that many training programs are moving toward the integration of more holistic and culturally sensitive curriculum in recognition of the complexity of issues facing many Aboriginal adults. Such models and the challenges that they encounter are described in Chapter 9.

4.4 The 21st Century Training Paradigm: Choice and Flexibility for Whom and to What End?

The basis for changes to training policy has been the promise to make training more relevant to regional differences. Evolving from the 1996 federal Employment Insurance (EI) Act, which called for agreements with the provinces regarding the administration of active labour market measures for the unemployed, federal/provincial bi-partite agreements are now in place across the country. The EI Act also specified that training could no longer be funded through payments made directly to public or private training facilities but rather it should be funded, “in whole or in part, through payments flowing directly to the client in the form of grants or contributions, and/or loans or loan guaranties, for the payment of approved services; and/or, with vouchers given to the client to be exchanged for approved services.” The stated rationale was to give individuals greater control over their training choices, but it also effectively made room for the private sector to scale up their involvement in training. Since training dollars were now attached to individuals, marketing a ‘product’ to consumers became important and the training ‘business’ became increasingly appealing to entrepreneurs looking for a niche.

Under the EI Act, the federal government maintained responsibility for training of Aboriginal people. In 1999, it signed Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA) with eighteen Aboriginal organizations across Canada. In

Manitoba, AHRDAs were signed with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Centre of Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD), Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), Manitoba Keewatinowi Inninew Okimakaanak (MKO). These agreements have given Aboriginal communities greater control over training funding and this has also had an impact on the design, delivery and marketing strategies of vocational trainers.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal training agencies (non-profit and for-profit) specifically target training for Aboriginal students, allowing them to access AHRDA funds. In 2005, Manitoba signed a 5-year Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA) with the federal government which would be a supplement to the LMDA and could potentially broaden the scope of programs to assist non-EI clients to include social assistance clients and the working poor. Manitoba's Minister of Advanced Education and Training praised the agreement as "good news for the people of Manitoba... 'Education First' is the cornerstone of Manitoba's Framework for Economic Growth. By supporting current efforts towards a flexible and responsible labour force, this Agreement will help ensure that Manitobans have continuous opportunities to prosper" (Government of Canada News Centre, 2005).

The new agreement outlined goals that were not included in the LMDA, and as such, were not adequately being addressed through that agreement. Under the LMPA, the governments agreed to an emphasis on:

- Expansion and enhancement of apprenticeships;
- Labour market integration of recent immigrants
- Literacy and essential skills
- Workplace skills development
- Increased workplace participation by Aboriginal Canadians
- Assistance to others facing labour market barriers (e.g. low income individuals persons with disabilities and youth at risk)

While the new agreement expanded its parameters to include individuals facing labour market barriers and not just EI qualifiers, an extremely important addition, it continues to focus on very limited supply-side strategies. While there are some provisions for economic development, the focus is on private sector development. The agreement outlines the provision of assistance aimed at “increased workplace participation by Aboriginal Canadians and assistance to others facing labour market barriers”, including low-income earners (Government of Canada News Centre, 2005). But it also states that support is targeted toward incentives to businesses to hire ‘under represented’ workers. Increased post-secondary education participation for underrepresented groups is identified as a ‘desired outcome’; however, the term ‘post-secondary education’ is loosely defined and funding continues to be limited to a maximum of two years and under the discretion of government caseworkers.

Regardless of its limitations, the LMPA does give the Province some flexibility and creates greater potential to improve labour market outcomes for long-term unemployed and multi-barriered individuals. But there continue to be serious problems aligning the objectives of the LMPA with those of the Employment and Income Assistance program given the continued emphasis on ‘work first’. The change in policy from passive supports to active measures through the 1990s remains firmly in place and this, in effect, restricts access to training opportunities. Throughout the 1990s, the Manitoba government cut several successful initiatives that provided training and education for high need groups, including welfare recipients.

For example, student social allowances were virtually eliminated in the 1990s, making it increasingly difficult for welfare recipients to participate in training or

complete high school. The Special Opportunity Social Allowance Recipients (SOSAR) provided living allowances to single parents while they pursued their education plans. The program was eliminated and the Province now provides living allowances on a case-by-case basis upon the discretion of the caseworker. This policy poses significant problems for students and training program administrators who spend endless hours seeking support for their students. This continues to be the case even after the election of the NDP government in 1999. While the government has made incremental changes that have had some impact on the lives of low-income Manitobans, training program administrators interviewed in this research argued that for those most marginalized, very little has changed. Simply put, it remains extremely challenging to get multi-barriered individuals the resources they require to get the training they need to access decent employment.

This ‘work first policy’, which aims to move welfare recipients into work as quickly as possible, is particularly at odds with the Manitoba government’s objective to build a high-skill economy. While the Province lists ‘Education First’ as a top priority, those individuals who are poor and reliant on provincial supports are pressured to find work—any work. For these individuals education is not a ‘first’ priority of government; in fact it is far down the list of priorities. Training is provided only as last resort for those without marketable skills and there is very little flexibility. Options are limited and aptitude and interest are less of a concern than is quick employability. In effect, the Manitoba government’s ‘work first’ policy reinforces inequality and effectively discourages welfare recipients from reaching their full potential.

One program that has been a mainstay in Manitoba and has demonstrated success in moving multi-barriered individuals into good jobs is Manitoba's ACCESS program(s) (described in greater detail in Chapter 9). Manitoba's ACCESS model was first introduced in the 1970s and ACCESS programs continue to be flagship programs of the Manitoba government. But these programs have been chipped away at over the years, making them less accessible to the most disadvantaged. Although the success rate of ACCESS programs has made it a model admired across the country, and graduates note the importance of these programs to moving them out of poverty, they continue to be vulnerable. For example, the current policy that gives EIA staff the discretion to approve client education plans leaves many clients vulnerable. In a 2006 interview an EIA director was asked about the policy to allow EIA clients to pursue a university degree through ACCESS programs. His response was that the policy was under review. He noted that

EIA clients should be treated like everyone else. If they want to go to university, they can do that, but we cannot support them....we are not in the business of supporting people to get careers—we are here to assist them to transition to work as quickly as possible—our policy is 'work first' (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2006, p. 15).

At time of this writing, no official changes to ACCESS programs appear to have taken place. Whether or not official changes are ever made to ACCESS programs, the response of the director was indicative of a lack of awareness and understanding of the exceptional barriers that many EIA clients face. With no firm policy in place, attitudes such as that of the director, a person holding significant power in a system where decisions about people's lives are the discretion of workers, demonstrates that in effect, if only by default, there is a policy in place—long-term training is not an option for people reliant on EIA.

Another successful program introduced in the 1970s fell victim to the neo-liberal shift. The Province of Manitoba's New Careers program provided multi-barriered individuals with training opportunities in over 40 different career areas. In spite of graduating more than 1000 trainees, many of whom became leaders in their communities, New Careers was scaled back in the 1990s after federal cutbacks in transfer payments resulted in a loss of 60 percent of program funding. Filmon's Conservative government chose not to fill in the funding gap and New Careers eventually ended in the mid 1990s.

In many ways New Careers was a model for the non-institutional, community-based training programs that emerged in the 1990s. The difference was that while it was labour- market focused, New Careers had greater flexibility to support social assistance recipients and other students with complicated needs, and for a longer period of time.

It is of great concern that the punitive spirit that was officially captured within Bill 36 in 1996 is now firmly imbedded within the culture of the department responsible for the delivery of social assistance, and it continues to have far reaching implications for the poorest Manitobans. A recent investigation by the Manitoba Ombudsman confirms that there are some significant problems. In response to a complaint put forward by twelve community-based organizations, the ombudsman investigation concluded "the program could be improved if the categorical eligibility system was replaced with a system that incorporates an assessment of applicants' needs and a matching of those needs with the services and resources necessary to address them" (Manitoba Ombudsman, 2010, p. 5). The report includes sixty-eight recommendations for administrative improvement. Among these recommendations are several calling for more clear policy direction and communication of the underlying 'philosophy' of the program,

to program staff and clients. The final recommendation states: "... all staff receive a written policy on discretionary decision making, setting out the process staff are expected to follow and incorporating the program's expectations around fairness" (Manitoba Ombudsman, 2010, p.68). While there are no specific recommendations regarding education and training, many of the recommendations, if implemented, could lead to improved response to the education and training needs of clients.

As the NDP government begins a fourth term in office, there is a hint of change with the introduction of the *All Aboard Strategy*—a *poverty reduction plan* that was reluctantly rolled out in response to pressure from community organizations, and there are hopes that change will come as a result of the Ombudsman Report. Under the leadership of Premier Selinger who established the Premiers' Advisory Council on Poverty, Education and Citizenship in 2010, there are expectations of change that will improve supports and increase opportunities for multi-barriered Manitobans including Aboriginal second-chance learners. Very recently the Manitoba Government introduced *Bill 204, The Social Inclusion and Anti-Poverty Act* after years of resisting to do so, and the 2011 provincial budget included measures to introduce multi-year funding for thirty-six community-based programmes, including some that deliver training to Aboriginal second-chance learners. But whether this positive shift will extend to more flexible programming and more flexible evaluation of programming is yet to be seen. Trainers say that they continue to be pressured to show evidence that trainees are getting jobs—any jobs.

To date, there appears to be no evidence that policy changes have led to greater choices and flexibility for the long-term unemployed and those with multiple barriers.

Statistics provided in Chapter 3 suggest that current policies have not had an aggregate positive impact on the poor. The number of Manitobans living in poverty continues to be considerable and specific groups, in particular Aboriginal people, are over-represented among the poor. Yet there has been no analysis of the long-term effects of current labour market measures and ‘work first’ policy in Manitoba. The long-term outcome for ‘welfare leavers’ is unknown and the number of clients cycling back onto the rolls is not tracked. We do know that there has been an increase in the number of individuals in receipt of social assistance since the recent economic downturn, which suggests that many workers remain extremely vulnerable.

There has also been little analysis as to the effectiveness of training policy and the outcomes for low-income workers. Whether or not the strategy to focus on short-term training targeted toward specific sectors is moving families out of poverty has not been directly evaluated. However the poverty and inequality data provided in Chapter 3 shows that poverty remains a problem. This would suggest that there remains room for improved labour market policy interventions, among other policy interventions, to improve outcomes for those most marginalized and excluded.

4.5 Integrating Supply-Side Solutions and Demand-Side Interventions: Creating Good Jobs for the Excluded

The literature reviewed shows that supply-side solutions are limited in their ability to address poverty and social exclusion. It suggests that demand-side interventions, including targeted job creation, should be added to the mix of tools aimed at poverty reduction. While the Manitoba government does not have an overall development strategy that includes job creation for poor and marginalized workers, there are some provincial initiatives worthy of mention. These are examined in Chapter 9. In terms of

supply, it is true that the emphasis has been on short-term training, but the current NDP government has made some important changes to employment standards and it has increased the minimum wage each year since 2000. In this regard, it has done a better job than some other provincial governments. But like other provinces, Manitoba competes to entice ‘skilled’ workers from other jurisdictions to fill the limited number of ‘high-skill’ positions that are apparently not being filled locally while a growing number of Manitobans are underemployed and/or unable to access the training to qualify for skilled positions. Not only are strategies limited to the supply-side of the equation, they are narrowly so. They promote high-skill training opportunities for those who can afford them, while limiting training opportunities for the poor, thereby nudging them into low-wage jobs.

A review of policy trends and outcomes shows that significant improvement to social and economic outcomes for low-income Manitobans will require a comprehensive coordinated effort on behalf of both federal and provincial governments, as well as cooperation between government departments. In order to address inter-provincial policy inequities and pressures, the federal government will need to increase its role. But it seems unlikely that this will occur given the current push toward further decentralization. Within this context it is true that the Manitoba government is somewhat confined and under a great deal of pressure to conform to the neo-liberal framework. However the research that follows explores whether there are lessons to be learned from the experiences of trainers and trainees of Aboriginal second-chance learners to support the argument for expanded policies and programs.

5 The Context of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners

Statistics very clearly show that Aboriginal Canadians are over-represented among the poor and unemployed. The fact that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is more than double that of the non-Aboriginal population and the fact that the number of Aboriginal Canadians living below the poverty line is far higher than that of non-Aboriginals suggests that something is seriously amiss.

The considerable inequality experienced by Canada's Aboriginal population calls for special attention when examining the design and delivery of government policy. The level of unemployment and poverty among Aboriginal Canadians, as described earlier in this paper, is an important indicator of the inadequacy of Canadian labour market policy and the prevalence of inequality based on race. Given the focus on supply-side strategies rather than job creation, it is useful to understand the education status of Aboriginal people and the context within which they have fallen so far behind.

5.1 Aboriginal Education Attainment

While the literature demonstrates educational attainment alone does not determine future employment and earnings, it is one indicator of employment and earnings potential. Statistics show that globalization has resulted in an increase in precarious employment for both skilled and unskilled workers (Livingstone, 1998), and that individuals with low education levels have a higher risk of long-term, low-wage, precarious employment (Chung, 2006).^{xv}

It is also true that education levels for the Aboriginal population have improved dramatically in recent years. However they continue to lag far behind the non-Aboriginal population. For example, while the number of Aboriginal Canadians completing high

school has increased, there continues to be a significant gap in contrast with the non-Aboriginal population. According to the Statistics Canada 2006 census, one in three (34 percent) Aboriginal persons between 25 and 64 years had not completed high school compared with 15 percent of all adults between 25 and 64. Fully 60 percent of all adults between 25 and 64 years had completed some form of postsecondary education in 2006, compared with 44 percent of Aboriginals. The good news is that the number of Aboriginal people with a degree has increased from 6 percent in 2001 to 8 percent in 2006.

In Manitoba, while the Aboriginal population lags behind the non-Aboriginal population in general, the gap is narrower. It should also be noted that the percentage of Aboriginals in Manitoba with a university degree is keeping pace with the national rate of Aboriginal people with degrees (Table 18). The relatively positive changes in university attainment could in part be attributed to the ACCESS models mentioned in Chapter 4, and further examined in Chapter 9. Also important to note is the poor showing in terms of high-school completion rates. These rates are lower in Manitoba than in Canada generally, but they are particularly low for Aboriginal Manitobans (Table 18). This is of particular concern since high-school education is a minimum requirement for most jobs in the current market.

Table 18
Highest level of Education
Age 25-64

	Total population Less than high school	Total Population High school certificate or equivalent	Total Population With University Degree	Aboriginal Less than high school	Aboriginal High school certificate or equivalent	Aboriginal With University Degree
Canada	15 %	24 %	23 %	34 %	21 %	8 %
Manitoba	20 %	25 %	19 %	40 %	12 %	8 %

While statistics show that there has been progress in Aboriginal educational attainment, the trajectory of Aboriginal students is unique, calling for unique and flexible measures. Post-secondary Aboriginal students tend to be older than others in their cohort. This is particularly telling because the Aboriginal population is much younger than the overall population. According to Census 2006, the median age of the Aboriginal population in Canada in 2005 was 26.5 years compared with 39.5 years for the total population. In Manitoba, the median Aboriginal age was 23.9 years compared with 38.1 years. It has been estimated that the number of young Aboriginal adults between ages 20 and 29 is expected to increase by over 40 percent by 2017 compared with a 9 percent growth rate among the same cohort in the general population. In Manitoba, the proportion of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 14 is projected to increase. Statistics Canada also estimates that in 2017, 31 out of 100 Manitoba children in this age groups will be Aboriginal, growing from 24 percent in 2001 (Statistics Canada Demographic Division, 2005).

The above demographics have serious implications for the Canadian and Manitoba labour markets. As the Aboriginal population grows, it will become an increasingly significant source of labour and will therefore need to be adequately educated and trained. But if we are committed to poverty reduction, we will also want to ensure that this population has access to jobs in the primary sector.

As noted in Chapter 3, there are many factors contributing to the employment outcomes of workers. For Aboriginal people, segmentation theory is particularly relevant because it demonstrates the existence of significant structural challenges to access training and to acquire decent jobs once training is complete. We must also recognize other historically-rooted dynamics, if we are to better design policies and programs that will contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal Canadians.

5.2 The Legacy of Colonization: Implications for Labour Market Policy and Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners

While there is caution of the limitations of education and training as the ‘ticket’ out of poverty, education and training policy does have an important role to play. Since Aboriginal Canadians continue to be over-represented among the socially excluded, it is important that interventions be built from an understanding of the historical context that has shaped the lives of Aboriginal people.

In Manitoba, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) Report, released in 1991, provided evidence of the devastating impact of colonization in Manitoba. The Report prescribed specific policy changes but a newly-elected Conservative government shelved it soon after its release. Soon after returning to office in 1999, the NDP government began the process of implementing some of the recommendations beginning with the

implementation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Child Welfare Initiative (AJICWI). Through this initiative, the Province has worked in partnership with Aboriginal leaders to establish Aboriginal child welfare authorities responsible for the management and delivery of child and family services to Aboriginal children and families. The implementation of the new model has been complicated and wrought with challenges, but it continues to be a critical part of the process of Aboriginal cultural reclamation and emancipation.

At time of writing, the federal government-sponsored Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is travelling across Canada to gather knowledge about the deep, damaging intergenerational affects of Canada's residential school policy. The legacy of residential schools is clearly evident in the testimonials of generations of Indigenous people who describe the devastating impact of colonial policies. While Aboriginal people's reaction to the Commission is mixed and understandably met with some cynicism, many express hope that the TRC will contribute to a process of healing and bring greater understanding to non-Aboriginal people of the very damaging impact of residential schools.

However, understanding where we have failed is insufficient unless followed by a significant shift in policy and programs to reverse damage and improve outcomes. The data gathered in this research shows clear links between the current realities of failed attempts to complete schooling through the first chance trajectory with the legacy of residential schools, colonial policies, racism and discrimination followed by a description of more appropriate policy and program measures.

Preliminary research and anecdotal accounts suggests that the schooling experience for many Aboriginal learners has been extremely negative (Castellano, Davis & Lahache, 2000; Helme, 2007; Huffman, 2008; Silver, Klyne & Simard, 2003). For many the experience of residential schools left grandparents and/or parents psychologically and spiritually damaged, passing their distrust of schools as a place of learning on to their children. Adding insult to injury, the continued use of Eurocentric content and teaching styles, a shortage of Aboriginal teachers, and a lack of evidence that education equates with a better life leads many Aboriginal youth to drop out at an early age. The effect has been high levels of illiteracy, absence of hope for a better future, and a perpetuation of poverty.

Huffman (2008) points to assimilationist policies as being a central problem that has resulted in ambivalent attitudes toward education among Aboriginal people. He notes that years of “paternalistic and condescending educational philosophies and approaches” (Huffman, 2008, p. 45), have contributed toward ambivalence, distrust, poor academic performance and early withdrawal.

A study of Aboriginal post-secondary learners in Manitoba found students to be struggling with “dispositional, situational, and systemic obstacles in their pursuit of post-secondary education” (Sloane-Seale, Wallace, & Benjamin, 2001). Study participants reported factors including lack of self-esteem; racism and sexism; lack of role models; dislocation; poorly educated parents; lower incomes; difficult family circumstances; lack of academic preparation; childcare and other social support challenges as contributing toward a very daunting experience (Sloane-Seale et al., 2001, p. 23-25). Huffman’s (2008) study of American Indian students across the US found similar issues. He

emphasizes a complex combination of financial, social, psychological and academic barriers for American Indian learners.

Conversations with representatives of training organizations in Winnipeg revealed similar obstacles. They note that their Aboriginal students generally come to them with very low levels of education (few beyond grade 10) and a host of family challenges and responsibilities that seriously complicate their ability to complete their programs and move out of poverty. The experiences described above are consistent with the literature on colonization that describes a long process of destruction that has “affected people physically, emotionally, linguistically and culturally” (Smith, 1999, p. 69).

The very damaging effects of colonization include internalized oppression (Poupart, 2003; Freire, 2006), and the spiritual and intellectual loneliness resulting from deprivation of knowledge and information other than what comes from the colonizer. The result is “a lack of self confidence, fear of action, and a tendency to believe that the ravages and pain of colonization are somehow deserved” (Daes 2000 as cited in Hart, 2010, p. 117). This often leads to self-destructive behaviours that lead to a cycle of failure and contribute to one’s own oppression.

5.3 Decolonization—A First Step to Emancipation

Many Aboriginal organizations have embraced the idea that decolonization is a critical component of the journey for Aboriginal people and have integrated cultural and historical teachings into their programming. As will be described further in Chapter 9, many argue that this stage is a necessary precursor to formal education and training. While sometimes invisible and difficult to measure, this type of ‘informal’ learning can

have a positive impact and influence on the education paths of those who may have become disillusioned early on and dropped out of ‘formal’ education. Many Aboriginal adults have regained confidence and hope through their participation in Aboriginal programs that have integrated important traditional teachings that can shape future directions (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2007). There are many examples of individuals who have ‘dropped out’ of formal education with little hope for the future who attribute their participation in community-based programs as having inspired them to further their education as adults (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2010; Silver, 2006). Several of the past students interviewed in this study have come to better understand the historical context of their ‘troubles’, and as they articulated during our interviews, this understanding has been critical to their moving forward.

5.4 Decolonization and Training Within the Neo-liberal Paradigm

Understanding the importance of decolonization and reclaiming of culture as a critical form of learning that strengthens self-awareness, self-esteem and builds much needed positive social networks is important for policymakers. Those who understand the long-term value of this component will be more inclined to adequately invest in a comprehensive network of programs that can lead individuals back through the formal learning trajectory with more successful outcomes. As noted by McKenzie and Morrisette (2003), “cultural reconstruction” can provide an important source of strength for those on the journey toward the development of self-identity. But the narrowly focused neo-liberal framework is incompatible with this approach. Minimal state investment and short-term training to fast-track people to employment simply does not allow time for decolonization to be integrated into the training process given the narrow

focus on skill development. Short-term labour market focused training models that ignore the damaging effects of colonization will have limited effectiveness because they disregard the central importance of cultural identity.

Decolonization is essentially the ‘undoing’ of colonization. The programs examined in this study integrate decolonization practice in different ways and some to a greater extent than others. There is not always agreement in the extent to which decolonization is integrated into their programs and in some cases the lack of funds to support such a component means it is absent. But all of the educators and administrators that I interviewed agreed that providing exposure to Indigenous knowledge and cultures, exposing students to the intent of colonial policies as a means of eliminating Indigenous culture, and explaining to them the intergenerational damage caused by these policies, is important.

Aboriginal organizations and others responding to the education needs of Aboriginal learners are increasingly using the Medicine Wheel to guide them. The Medicine Wheel is a commonly used symbol in North American indigenous cultures. It is an important tool used in the teaching of Aboriginal philosophy. While uniquely interpreted across different tribes, the core values remain consistent. The ‘wheel’ is based on the four directions of the compass and each direction represents a different philosophy within the context of the circle of life. Individuals are seen in the broader context of the environment and the community.

Diane Hill describes one way of using the medicine wheel in the learning process (Hill, 1999). The ‘Medicine Wheel Model of Learning’ incorporates traditional Aboriginal knowledge and methodologies and includes four stages to learning:

Awareness (Spirit—Attitudes and Insights)—ever-increasing understanding of one's self and the world.

Struggle (Heart—Feelings about Self and Others)—efforts and attempts to change negative life experiences to positive patterns of feeling and believing which influence relating behaviour.

Building (Mind—Knowledge)—developing the new positive life experiences into continuous patterns and a view of life which includes integrating the strengths already acquired by the learner.

Preservation (Body—Skills)—maintaining the positive patterns and view of life as an on-going system.

This model, and other Indigenous cultural models of practice (McKenzie & Morrisette, 2003; Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002) are effective because they begin from an understanding that Aboriginal second-chance learners have been affected by colonization. These models help them to situate their journey, including that which has been positive as well as that which has been negative, within this context.

The continued overrepresentation of Aboriginal people among those who are poor and excluded suggests that we as a society have not yet solved the problems that we have essentially created through Eurocentric public policy. Colonization has resulted in complex problems for individuals, families and communities and solutions are also complex. Individuals pursuing education often carry a heavy emotional load and a breadth of family responsibilities beyond those of the non-Aboriginal population (Sloane-Seal, et al., 2001; Huffman, 2008). If we continue as a society to ignore these realities and try to apply mainstream, narrowly focused education and training models to a population with unique and complex needs, we will likely not see a significant change in outcomes.

6 The Education Trajectories of Aboriginal Second-Chance Learners

Training and education can take many forms. Livingstone (1998) describes *formal* education as “full-time study within state-certified school systems” (p.14). This includes primary, secondary and post-secondary education including university and college. All other organized educational activities, primarily geared toward adult learners and most often part time, fall into the category Livingstone (1998) calls *non-formal or further education* (p. 14). *Informal* learning is all other learning that we undertake to gain knowledge based on personal interest.

Those who follow the traditional or mainstream *formal* education and training trajectory move through *primary* education where they develop the foundation and skills for more advanced learning. This formal learning most often takes place up to the teen years through publicly funded, publicly delivered programs.^{xvi} Following completion of the primary stage, students who choose (and are able) to proceed to the secondary stage of learning follow either an academic-oriented (university) or non-academic (college/trade/vocational) path. This trajectory is referred to as the “first-chance system of education” (Bartik, 2000, p. 25).

The good jobs in the primary sector are most often awarded to those individuals who follow the mainstream ‘first-chance’ path, usually without interruption, from secondary through post-secondary education. It should be noted that it is increasingly common for individuals to change career paths throughout their lives. Many will pursue post-secondary education after a break from high school and go on to successful careers in the primary sector. While this group may not follow the first-chance trajectory in the

linear manner described, they have access to family supports, employment contacts through family and friends, and the resources necessary to allow them to re-enter the first-chance system leading them to have greater success in accessing jobs in the primary sector.

Another group of students drop out altogether, or marginally ‘squeak through’ unprepared for more advanced education. Individuals within this group are often relegated to employment in the secondary sector characterized by low-wage, precarious work with few benefits and little opportunity for advancement. In other cases, those unsuccessful in the first-chance trajectory end up with no work at all. In Manitoba, the statistics on educational attainment very clearly show that the number of Aboriginal students who drop out is highly disproportionate (Table 18, p. 111).

Options for those who ‘drop out’ and later choose to return to formal learning are most likely available through the ‘second-chance’ system. The central distinction between these last two groups described is essentially class. Second-chance learners often come from families with low socio-economic status with parents who employed in the secondary sector, and they experience a host of challenges that limit access to jobs in the primary labour market. It follows that in a neo-liberal policy environment where emphasis is on individual investment, those unable to pursue their education path without direct government assistance will have fewer options available to them. This increases their chances of remaining in the secondary sector.

As noted by Feinstein, Galinda-Rueda & Vignoles (2004, following Blundell et al., 1997; Egerton, 2001a, 2001b; Steel & Sausman, 1997 and Jenkins et al., 2002), adult education and training does not necessarily result in improved employment/wage

outcomes. Second-chance learners often move from work to training back into the secondary segment. Although not a homogeneous group, Table 19 shows that second-chance learners share characteristics that put them at greater risk of not completing their education. In addition to being older than post-secondary students who have followed the first-chance trajectory, individuals in the ‘second-chance’ group characteristically have fewer family supports, lower socio-economic status, and greater family responsibilities. Table 19 also shows that the range of potential options and outcomes is far more limited for second-chance learners who require government support to help them through.

For Aboriginal second-chance learners, the complexity of the situation is further complicated by the historical context that has left many Aboriginal learners distrustful of and unable to relate to mainstream education models. The outcome for these learners is in part dependent on how they internalize their situation and whether informal learning will lead to reclaimed self-identity, increased self-esteem, increased hope and confidence, and the ability to re-assess the potential of education and re-enter training. But outcomes also depend on the policy response. While comprehensive approaches require significantly greater investment, evidence suggests that the impact for individuals, their families and society in general will also be greater.

Table 19
Education and Training Trajectory

Characteristic of Learner and Likely Trajectory	Possibilities	Range of Education Options	Predicted Outcomes
Primary Pool—First Chance Successful completion of early and secondary education. Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-high socio-economic status • Family support and encouragement to pursue education • Positive social networks and peer support for education • Greater access to financial resources • Minimal family responsibilities • Able to place primary focus on studies 	Community Colleges University	Broad range of options Ranging from short-term to long-term averaging 3-4 years College > University> Graduate > post-graduate	Increase opportunity Higher wages and benefits— primary labour market
Secondary Pool – Second-chance Drop out or poor performance at secondary level resulting in poor employment outcomes Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low- socio-economic status • Weak family encouragement to pursue education • Weak social networks and peer support of education • Weak financial support • Greater family responsibility—juggle family and study 	Job training agencies (private for profit; community based not for profit) Employment services Welfare sponsored programs	Options are limited due to financial and other barriers Greater reliance on government assistance Current policy limits funding therefore training is usually short-term (3 months-2 years) and targeted to labour market needs	May result in some improvement in outcome but continue to have lower incomes than those in first-chance trajectory— often results in continuation of employment in secondary labour market.
Aboriginal Second-chance Drop out or poor performance at secondary level resulting in poor employment outcomes Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low- socio-economic status • Weak family encouragement to pursue education (distrust/ambivalence toward education) • Weak social networks and peer support of education (no ‘proof’ that education will improve outcomes) • Assimilationist policies—low self esteem, low-confidence, hopelessness • Weak financial supports • Greater family responsibility—juggle family and study • Complicated family challenges • Racism 	Job training agencies (private for profit; community based not for profit) Employment services Welfare sponsored programs	Options are limited due to financial and other barriers Government assistance often required Current policy limits funding therefore training is usually short-term (3 months-2 years) and targeted to labour market needs	May result in some improvement in outcome but continue to have lower incomes than those in first-chance trajectory— often results in continuation of employment in secondary labour market. Racist attitudes in hiring practice limit possibilities and result in poorer outcomes

6.1 Second-Chance Training: Funding, Delivery and Design

Second-chance training is delivered in various ways. Non-profit organizations are increasingly funded to deliver training, sometimes in collaboration with colleges. In some cases, albeit limited in the current political milieu, supply and demand strategies are integrated and training for marginalized groups is connected with publicly funded large-scale infrastructure/economic development projects. Further discussion of these various models and an examination of local examples is found in Chapter 8.

In addition to education and training in the traditional sense, welfare reform and work-first policies have resulted in the growth of ‘pre-employment training’ programs. These are not training programs per se, but rather programs designed to help people find jobs. Social assistance recipients are often encouraged to participate in these programs because they are short-term and more closely aligned with ‘work-first’ objectives. While these programs can be helpful for the ‘job ready’, they are not ‘training’ programs, and they should not be presented as such.

In spite of a shortage of skilled, certified trades-people, efforts to target training in the skilled trades to excluded groups has been weak. It simply takes far too long to move individuals with low education levels through the necessary training. So governments and employers looking for a quick fix, have opted to seek skilled trades-people from outside Manitoba and Canada, through immigration policy. This resolves two problems for the government—it increases the population base and fills skilled positions without the cost of training workers. But it neglects to address a much bigger challenge—the poverty and exclusion of Aboriginal people.

7 From a Global Political Economy Analysis to Local Policies and Their Impacts: Testing the Hypothesis

In the preceding chapters I outlined the evolution of training policy and the ideological context in which it has evolved. I introduced the realities and challenges faced by a specific demographic of people who are over-represented among the poorest and most marginalized. Finally, I raised questions about the ability of the current model to effectively respond to the complex challenges of the Aboriginal population and its failure to respond to inequities created by a free market economy left to its own devices.

The review of the literature and political economy analysis in the preceding chapters led to my hypothesis that neo-liberal policies are incongruent with the needs of Aboriginal second-chance learners because they focus too narrowly on training that leads to precarious employment and they do not, for ideological reasons, invest sufficiently in high-needs populations that require far more than short-term job-focused training. Further, they do not aim to create employment that can lift people out of poverty.

This approach is particularly insufficient for Aboriginal second-chance learners whose lives have been negatively affected by racism and policies intent on assimilation. Narrowly focused, short-term training simply does not address the complex context of the Aboriginal second-chance learner. Nonetheless, neo-liberal policies are deeply entrenched and governments aim to move poor people into work as quickly and cheaply as possible.

It is possible to identify central characteristics of the neo-liberal training model for the second-chance learner that will guide me as I aim to test my hypothesis and

explore alternative solutions. These are:

1. Within a neo-liberal paradigm, state support for the training of second-chance learners is limited in scope and duration. This is consistent with the goal to move state-dependent people into the labour force as quickly as possible.
2. Training *opportunities* are defined by the labour market. There is little regard for individual interest and personal development. The goal is to get people to work in any job that is available. Finding the quickest route to this end is the central objective.
3. Training available to second-chance learners with limited resources is narrowly focused on developing labour market specific skills.
4. Neo-liberal governments are loathe to intervene in the creation of good jobs and/or the prioritizing of marginalized group for training and employment for jobs created. Their emphasis is solely on the development of skills to meet the requirement of those jobs created by the private sector. Guided by human capital theory, they argue that individuals are responsible for their education and training and they will receive adequate return for their investment if they invest wisely—the best trained will receive the best jobs.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the neo-liberal view fails to move beyond the analysis of labour market need to examine more broadly the context of job seekers. The result is an inadequate response to the social and economic barriers that are the reality for many. However, segmented labour market theorists argue that this response is not an oversight. They argue that neo-liberal policies are intentionally designed to ensure that a pool of relatively unskilled labour is readily available for the growing number of secondary sector jobs. From this theory it becomes possible to better understand the rationale for the neo-liberal approach. The goal is quite simply to meet the needs of the labour market. The needs and aspirations of learners is a private rather than a public concern.

However, as I have shown through a review of the literature and analysis of census and labour market data, the problem is much more complex than neo-liberal theories would suggest, resulting in challenges that become costly for society when not adequately responded to. When we examine the situation for Aboriginal people, we very clearly see a population of people who are faring poorly in comparison with the non-Aboriginal population. There continues to be general concern with low education attainment and low-income levels in addition to a whole host of problems that social science researchers, educators and some policy makers increasingly understand to be directly related to the damaging legacy of colonization, systemic racism, intergenerational poverty, and the many challenges that intergenerational poverty creates.

Within the current paradigm, the solution offered for this population is training that will quickly lead to employment. But employment and income outcomes suggest that this has not been overly effective.

In the previous chapters I have described the problem of ongoing poverty and social exclusion by examining diverging ideological perspectives and theories and their influence (or lack of) on the current state response. In this chapter, I proceed by outlining more specifically the research questions that I explored and the methods that I used in an effort to better understand how labour market policies are currently responding to the poverty and inequality of Aboriginal people, and if and how this might be improved.

7.1 Methodology

Accepting that a clear set of characteristics that identify training models inspired by neo-liberal policies (either intentionally designed or by default) exists, in the research that follows I test the general hypothesis that neo-liberal training programs have

limitations in improving outcomes for Aboriginal second-chance learners. I hypothesize that in part, the current model is ineffective because the ideology that shapes it disregards key factors such as:

1. The complicated effects of colonization and the need for comprehensive, holistic programming to address issues including low self-esteem, lack of motivation, personal and family issues and low educational attainment.
2. The lack of good jobs available and the inability of short-term training to prepare individuals for those jobs that are available.
3. Systemic issues such as discrimination and racism.

The literature suggests that the employment that often results from short-term training is in the low-wage secondary sector with few opportunities for advancement (Bartik, 2001; Crouch et al., 1999; Gallie, 2002; Hammer, 2003; Lafer, 2002; Livingstone, 1998). To better understand the extent to which the above is true and to which longer-term education and training and job creation programs that integrate training have better outcomes, I examine existing programs in the context of the neo-liberal milieu.

The focus of my research is three-fold:

- First, to test the hypothesis that the second-chance system, which emphasizes short-term training aimed at integrating people into the labour market as quickly as possible, does not adequately address social exclusion, and in particular the exclusion of Aboriginal people.
- Second, to determine whether ‘successful’ trainees share common characteristics and/or whether the training programs they participate in share common practices that lead to improved outcomes.

- Third, to determine whether longer-term training and more comprehensive approaches that include job creation paired with training can better respond to complex challenges.

7.2 Research Questions

My review of the literature, informal discussions with program directors and trainees, and an examination of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal second-chance learners led to the following research questions:

1. What are the social and economic outcomes of training for Aboriginal second-chance learners?
 - Objective outcomes (income, employment, program completion)
 - Subjective outcomes (satisfaction with program, income, employment)
2. What are the outcomes affected by?
 - Characteristics of trainee
 - Characteristics of program
 - Characteristics of the environment (Including those that influence training available and those that influence job prospects.)

Developing an understanding of outcomes as outlined in the first question is central to this study. Consistent with Indigenous and transformative research models, as are discussed further in Chapter 9, quantifying these outcomes can provide some answers. However, exploring this question using qualitative methods will provide a deeper understanding through the eyes of trainees, their teachers, counselors and program managers.

The second question attempts to enrich the research by providing possible explanations for the answer to the first question. Many factors contribute to individual ‘success’. Given the often-complicated lives of Aboriginal second-chance learners, program design and the context of the trainee will be important contributing factors. In

addition, the ideological context influencing program design (i.e. neo-liberalism) is an important contributing factor. For example, I propose that by virtue of the narrow analysis that the market will solve all problems, and that government intervention to assist workers should be minimal and targeted, neo-liberal policies are unable to respond to the complicated contexts of Aboriginal second-chance learners.

7.3 Mixed-Method Research Design

Testing the hypothesis and seeking answers to the above questions was pursued through a mixed-method research design as described in section 8.3. A transformative-emancipatory paradigm (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Mertens, 2003, 2007) was integrated to the extent that it was possible.^{xvii} People who work on behalf of marginalized groups commonly use the transformative paradigm, which is consistent with decolonizing methodologies described by Kaomea (2004) and Smith (1999). As described by Mertens (2007), the transformative paradigm places “central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups” (p.139). She notes that those working within this paradigm link their research to a broader analysis of inequality and injustice and “link the results of social inquiry to action” (Mertens, 2007, p. 140). This paradigm is important for this research because while I am more generally concerned with policies as they relate to all marginalized individuals, the levels of unemployment, education attainment and poverty among Aboriginal Canadians, as described in Chapter 5, are important indicators of the inadequacy of Canadian labour market policy and the prevalence of inequality based on race in addition to class. Also consistent with the transformative approach and decolonizing methodologies, it is my aim to conduct

research that can contribute to policy change that will improve social and economic outcomes for oppressed groups.

My research design is a variation of a participatory model that I have used for the past six years conducting research in the inner city of Winnipeg. It is consistent with transformative-emancipatory methodologies in that it involves the community affected by the research in the design, albeit in a more limited way than I have used through a community-based research model (MacKinnon, 2011). Nonetheless, the ‘community’ that is the focus of this study has been involved in the shaping of this research in the following ways:

1. Representatives from the sample of training programs involved in the study provided input into the design of the interview guide.
2. In addition to participating in a semi-structured interview, trainees were given the opportunity to share their experience through story-telling which gave deeper meaning to the data collected and gave them an opportunity to share information that they felt to be important to the study.
3. In addition to this dissertation, findings will be compiled into an accessible format that organizations can use to advocate for policy change. This component is important because inner-city organizations and their program participants are often reluctant to participate in research because they fail to see how it benefits them. Their cynicism and distrust is understandable given the history of ‘outsider’ research that has been unhelpful at best and harmful at worst.

My relationship and reputation with inner-city organizations, including some of those examined in this study, was pre-established, and trust has been built based on a

particular model of collaboration (Mackinnon & Stephens, 2009; MacKinnon 2011). I have, over the past six years developed trusting relationships with inner city organizations because the research that I have conducted has been in collaboration with them and findings are presented in forms that they find useful. While I recognize that a PhD dissertation has specific requirements that are not conducive to all aspects of the model that I have become accustomed to, I feel ethically responsible and personally committed to a framework that is not only useful for my academic goals but to the community that has entrusted me to conduct research that is helpful to them and in collaboration with them.

This is consistent with Indigenous research models (Kaomea, 2004; Smith, 1999). As noted by Smith (1999), research should lead to “intervention directed at changing institutions which deal with indigenous peoples and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures” (p. 147). This framework allows for a structural analysis and “a reframing of the issues to acknowledge historical contexts” that have led governments and social agencies to fail to relate Indigenous problems with historical experience and inadequately respond to complex issues (Smith, 1999, p. 153).

In this study I have used a concurrent triangulation mixed-method design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered concurrently and the process was consistent with the “multilevel” variant of mixed-method research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 48). In addition to qualitative and quantitative data gathered through interviews with various ‘stakeholders’, including trainees, counselors/teachers and program directors, organizational data was gathered based on the guide outlined in Appendix 2. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered

from these various ‘levels’ were brought together in a final analysis described in Chapter 10.

A mixed-method design was selected because it allows for the collection and melding of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is useful but it does not capture the richness of experience shared by those directly affected by policy. Quantitative measures cannot tell us what the experience was like for learners, the historical context of their journey and whether they feel their lives are better as a result of the training they received. We cannot dismiss the possibility that individuals may appear successful based on quantitative government prescribed measures (e.g. have completed their training and are now employed), but do not feel entirely positive about the outcome (e.g. their quality of life has not improved in their perception as they have less time to care for family members). The opposite is also true. Standard measures may show that an individual has not been successful (e.g. dropped out, is not working full time or has low-wage work) but qualitative measures may tell us something very different (e.g. they feel that the experience contributed greatly toward their personal growth and healing). Qualifying outcomes through individual voices is a critical component to fully understand the perspective of participants on their own terms rather than measured against someone else’s expectations. As noted by Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2007) mixed-method research can provide a breadth and depth of information not possible of single method designs. It can also be more suitable in projects aimed at achieving social justice and avoiding further oppression (Mertens, 2007).

Consistent with the transformative paradigm, agency representatives were involved in the research process at the design stage. An early outline of the proposed

research model and a draft of potential interview questions were developed in consultation with representatives of participating organizations. As noted by Mertens (2007), a transformative paradigm requires that “the community affected by the research be involved to some degree in the methodological and programmatic decisions” (p. 141). The literature review and political economy analysis in the first part of this dissertation provided an academic rationale for the research focus and helped to identify the ‘problem’ in a broad political economy context. Engaging program staff and others in the community in the early stages ensured that the research design reached beyond a theoretical academic pursuit to ensure its usefulness to the organizations and individuals who agreed to participate (Mertens, 2003).^{xviii}

7.4 Research Procedures

I examined various short-term training initiatives and one long-term education program to explore social and economic outcomes for program participants. The impact of colonization and the potential for and effectiveness of decolonization content in program design was an underlying theme explored through interviews. I sought to examine outcomes as they relate to training based on choice and interest versus those for which funding is available, and the effectiveness of short-term training focused on labour market need in comparison with longer-term post-secondary education and approaches that combine job creation with training.

7.4.1 Sampling

Table 20 provides an outline of the purposive sample of training agencies and programs that were selected for the study. The agencies and programs are described more fully in Appendix 1.

The sample is divided into three categories:

1. Organizations that have the characteristics of the neo-liberal training model.
2. A university degree program that does not share with the others the characteristics of the neo-liberal model.
3. Economic development projects that have integrated targeted training and employment.

Of the initiatives within the third category, only one was treated in the same way as the other two categories. For the other initiatives in the third category, secondary data was gathered to demonstrate that there are models that combine demand- and supply-side measures as described in the literature. In order to keep this research manageable, Building Urban Industries for Local Employment (BUILD) was selected because it is a smaller program and the agency expressed an interest in participating in the study

Table 20
Purposive Sample of Training Agencies/Programs

Sample of Training Organization	Characteristics	Target Population	Data Collection Methods	Procedures
Category 1 Neo-liberal characteristics				
Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private non profit • Primary funding through the federal government Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement. • Also provides training funded by provincial programs (EIA) 	Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with director/teachers/ students • Review of records/reports
Urban Circle Training Centre (UCTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based inner city non-profit • Funding from provincial government, Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) 	Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with director/teachers students • Review of records/reports
Patal Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private for profit training enterprise • Students funded through various sources— primarily First Nations 	Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with director/teachers students Review of records/reports
Category 2 Does not share neo-liberal characteristics				
Inner City Social Work Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Access Program 	Inner City residents/	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with directors/teachers

		equity groups (approx. 70% Aboriginal)		Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of records/reports
Category 3 Economic development integrating demand- and supply-strategies				
Limestone Training and Employment Agency (LTEA) (1985-1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-limited corporation to train/employ for Northern Hydro development project (Limestone) 	Northern and Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of public documents Interview with one past employee
Hydro Northern Training Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-limited corporation to train/employ for Northern Hydro development (Wuskwatim) 	Northern Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of public documents Interview with employees
Manitoba Floodway Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-limited targeted training and employment 	Excluded groups including Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of public documents Interview with employees
BUILD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated training and employment 	Inner City residents Priority to multi-barriered Aboriginal	Quan/Qual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with directors/teachers/s students Review of records and reports

In addition to sharing features of neo-liberal training models, the agencies in Category 1 were selected based on the following:

1. They are either solely targeted toward Aboriginal students or have a high number of Aboriginal students;
2. Agencies are based in Winnipeg;
3. They agreed to participate;
4. They represent a range of delivery models.

There are many other agencies with similar characteristics that might have been selected. This small local sample was selected for practical reasons. I acknowledge that the limited sample will have implications for transferability of findings; however, I believe it provides an interesting base of knowledge that could be expanded upon in future studies.

7.4.2 Data Collection

I collected data using a multilevel triangulation model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I collected quantitative data through analysis of records and reports for each of the agencies/programs identified. I collected qualitative and quantitative data concurrently through a semi-structured interview process as follows:

- Quantitative and qualitative data collected from past trainees including graduates and those who did not complete their programs;
- Qualitative data collected from program directors, teachers/counselors.

I interviewed administrators, teachers and counsellors at the participating training organizations. My goal was to interview between 5-10 past students of each training initiative; however, the response rate to requests was lower than anticipated. I worked with agency staff to randomly select students for participation to avoid potential selection

bias. Letters were sent to students describing the project and asking them to participate in a semi-structured interview. The assistance I received from agency staff varied from organization to organization and this had a significant impact on the number of interviews. In addition to interviews with graduates of specific training programs, I was able to identify other individuals who had participated in training as adults through snowball sampling. These interviewees were not participants in the training programs examined in this study. The total number of trainees interviewed was twenty-five, including both graduates and non-completers.

Respondents (directors, teachers, students) were asked to participate in an interview with semi-structured questions (Appendices 3-5). Interviews were between ½ to 1 hour in length. A small honorarium was provided to trainees who participated. All trainees interviewed identified as Aboriginal.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. As highlighted in Table 20, qualitative and quantitative data was first analyzed separately and then brought together for final analysis and discussion.

A spreadsheet was used to organize data collected from records and reports including elements outlined in Appendix 2. Permission was granted through the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. The interview procedure included:

- A semi-structured interview guide to be used in interviews with organization directors (qualitative).
- A semi-structured interview guide to be used in interviews with instructors in each of the organizations (qualitative).
- A semi-structured interview guide to be used in interviews with students from each organization (quantitative and qualitative).

7.4.3 *Data Analysis*

I concurrently analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to determine patterns and themes in experience and outcomes for trainees. In the final analysis, I examined the relationship between policy and outcomes for trainees in an attempt to test the hypothesis that neo-liberal labour market policies fail to resolve poverty and social exclusion. I initially analyzed data using NVivo computer software (Baseley, 2006). I later examined narratives line by line to ensure that important qualitative data was not missed (Fraser, 2004). After finalizing a selection of key themes, I further examined transcripts and grouped narratives under themes (I include a sample of narratives throughout Chapter 9). These examples were subjectively selected based on my assessment that they captured the overall sentiment of the theme described and helped to make sense of quantitative data.

8 Description of Programs in Study

This chapter is divided into three sections (Table 21). The first section describes programs that can be identified as taking a neo-liberal approach because they are short term in nature and are specifically designed to respond to labour market needs. The second section focuses on another type of supply-side initiative however this one is less aligned with the neo-liberal paradigm because it is longer-term in nature and participants are awarded with a university degree at the end of their program. The third section of programs described includes initiatives that address both supply and demand. They take an economic development approach that integrates targeted training and employment.

Table 21
Differentiation of Programs in Study

8.1 Neo-liberal Supply Programs (Short-term)	8.1.1 Urban Circle Training Centre(UCTC) 8.1.2 Centre for Aborigin Human Resource Development (CAHRD) 8.1.3 Patal Training
8.2 Supply Programs (Long-term certificate/degree)	8.2.1 Access Programs 8.2.2 Inner-City Social Work Program(ICSWP)
8.3 Supply/Demand integrated programs	8.3.1 Limestone Training and Employment Agency (LTEA) 8.3.2 Hydro Northern Training Initiative (HNTI) 8.3.3 Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) 8.3.4 Building Urban Industries through Local Development (BUILD)

8.1 Short-Term Training and Job-Skills Programs

The following section provides data collected on the training and job skills programs described in Table 20 as those that most align with the neo-liberal paradigm. Data on these programs was collected in 2009 and 2010. Table 20 provides basic information about each of the three programs described in this chapter. While they share

some characteristics in terms of their employment objectives and the clientele that they serve, they offer very different programs, requiring different skill sets.

Data in this chapter was gathered through various methods including interviews with program managers/directors, collected from organization websites and annual reports, and from other materials that organizations made available to me. Basic costs and outcomes are outlined in Table 22. It should be noted that data available to the public varies from agency to agency and I relied on each agency's willingness to share information with me. Also of note is that two of the three agencies, Urban Circle Training Centre and the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, are non-profit organizations while Patal Training is a privately owned business.

Table 22
Average Training Program Cost and Outcome

Training Institution	Number of trainees	Program Completion	Employment/Continuing Education	Cost Per Student	Cost to student (tuition,books,supplies) ***
Urban Circle Training Centre*	150	87%	83% either find employment or continue with education	\$10,700	\$6,000-\$8000
Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (Neeginan Institute)**	287	67%	Of 287 participants, 68 found work, 10 continued on with further education and training, and 114 remained in the program they were enrolled in.	NA	\$8,600 per program
Patal Training	NA	85%	NA	NA	NA

*Includes total registered including adult literacy and job training programs

**Includes job training programs only—excludes literacy and upgrading outcomes.

***Organizations assist student to find funding. This cost does not include living allowances.

8.1.1 Urban Circle Training Centre

The Urban Circle Training Centre (UCTC) was formed in 1991. The program uses the philosophy of the Medicine Wheel, as described in Chapter 5. According to their

website, UCTC is a non-profit, community-based organization with the objective to provide Aboriginal People with skill training specifically targeted to job-market demands.

For those who have not obtained a grade twelve standing, UCTC offers an Adult Basic Education and Employment Program. Many of the students who complete this program continue on with other UCTC programs or training at other centres. Current training initiatives/programs offered at UCTC include:

Adult Apprenticeship and Employment Program (Stream 1)

This program is designed to meet the labour market need for skilled trades-people. It is a 35-week, 8-credit Manitoba High School Diploma program offered in partnership with Manitoba Adult Learning & Literacy and the Seven Oaks School Division. Like all UCTC programs, training includes a life skills and cultural awareness component in addition to the full high-school curriculum. The purpose is to provide students with the academic preparation necessary for *further* apprenticeship training. It does not result in a skilled trade designation.

The Para Educator (Teacher Assistant) Program

This 44-week program is certified by Red River College. It offers specialized training to work with special needs students. UCTC describes this as training that is in high demand in all school divisions and therefore excellent job opportunities are available upon completion of the program. They also describe this program as one that students use as a ‘stepping stone’ toward attending university to obtain a Bachelor of Education degree.

The Adult Apprenticeship and Employment Program (stream 2)

This program focuses on general employment skills through a 44-week training program that is delivered in partnership with the Province of Manitoba and the Seven Oaks School Division. Students in this program obtain a Mature Grade 12 Diploma. Similar to Stream 1, however, the program does not however, result in the attainment of a skilled trade designation as the name might imply.

The Health Care Aide/Health Unit Clerk Training Program

This is a 44-week training program certified by Red River College and delivered in partnership with the Health Sciences Centre hospital. Graduates find work in the health care field. This program is also described as a ‘stepping stone’ into other areas in the health care field.

The Family Support Worker/FASD Program

This is a 47-week program certified by Red River College and delivered in partnership with the Manitoba government’s Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative and the Manitoba Métis Federation. The program prepares students to be family support workers, another sector where there is a growing labour market need. It is also described as a ‘stepping stone’ into the social work field—graduates commonly continue their studies with the University of Manitoba Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP).

A unique aspect of UCTC is that all students are required to participate in a Life Skills/Cultural Program. This program involves an intensive four-week program at the outset and continues one day per week throughout the program. The purpose is to give students grounding in their Aboriginal cultures and to ensure that they have an

understanding of the colonial history that has been so very devastating to Aboriginal people generally.

In terms of cost, UCTC reports an operating budget of \$1,200,000 in 2008-09 with a total of 115 students enrolled for a total cost of approximately \$10,700 per year per individual (Table 24). With the exception of the Para Educator program, there are no program costs to students. These costs are covered through UCTC's various funders. However, students are responsible for their personal living costs and they must demonstrate that they have this funding in place before registering in the program. Sources include First Nation (Band) funding, Employment and Income Assistance, Employment Insurance or other sources. UCTC will assist students in finding financial resources as much as possible.

As was described in Chapters 5 and 6, the characteristics of UCTC's trainees are similar to those of all students described in this study. UCTC serves the Aboriginal population living in the city of Winnipeg and especially those in the North End and Inner City where indicators of poverty-related barriers to education, training and employment are among the highest in the city. The director of UCTC described student realities that include "poverty, homelessness, violence, negative encounters with the justice system, and family disruption." Many have little to no personal connection to their traditional Aboriginal culture/history due to colonization including the intergenerational effects of the residential school system. The majority of the students at UCTC are also single parents, and therefore must balance life as a full-time student with parental responsibilities. As described by the director of UCTC, the lives of these learners are "extremely complicated."

UCTC receives funding from many sources. Funding for the first program was approved by the Winnipeg Core Area initiative in 1991 and continued through Human Resources Development Canada through the Winnipeg Development Agreement until March 2000. Funding is now provided through provincial government programs including Manitoba Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative, and the department of Adult Learning and Literacy. Funding is also received through various Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement holders including the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD) and the Manitoba Métis Federation. Other funders include Mother of Red Nations (MORN), and a number of First Nations, tribal councils and First Nations education authorities that fund students with First Nations status.

UCTC is committed to offering training targeted to urgent market demands but it also stresses that its aim is to prepare students for long-term sustainable employment that pays a living wage and provides opportunity for upward mobility thereby providing a ‘true’ alternative to social assistance. The agency reports an average starting wage of UCTC graduates of \$14.00 per hour, while many gain employment at much higher rates (\$18.00-\$22.00 per hour). Some graduates choose to further their education, and graduates have obtained degrees in education, nursing, social work and other areas. While programs are short-term by design, graduates often use their training as a ladder to further education and training.

UCTC has four Employer Advisory Committees who support and promote their work. These committees provide UCTC with updated information on current job market demands and qualifications. Membership to date includes representatives from

businesses, service agencies and institutions such as hospitals that hire Urban Circle graduates.

UCTC prides itself in having high completion rates. Most recent statistics show eighty nine percent completion rates of those attending the Adult Basic Education Program/Adult Education and Employment Program, eighty five percent completion rates in the Health Care Aide/Health Unit Clerk program, eighty four percent completion rates in the Para Educator Program, and ninety three percent completion rates in the Family Support Program.

UCTC has developed a somewhat stringent intake process throughout the years. Applicants must first attend a general information session followed by submission of a program application form with two letters of reference and a handwritten autobiography. Where applicable, a child abuse registry check and a criminal record check are required.

Applicants are then invited to a program-specific orientation session where they learn about the program and expectations of the Centre. Applicants are tested for appropriate placement, and are interviewed to determine interests and experience. Accepted applicants are notified by mail. Each program conducts two to three intakes prior to the program start date. UCTC has very clear eligibility requirements depending on the program of study and those who do not qualify academically are required to begin with the adult basic education program.

Certified teachers and counsellors staff UCTC. Programs range from 3 to 10 months in duration. Culturally based life-skills programming and full-time counselling and support are provided.

In an effort to show government funders the economic benefit of their program, UCTC used a simple analysis to calculate the financial cost-benefit of their program annually and cumulatively from 1990-91 to 2009-10. As seen in Table 23, savings are considerable when savings from removing participants from the welfare rolls as well as new revenues generated through employment income are factored in. Fully 90 percent of students graduate and upwards of 83 percent of graduates find work or continue with their studies. UCTC estimates a cumulative savings of \$53.3 million over 20 years. In addition it identifies a modest estimate of tax revenue of \$1000 per year per graduate accumulating to a total of \$13 million in tax revenue over the past 20 years compared with a cumulative operating cost of \$12.5 million.

While UCTCs cost-benefit analysis is somewhat rudimentary^{xix} it shows two things. The more obvious is the economic benefit of providing government support for second-chance learners. The second is that organizations like UCTC feel immense pressure to justify their economic value while the far-reaching social benefits of education become a distant secondary objective. While ‘savings’ are significant in their own right, they do not take into account the many benefits of the UCTC’s programs that are more difficult to measure yet have a profound effect on families and communities.

Table 23 Urban Circle Training Centre Cost Benefit 1990 - 2010						
Year	# Students	Direct Savings	Annual SA Savings @ 83%	Cumulative SA Savings	Income Tax Pd	Urban Circle Operating Costs
1990-91	12	\$57,600	\$908,352	\$908,352	\$-	\$65,000
1991-92	12	\$58,752	\$877,755	\$1,786,107	\$228,000	\$65,000
1992-93	30	\$149,760	\$2,113,114	\$3,899,220	\$444,000	\$120,000
1993-94	30	\$152,640	\$2,027,059	\$5,926,280	\$954,000	\$120,000
1994-95	40	\$207,840	\$2,587,608	\$8,513,888	\$1,464,000	\$150,000
1995-96	40	\$212,160	\$2,465,299	\$10,979,187	\$2,548,000	\$150,000
1996-97	60	\$324,000	\$3,495,960	\$14,475,147	\$3,148,000	\$300,000
1997-98	85	\$468,180	\$4,663,073	\$19,138,220	\$3,988,000	\$500,000
1998-99	85	\$477,360	\$4,358,297	\$23,496,516	\$5,093,000	\$700,000
1999-00	85	\$487,560	\$4,046,748	\$27,543,264	\$6,113,000	\$700,000
2000-01	100	\$584,400	\$4,365,468	\$31,908,732	\$7,048,000	\$700,000
2001-02	100	\$596,400	\$3,960,096	\$35,868,828	\$8,048,000	\$700,000
2002-03	100	\$608,400	\$3,534,804	\$39,403,632	\$8,948,000	\$800,000
2003-04	115	\$713,460	\$3,553,031	\$42,956,663	\$9,748,000	\$1,000,000
2004-05	120	\$758,880	\$3,149,352	\$46,106,015	\$10,553,000	\$1,000,000
2005-06	115	\$742,440	\$2,464,901	\$48,570,916	\$11,273,000	\$1,000,000
2006-07	115	\$757,620	\$1,886,474	\$50,457,390	\$11,848,000	\$1,000,000
2007-08	115	\$772,800	\$1,282,848	\$51,740,238	\$12,308,000	\$1,000,000
2008-09	115	\$787,980	\$654,023	\$52,394,261	\$12,653,000	\$1,200,000
2009-10	150	\$1,047,600	\$869,508	\$53,263,769	\$12,883,000	\$1,200,000
	1,624			\$53,263,769	\$13,033,000	\$12,470,000

*General Notes to Table 23

Data provided by UCTC

1. Cost estimates based on single mother and 2 children aged 0-6 years.
2. Social assistance rate based on a monthly allowance of \$400 in 1990 with a 2% per year increase to arrive at a rate of \$582/mo in 2009.
3. Students graduating from the program = 90%; students with continuing full time employment or post secondary continuing education =83%
4. Annual savings discounted to 83% of total based on employment rate of students
5. Number of students in 20 years is 1624; number in workforce 1380
6. Savings are for Social Assistance only and does not include housing allowances
7. Income tax paid by graduates estimated conservatively at \$1000 per student per year.
8. Total cumulative direct savings over 20 years = \$66 million
9. Total cumulative direct operating costs over 20 years = \$12.5million
10. Net Savings to governments over 20 years: \$53.3 million
11. Indirect costs to system including health services, justice system, family services etc NOT included in estimated savings
Cumulative savings after 25 years (to the end of 2015) are estimated to be \$133million with total operating costs at \$18.5 million for a net savings to Canadian taxpayers over 25 years of over \$114 million

8.1.2 *Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD)*

CAHRD describes a mission “to assist Aboriginal people prepare for, acquire and maintain successful employment by providing direct service, and through funding outside organizations to provide training and employment related service” (CAHRD, 2010). It outlines specific goals that include providing services to approximately 2,400 people annually and the placement of 1200 people per year in successful employment. It aims to train 500 people for employment per year through the Neeginan Institute and through other programs funded through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA), which expired in 2010. CAHRD will continue to receive training funding and support other initiatives through a recently signed agreement with the federal government that replaces the AHRDA. Similar to the AHRDA, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) is a \$1.8 billion federal initiative that provides funding for short-term, labour market focused training.

In addition to education and training programs, CAHRD reports providing a number of services to their clients. While these will not be described in this study it is important to note that CAHRD views its organization as one that is “creating a community of support for Urban Aboriginal people” (personal communication, executive director of CAHRD).

CAHRD offers direct training through two programs.

The *Aboriginal Community Campus (ACC)* is a stand-alone Adult Learning Centre recognized by Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. It provides programming from basic literacy to a mature student high school diploma. While most

students in this program are Aboriginal, it is open to anyone who is a resident of Winnipeg.

Neeginan Institute of Applied Technology (Neeginan) is a technical and vocational post-secondary training institution specifically targeted to Aboriginal second-chance learners. Neeginan provides in-house training to Aboriginal students in partnership with industry, business and training and vocational institutions. All programs are delivered in response to labour market research and demand. Neeginan staff are qualified teachers who are accredited by institutions with which CAHRD is aligned.

Neeginan Institute programs include the aerospace manufacturing technician program, bookkeeping, carpentry, early childhood education, education assistant/communications, gas turbine repair and overhaul technician program, kinesthetic specialist education assistant, medical lab assistant, security guard, TIG welding, CWB welding, and 5th class power engineering.

While CAHRD does offer Aboriginal history through specific courses such as Native Studies, and it offers exposure to Aboriginal culture through various activities, unlike Urban Circle, it does not integrate Aboriginal culture and history directly into programming. The executive director of CAHRD noted that the organization is beginning to explore how to do so because it recognizes that there is a great need for students to understand how colonization has affected their lives and integrating cultural/historical awareness and healing into the core content would be helpful.^{xx} CAHRD also continues to expand its services in other areas in response to the complex needs of its students. For example, it now provides on-site childcare and will soon have on-site housing.

Because training programs at Neeginan have been selected based on market need, the expectation is that employment will be available for those who complete their training. Neeginan reports that virtually all of its graduates secure employment. Its most recent annual report (2008/09) showed a total of 287 participants in programs including aerospace manufacturing technician, bookkeeper, carpentry, early childhood education, education assistant/ communications, gas turbine repair and overhaul, kinesthetic specialist education assistant, medical lab assistant, security guard, welding and 5th class power engineering. As shown in Table 22, of the 287, 68 found employment, 124 continued with their education, 95 were listed as ‘other’ and the remaining 114 are described as “ongoing.”

As is true of any education and training program, it is virtually impossible to know the long-term employment outcomes of graduates for certain. For those who attend ACC, the hope is that they will continue their education either at Neeginan or through other programs offered in the community. Staff members are available to all students to assist them in finding programs that suit their particular interests and abilities. CAHRD stresses that the aim is to train participants for jobs that pay well. While statistics were not available, the executive director stated that graduates of Neeginan programs consistently find work earning wages far above minimum wage.

I was unable to obtain from CAHRD the cost of programs per student at Neeginan. Tuition is \$8,600; however there is no direct cost to students as funding is found through a variety of sources. ACC programming is fully funded through the Manitoba government. Students in all programs are responsible for their living allowances and staff members assist them in finding sources of funding. Recently, a pilot

project through Manitoba Family Services has allowed students at CAHRD to maintain living allowances through Employment and Income Assistance. This is a significant shift in policy in recent years and while only a pilot project, there is hope that the government is recognizing the long-term value in making this short-term investment.

8.1.3 Patal Training Inc.

Patal Training is a registered private vocational school that operates as a business rather than as a non-profit. Established in 1986, Patal offers programs in a small supportive environment. While Patal does not exclusively serve Aboriginal learners, eighty percent of its students are Aboriginal. The physical environment displays Aboriginal art and symbols and the Smudging ceremonies are said to be included in daily activities.

Patal offers programs that provide training within a one-year timeframe. Like other training programs, Patal programs are designed this way because it is near impossible to access funding for training that is longer in duration. Patal programs can be organized under two streams —computer/office and restaurant/hospitality. It also provides some culturally-based life-skills programming. *C.O.R.E (Continuing on the Red Road for Empowerment)* is a 12-week course that aims to prepare Aboriginal students for employment by introducing them to basic life skills, cultural awareness and basic computer training. *The PC Service Technician/Network Management* is a 42 week program. The objective is to provide students with the knowledge and practical skills to function in an entry-level position as a PC service technician, network technician, technical support or PC support specialist. *A Computerized office assistant program* provides basic computer operation instruction, teaching students how to operate specific

business applications including word processing, spreadsheets, and accounting applications. Graduates are prepared to work in entry-level office positions. Patal also offers an *ISP Community Technician* program. This twelve-week program provides students with general technical and operating knowledge of computers. The Certiport IC3—Internet and Core Computer Certificate Training is a basic computer operation program.

The second stream includes *Cooking Level One*, a 20-week course designed to train students in level one cooking skills. Patal has is an accredited institution for level one training. *Hospitality and Tourism* provides students with the knowledge and practical skills to function in an entry-level position in the tourism/hospitality industry, Patal also owns The Chocolate Shop, a regularly functioning restaurant that acts as the training ground for their Hospitality and Level One Cooking programs.

Patal maintains minimal and flexible eligibility requirements. Applicants are required to participate in a basic education assessment and an interview process to determine eligibility. While grade eight is the official minimal requirement, this policy is flexible. Students are in fact rarely turned away based on education level. Staff members assist prospective students to find financial assistance for tuition and living allowances and students are normally only turned away if such funding cannot be secured.

Patal has also made it a priority to hire individuals that have themselves trained at Patal and can therefore relate to the challenges of trainees. They provide mentorship, encouragement and support. Other than the director, staff members do not have formal training as educators but rather they have been trained ‘in house’ to deliver the curriculum.

Patal's website states that graduates have recently been hired by The Radisson Hotel, Manitoba Telephone Services, Manitoba Public Insurance, NRG Research, Manitoba Hydro and the University of Winnipeg Cafeteria. While more detailed information of the types of jobs acquired and wages earned is not available, the director of Patal notes that graduates earn a range of starting wages.^{xxi} The average wage rate for cooks is \$12 per hour. The average for PC Technicians ranges from \$12 to \$15 per hour. Accounting graduates normally start at \$12 per hour and those who find work after completing the CORE program rarely find employment paying more than minimum wage unless they have previous skills. The student employed by MPI from this program has done very well at about \$15 per hour.

I was unable to obtain information outlining the cost per student at Patal. I was informed that funding comes from a variety of sources including First Nations, Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) funds, Employment and Income Assistance and Employment Insurance. The cost of program per student/client is also not known. Direct costs are covered through the above resources and, like other programs, with no direct cost to trainees. Trainees are responsible for living costs; and finding these resources can be an extremely complicated process for students and they almost always require assistance of Patal staff.

Patal reports a 90 percent retention rate with 85 percent of trainees completing their programs and finding employment or participating in ongoing training.

At first blush, the programs offered by Patal appear to be very basic. It seems to provide training that could be learned on-the-job. It is not clear whether or not there is any significant difference resulting from the private-for-profit vs. non-profit nature of this

program. In part, it is impossible to make this assessment as I did not have access to the financial information of this private business. Access to information is an important distinction between Patal—a private owned entity—and the non-profit programs examined. Non-profits are required to have an annual report publicly available while privately owned companies are not, regardless of whether public funds are accessed. Nonetheless, while it can be assumed that there is some profit motivation as in all businesses, the owner/director seemed to be genuinely dedicated to her students and their outcomes and the individuals interviewed spoke very highly of her. A further distinction might be that as a small business operator, the owner is not accountable to shareholders concerned with returns on investment therefore she has greater ability to incorporate social objectives.

8.2 Long-Term (Degree/Certificate) Programs

8.2.1 ACCESS Programs

In the 1970s, the NDP government in Manitoba began to introduce a series of post-secondary education programs known as ACCESS programs. These programs were designed to make Manitoba's post-secondary institutions accessible for individuals who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend. Some ACCESS programs are more specifically focused on providing opportunities for Aboriginal students. Others are open to a broader range of students recognizing geographic, financial, social, and academic barriers. Priority groups consist of northern Manitobans, Aboriginal people, single parents, women, immigrants, visible minorities, and people with disabilities. ACCESS programs provide academic and personal supports as required to assist students with completing their course of study.

By 1987, the Province was financially supporting sixteen separate programs. In 2010, five Manitoba post-secondary institutions were delivering twelve ACCESS Programs. While all ACCESS programs are targeted toward disadvantaged learners, they are not all the same. Programs like the University of Manitoba's Inner City Social Work Program and the University of Brandon's Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) program were developed as community-based programs—programs that operate off-campus. However others, including the University of Manitoba's ACCESS Program (UMAP) and the Engineering ACCESS Program (ENGAP) operate on campus, offer students supports including counselling, academic upgrading, advisory services within the traditional university setting.

ACCESS programs were initially administered through the Department of Education and Training. In addition to academic and personal supports, students were provided with financial supports: tuition fees and textbooks were provided for in addition to a monthly living allowance. In 1992 a Conservative government eliminated living allowances for ACCESS students and despite strong opposition by the NDP at that time, the decision was not reversed when the NDP returned to office in 1999.

In 1998 responsibility for ACCESS programs was moved from the Department of Education and Training to the Council On Post Secondary Education (COPSE). COPSE was established as a provincial agency within government in 1996 to “facilitate the coordination and integration of post-secondary services and facilities, review and approve university and college programming, develop policy, and promote fiscal responsibility and accountability in the post-secondary system” (Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, 2010).

COPSE provided me with intake, enrollment and graduation statistics. However comparable statistics were only available for the period after 1998. For the nine-year period between 1998 and 2007, there has been an average of 370 new intakes each year with an average enrolment of 1089 in ACCESS programs. Approximately 150 students a year have graduated from the various programs in this period with a total of 1435 graduates. On average, over 70 percent of students are Aboriginal and over 70 percent are women.

ACCESS programs cost Manitoba taxpayers \$7.1 million in 2007—less than \$7,000 per year per student on average. In 2006/07, 77.7 percent of graduates found full-time work. Another 6.9 percent were employed part-time and 5.4 percent continued with their education.

In the following section, I examine the Inner City Social Work Access Program as a specific example of an ACCESS program that has successfully trained Aboriginal second-chance learners.

8.2.2 The Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP)

The Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP) was designed to provide inner city residents and especially those with social, financial and academic barriers with an opportunity to obtain a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Manitoba. Although the ICSWP can be described as a labour-market focused program in that it trains students for a very specific market need, it is arguably less aligned with a neo-liberal model as training is longer term and includes more than skills-based learning. ICSWP is a four-year university degree program. The program is also offered part-time to accommodate students who are working in the field but do not have a degree. Costs of the program are shown in Table 24.

Table 24
Average Training Program Cost and Outcomes

Training Institution	Number of trainees	Program Completion	Employment/Continuing Education	Cost Per Student	Cost to student (tuition, books, supplies)*
Inner City Social Work Program	Approximately 100 students (4 year program)	67%	90% of graduates find employment	\$12,000 per year full time study for total of \$48,000 for full program of study.	Approximately \$4000 per year

*Organizations assist student to find funding. This cost does not include living allowance

Seventy percent of students at the ICSWP are Aboriginal. Programming is designed to reflect the characteristics of the student population as well as the reality that a majority of graduates will be working with Aboriginal ‘clients’. The curriculum includes university-level Native studies courses and Aboriginal social work practice courses. Students learn about colonization and the impact that this has had on Aboriginal people. They are encouraged to engage in their journey of healing. The ICSWP recently hired an Aboriginal student advisor/counsellor to further support its Aboriginal focused education model.

Graduates of the program attain a bachelor’s degree in social work and are qualified to work as professional social workers. As shown in Table 24, program staff calculated the cost of this program per student to be approximately \$48,000 per student for the full 4-years. According to the ICSWP director, the program receives sixty percent of its funding through the provincial government’s Council on Post Secondary Education (COPSE) and the remaining forty percent comes from tuition fees. Prior to 2002, the ICSWP was funded as an annual project through COPSE but it has since been recognized as a permanent University of Manitoba program, receiving permanent funding. The

ICSWP program director describes the new funding model as significant because it means staff and students are less vulnerable to the whims of government.

Program costs are the same as those at the main campus of the University of Manitoba. The cost, including tuition, books and supplies, can range between \$4,000 and \$4,500 per year. As will be described later, the ICSWP was at one time fully funded, including tuition, books and living allowances, by the provincial government. However this is no longer the case. Some current students are able to access funding through their First Nations or through other bursaries and scholarships while others have no sources other than student loans. This creates a significant barrier for some students as well as resentment among students who cannot understand why others in similar circumstances can get help and they cannot. It also deters some students from enrolling in the program because they are afraid to put their families in financial debt.

Including both part-time and full-time study, the ICSWP has approximately one hundred students enrolled in the program. Through an extensive intake process to determine readiness and suitability, ICSWP aims for thirty-five new students each year. Eligible students must demonstrate academic and social need but they must also demonstrate their suitability to the profession and their potential ability to handle the academic demand of the program. This creates some tensions between ‘need’ and ‘eligibility’ however program staff maintain that it is not in the applicant’s best interest to be accepted into a program if they are not able to handle the demands.

Sixty-five to seventy percent of students graduate. The majority find work as social workers earning anywhere from \$35,000 per year as community workers to upwards of \$50,000 in public service social work positions.

The Director of the ICSWP describes the program as having been modelled after an earlier ACCESS program that assisted inner-city students to obtain a Bachelor of Education Program through a University program offered at a community-based setting. The ICSWP had its first intake in 1981 and the first cohort graduated in 1984. Since that time, the program has graduated more than three hundred social workers.

After spending years in a rented facility in the northeast quadrant of the City, in 2004 the program relocated to a facility owned by the University of Manitoba, appropriately located on Selkirk Ave. in the heart of Winnipeg's inner city. The Centre, also known as the William Norrie Campus, shares a street with other adult learning programs and community-based programs offering supports to inner city residents. It is a few steps away from the Urban Circle Training Centre, where many ICSWP students begin their journey as second-chance learners.

The Director of the ICSWP describes the current situation of the program as more stable than ever before since becoming a permanent program of the University of Manitoba. However, students continue to be in a precarious situation without the comprehensive funding supports that were made available in earlier years.

In terms of cutbacks, the Director points to the "winds of political change" in the 1980s as a major influence on the scaling back of support for ACCESS programs (Clare, 2003, p.11). Soon after a Conservative government was elected with a majority government in 1990, ACCESS programs came under attack. Student allowances were cut by 50 percent in 1992-93 and students would have to take on student debt through the Canada Student Loans (CSL) program to fund their studies and support their families.

To offset the impact of cutbacks and in recognition of the added financial demands of ACCESS students with families to support, a new bursary program was introduced. This was important because ACCESS students are by definition older students with greater financial responsibilities, fewer family resources to fall back on than available to the average student, and a shorter work life ahead of them making it more difficult to pay back their loans. However bursaries could be accessed only as a supplement to the maximum allowed under the CSL program. This created a significant barrier to students. As noted by one ICSWP interviewee who was fortunate to obtain her degree before financial supports were eliminated, taking out a student loan when you are a single parent with limited supports can be “terrifying.” She explained that when you are accustomed to living on a very low-income with no family or other supports to rely on, “...you’d be afraid to owe any kind of money—how are you going to pay it?”^{xxii}

Additional cuts were made to ACCESS programs in 1992-93. The institutional support portion of the program was cut by more than 10 percent each year resulting in “the shrinking of staff and programmatic supports” (Clare, 2003, p.14). In spite of reviews that showed the ACCESS programs to be a success, a 1994 review of Manitoba’s ACCESS programs fed into the Conservative agenda to further dismantle supports. This review, authored by Hikel, (quoted in Clare, 2003), stated that the “ACCESS program was unquestionably worthy of continuation... [with] graduation rates of 41.8% across all of the access programs between 1985 and 1995” (p. 15). Hikel acknowledged... “we know of no other ACCESS-like program in Canada that can claim such success” (quoted in Clare, 2003, p.15). Nonetheless, he went on to recommend complete withdrawal of

student allowances to ACCESS students, stating that it provided “unfair—and perhaps unnecessary financial advantage to access students” (quoted in Clare, 2003, p.15).

Cuts to supports for students have had a major impact on student recruitment. The ICSWP has had a 50 percent reduction in applicants. Many are simply too afraid to take on the debt required. However, success for those who are enrolled continues to be impressive. ICSWP records show completion rates of 65-70 percent with 80-100 percent of graduates finding employment in the field.

When re-elected in 1999, there was hope that as the government who had championed ACCESS programs, the NDP government would revisit the funding of multi-barriered students qualifying for ACCESS programs. While the current NDP government continues to hold ACCESS programs up as an important model, and while they have, as noted by Clare (2003), increased supports and made programs more stable, they have not reinstated financial supports for students and they are not likely to do so.

As noted earlier, the policy to support the disadvantaged to acquire long-term post secondary education does not comply with the neo-liberal ideology that continues to drive policy direction. For example, while the Province will, on a case-by-case basis, allow ICSWP students to retain Employment and Income Assistance supports while completing their BSW program, this is becoming increasingly rare. As described in Chapter 4, while official policy does not restrict support through ACCESS programs, decisions are made at the discretion of the EIA worker and almost always in line with the ‘work first’ policy position—a position that very clearly distinguishes between government interest in supporting poor people to obtain the education they need to escape

poverty. There is a clear, albeit invisible, line drawn between ‘job’ and ‘career’ and there is little interest in supporting multi-barriered individuals in obtaining the latter.

8.3 Demand and Supply: Job Creation, Affirmative Action and Public Infrastructure

Given the limitations of supply side strategies, integrating affirmative action conditions into hiring and tendering contracts for large-scale public infrastructure projects is one approach to providing opportunities for marginalized workers. In spite of concerns about labour shortages, much of the literature argues that there are simply not enough good jobs available, and critics of narrowly focused supply-side approaches advocate for governments to stimulate job creation as a central feature of anti-poverty strategies (Crouch, et al., 1999; Lafer, 2002; Livingstone, 1998; Stricker, 2007). While such interventions were quite common in the Keynesian years, they have become politically unpopular in the era of neo-liberalism. However in spite of some resistance, more progressive governments have managed to integrate equity training and hiring of marginalized populations into large-scale infrastructure development projects.

In their analysis of construction based public infrastructure projects that integrate training and employment for equity (excluded) groups, Cohen and Braid (2003) outline three essential components of successful equity ‘construction’ projects that can be transferred to other targeted job creation projects.

1. Projects must be built on collaborative relationships between contractors, trade unions, and community-based organizations;
2. Projects must establish a critical mass of specific equity group employees; and
3. Projects require an atmosphere characterized by cooperation rather than the demand for ‘compliance’ (p.55).

Cohen and Braid (2003) also describe such projects as being highly contentious. In their description of the Vancouver Island Highway project, they note that neither contractors nor unions welcomed equity provisions. Projects in Manitoba have been equally contentious with critics strongly opposed to the adoption of project labour agreements that include provisions for training and hiring of target populations. Contentious as they may be, equity provisions in public infrastructure projects have made an important contribution to addressing poverty and social exclusion in Manitoba. NDP governments in Manitoba have a long history of such projects. The initiatives described here are examples of projects that are fundamentally different from neo-liberal models in that they have broader public policy objectives. In addition to their central objectives — infrastructure improvement — they integrate affirmative action hiring and training of marginalized groups. Four Manitoba examples have had some success in meeting these social goals while also addressing infrastructure needs and economic development priorities. They are:

Limestone Training and Employment Agency (Limestone),

Hydro Northern Training Initiative (HNTI),

Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) and

Building Urban Industries through Local Development (BUILD).

Data collected on the Limestone, HNTI and MFA projects was gathered in 2008. In the case of Limestone, documents were obtained from the government of Manitoba and a past project manager was interviewed. Training opportunities available to participants are outlined in Appendix 6. In the case of the Northern Hydro project and the Red River

Floodway project, information available on project websites were examined, and current and past project staff were interviewed.

The Limestone Training and Employment Agency (LTEA) was the first large-scale economic development project that integrated affirmative action training and employment objectives into the project design and agreements with contractors. To some degree, this model provided a framework for the more recent Northern Hydro Project and the Manitoba Floodway Initiative. BUILD, the fourth program examined is the most recent, and is much smaller scale than the others. It is also unique in that it is a community-based initiative rather than one that is government driven. Nonetheless, it too integrates supply- and demand-side strategies. Central to BUILD's business model is the increasing demand for upgrades to the aging public housing stock. It is a model that ties this infrastructure need to a targeted supply of worker/trainees.

I examine each of these models to better understand how targeted job creation models contribute to greater social and economic inclusion of Aboriginal people. Table 25 provides a basic outline of the scope of each of these projects. While the scope and scale differs significantly in each case, they are similar in that they are integrated models that aim to create demand for a targeted supply of workers.

Table 25
Affirmative Action/Infrastructure Projects

	Limestone Training and Employment Agency (Actual)	Northern Hydro Training Initiative	Floodway Training Initiative	BUILD
Project Duration	7 years	12 years	6 years	Ongoing since 2006
Projected Training Funds (Federal/Provincial)	\$41 million*	\$60.3 million	Not specified. A total of \$1 million approved for a number of projects, including the FTI	\$1 million per year
Training targets	1477 (Aboriginal and Northern)	1,115 (Aboriginal)	No targets specified	40 per year
Jobs created	6846 (1,709 Aboriginals hired)	2000 at peak construction NHTI training for 794 jobs	Projects “thousands of jobs”	40 FTE per year
Aboriginal hiring goals	10-45 percent non-apprentice 60 percent of permitted apprentice	Goals not specified	20 percent equity hires	90 percent
Actual Aboriginal hires	1985-1989 1,709 Aboriginal identity hired (25percent of total hires)	2006-2008, 855 Aboriginal identity hired (63.6 percent of total hires)	Data not available	Data not available

*1991 dollars

8.3.1 Limestone Training and Employment Agency

The Manitoba Limestone Hydro Project (or ‘Limestone’) was a major hydro construction project on the northern Nelson River. Construction began in 1985 with completion in 1992. A critical component of Limestone was the Limestone Training and Employment Agency (LTEA), which was established to ensure training and employment of Northern Manitobans and in particular Aboriginal Northerners. An impetus for the

project was the need for the coordination and training of individuals for jobs directly and indirectly created as a result of Limestone. The LTEA has been described as ‘the centerpiece’ of a strategy to meet the needs of the Limestone project, while also addressing the long-term occupational needs of northern Manitoba (Conawapa Education and Training Working Group (CETWG), 1991).

The LTEA’s mandate was to implement programming including basic education, short-term community-based courses and long-term institutional courses that would result in a university degree. A primary objective was to train Aboriginal people for higher-skilled occupations and to provide individuals otherwise unlikely to acquire recognized credentials with an opportunity to do so. Achieving this goal required the development of alternative approaches to both recruitment and training in order to accommodate the unique needs of Northerners. Over a five-year period a total of over \$41 million was spent to establish a pool of skilled individuals in the North which hydro contractors and other employers could draw upon.

The LTEA was created in part as a response to the concerns that there was a shortage of skilled trades-people in the North to work on the Limestone project. This was primarily due to systemic barriers that limited opportunity for Northerners interested in apprenticeships. Through the LTEA, special recruitment and training was put in place to resolve this issue and the Limestone Training and Employment Retrospective Report (1991) stated that “the northern labour force changed from having virtually no skilled tradespersons in 1984 to over 1000 persons registered in apprenticeable trades by 1990” (CETWG, p. 25). Due to the limited time frame, the significant increase in participation in skilled trades would not result in journey certification in time to benefit from

employment opportunities on Limestone. However it was important for the long-term vision of the LTEA which was to “leave behind journey persons and professionals, not simply train for short-term jobs” (CETWG, 1991, p. 27). A total of 1,720 persons applied for apprenticeship training on the site. One thousand and one were registered with 428 active apprentices in 1990. By 1991, 14 persons had attained journeyperson status, four times that which previously existed in the North.^{xxiii}

An important aspect of Limestone was that it had the potential to provide apprentices with sufficient work hours to progress to journeyperson accreditation. While the project had some shortcomings, and challenges with the apprenticeship program remain evident with the current Hydro Northern Training initiative, the CETWG concluded that the apprenticeship system improved as a result of Limestone.

The Limestone project, and the spinoff jobs that it created, also resulted in a need for a significant number of less skilled workers in various positions. In response to this need, a number of community-based training initiatives, spread across 12 northern communities, provided opportunity for individuals to train in their home communities. Community-based programs included training for ironworkers, heavy equipment operators, truck drivers, cooks and bakers, carpenters, bus drivers, store clerks, tower erectors, rebar workers and labourers. Between 1985 and 1990, 68 community-based training courses were offered. A total of 734 individuals participated and 456 graduated. The CETWG felt that the community-based model proved to be effective for learners while also having the important outcome of sensitizing trainers to the education challenges in northern remote locations. As will be further discussed, the community-based model was criticized for being centrally delivered through the LTEA, leaving few

opportunities for Aboriginal communities to be fully engaged in the process of design and delivery.

In addition to community-based programs, simulated training programs were designed to give trainees a more realistic sense of the real work environment that they hoped to eventually be employed in. In cooperation with unions and contractors, courses were designed to train labourers, welders, rebar workers, forming and apprentice level carpenters, heavy equipment operators, security guards, teamsters, caterers, bus drivers, surveyors, computer operators, hydro linesmen, bull cooks, and truck drivers. Between 1985 and 1990, at a cost of \$2.67 million, 180 simulated training courses were offered with 1,674 individuals participating and 1,083 graduating. Trainees were provided with a training allowance set at minimum wage, and were provided with room, board and travel allowance. It is not clear how many trainees were hired on site after completion of their training.

The LTEA's broader vision was reflected in the implementation of institutional education/training programs aimed at developing a highly-skilled, professional northern labour force to meet the longer-term needs of the North. Four new long-term institutional programs were created as an extension of the existing ACCESS model. The Engineering ACCESS program (ENGAP) was introduced through the University of Manitoba to encourage Aboriginal students to pursue a degree in Engineering. ACCESS North-The Pas delivered programs to accredit water treatment operators, construction electrical pipefitters, as well as pre-employment courses leading to Keewatin Community College certification. ACCESS North-Thompson delivered integrated business skills and civil technology through the Wa-Waah-Tay-O Education Centre and ACCESS North-

Winnipeg delivered programs to northern students in three-year electrical, electronic, computer or instrumentation technology programs at Red River Community College. These programs continue to provide accredited training to Aboriginal students and are an important legacy of the LTEA.

Another important objective of the LTEA was to address low levels of education attainment through the Community-Based University Entrance program (CBUE). The need for basic skills training was identified as critical, as many potential workers lacked basic skills that would allow them to proceed through the apprenticeship program. The CBUE gave individuals an opportunity to complete the prerequisite training to qualify for further Limestone or other Hydro-related training. Although found to be an effective and cost efficient model, the CBUE was eliminated from the provincial government 1990/91 estimates due to budget constraints (CETWG, p. 34).

From the onset, developers of the Limestone training program were aware that the majority of jobs created would be time-limited construction jobs. Their aim was to ensure that in addition to training directly for Limestone, individuals would be provided with opportunities for accredited training that would lead them to qualify for good jobs after Limestone was completed. They were also committed to ensuring that education and training programs targeted toward Aboriginal and northern populations would be created and continue beyond the life of the project. ACCESS programs, initially designed through the LTEA to meet labour market needs at Limestone, continue to provide targeted professional training for Aboriginal people today.

The Limestone project negotiated Aboriginal employment goals based on the labour needs of the project. This included 40 percent of labourers and 10 percent of

carpenters. According to the CETWG, by December 1989, 6,646 persons had been hired at Limestone. One thousand, seven hundred and nine (25 percent) were northern Aboriginals, 12 percent were non-Aboriginal Northerners and the remaining were residents of southern Manitoba and elsewhere.

In terms of employment outcomes for LTEA graduates, the CETWG report shows outcomes for only two of the seven-year period (Table 27). While it is difficult to know for certain whether trainees would have been employed without the LTEA, overall employment outcomes of 75 percent in 1986 and 68 percent are significant given the obstacles reported.

Table 26
Limestone Trainee Employment Outcomes—1986, 1987

Year	Total Graduates	Percentage employed at Limestone	Percentage Other Employment	Percentage Unemployed	Percentage Not Actively Seeking Employment
1986	828	28	47	19	6
1987	982	29	39	25	7

Source: CETWG Retrospective Report

It is also notable that meeting the affirmative action goals for employment requiring short-term training was much easier than that of the higher skilled trades. This was in part due to the longer-term education requirements of high-skill positions, but an additional problem was that contractors did not hire as many apprentices as they were allowed under the regulations. Concern was expressed that some job orders placed unnecessary emphasis on previous work experience, in addition to LTEA graduation. This effectively compromised affirmative action goals and discriminated against LTEA participants.

This concern led to LTEA-led criticism of the Canada Employment Centres (CECs) that acted as the referral mechanism for workers. The LTEA felt that the CECs showed preference to employer needs and were less concerned with the placement of trainees. This created conflict between the two parties and it was seen by the LTEA to be in violation of objectives laid out in the Canada/Manitoba Agreement. The LTEA felt that the spirit of cooperation in meeting affirmative action goals was compromised. As will be further discussed, similar challenges occurred with the more recent Red River Floodway expansion and Northern Hydro Training projects, which suggests that there is a fundamental flaw in the framework that has yet to be addressed in spite of very clear lessons learned.

Notwithstanding the challenges described above, it appears that the LTEA was successful in providing a series of short-term and long-term training opportunities for Aboriginal Northerners who would have otherwise had difficulty accessing such opportunities. While follow up with LTEA graduates indicated a much higher rate of unemployment compared with those in other parts of the province (25 percent compared to 7 percent in October 1987), the CETWG noted that when compared with unemployment in many northern First Nations, employment outcomes were significant (CETWG, 1991).

The LTEA, while less than perfect, was the first model of its kind in Manitoba and it made a significant contribution to skills development for Aboriginal people. There are many lessons to be learned from the successes and failures of the LTEA. In particular, the CETWG argued that an important benefit of the LTEA was that “in the process, many of the complexities which have contributed to the difficulties of

mainstream education programs and employment initiatives were identified and in many cases remedied (1991, p.50). In general, evaluations found the “LTEA to be a cost-effective method of training Northerners for the hydro site” (CETWG, 1991, p.50). Average cost per student per year was \$13,336 (simulated training), \$3,963 (community-based) and \$24,927 (institutional).^{xxiv} From 1984/85 to 1989/90, Manitoba expended an estimated \$41,313,100, recovering a total of \$11,509,700 from the federal government. The(Northern Resident Employment Committee, 1993) also concluded that the project was an important model to be further developed in future years. It stated that “...significant progress was made on the Limestone Project in respect of the training and employment of Northern Aboriginals” and that “further improvements over the Limestone experience can be achieved on the next major project” (Northern Resident Employment Committee, 1993, p.3).

In spite of its successes, the Limestone initiative was highly criticized for failing to meet its mandate. In its ‘retrospective’, the CETWG provided two explanations for this. First, it notes that government communication about the project and the LTEA led Northerners to believe that they would have a direct route to employment at the Hydro site. This perception raised expectations far beyond what the project could meet. Approximately 5000 Northerners registered with the LTEA, believing that they would be trained and employed on the site. In spite of the use of the term ‘employment’ in the agency name, the LTEA was not mandated to ensure employment on the site—its role was strictly that of a trainer and a broker between trainers and employers. Hiring was out of its hands. The CETWG noted this as a major ‘lesson learned’ for future projects, yet

there continue to be similar concerns raised about process and the kinds of jobs training leads to (Hultin, 2004; Kulchyski, 2004, as cited in Freylejer, 2010).

As noted earlier, a major criticism of the LTEA was that the initiative did not have significant involvement of Northerners in the development and design.^{xxv} The centralized structure resulted in training and delivery models being developed by non-Aboriginal southerners. This appears to have been taken into consideration in the current Hydro project model—Northern and Aboriginal organizations have been involved throughout the design and Aboriginal communities are making decisions on training needs and delivery models.

Regardless of how far we have come, further analysis will show that many of the same challenges continue to be found with the current Northern Hydro project. In some respects, the current model is less visionary than the Limestone model was. The Northern Hydro Training Initiatives' explicit aims appear to be more narrowly focused on the short-term needs of the project, with less attention to the longer-term needs of the communities and the education of future Aboriginal workers. The good news is that the community-driven training model appears to have raised significant capacity in the communities, which will likely have far reaching implications. Albeit in a different manner, the Limestone project also appeared to carefully consider capacity building for the future by leaving a legacy of institutions (ACCESS programs) that would be in place for generations to come. Perhaps the capacity being developed in the current model will better prepare individuals in northern Aboriginal communities with the essential skills necessary for them to take advantage of the professional training opportunities that are in place as a result of Limestone.

8.3.2 *Northern Hydro Training Initiative*

According to the Manitoba Government in 2000, Manitoba Hydro announced plans for two new hydroelectric generating stations (GS) in Northern Manitoba: Wuskwatim GS on the Burntwood River and Gull (Keeyask) GS on the Nelson River. The Manitoba government estimated construction costs of \$4 billion with the creation of over 2,000 jobs at peak construction. It has been estimated that the effort will contribute up to \$2 billion to the national GDP, with one half of this amount accruing to Manitoba.

The Manitoba government describes the Hydro Northern Training and Employment Initiative (HNTEI) as a \$60.3 million, multi-year initiative that aims to train and prepare over 1,000 Aboriginal residents for 800 hydro construction and related employment opportunities. The Initiative is funded by the federal government's Aboriginal Skills and Employment partnership (ASEP) program, Manitoba Hydro, the Province of Manitoba, Western Economic Diversification, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The HNTEI is managed by the Manitoba Métis Federation and northern First Nations through the Wuskwatim & Keeyask Training Consortium (WKTC). The consortium is a limited partnership involving five northern First Nations, the Manitoba Métis Federation, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Manitoba Hydro and the Province of Manitoba. In response to criticism of the centralized training approach taken by the LTEA, the WKTC does not provide training. In the current model, the WKTC essentially channels the \$60.3 million in training funds, through an application process, to communities to deliver training in a manner that they deem appropriate.

The consortium aims to “provide a continuum of training opportunities for up to 1,115 individuals from the five Cree Nations and other Northern Aboriginal people and to

secure 794 positions on construction opportunities on the proposed hydroelectric generating stations” (HRSDC, 2009).

Similar to the previous Limestone project, it has been determined that training is required to prepare individuals for a variety of positions including designated and non-designated trades, construction supports, technical/professional, and business/management. A ‘Community-Based Training and Employment Model’ has been developed to include five phases including assessment, academic preparation, academic instruction and technical training, on-the-job training and employment.

As of December 31, 2007, the Consortium reported the following outcomes.

- Over 1800 participants have been assessed for training
- 160 trainees have participated in academic upgrading activities
- 173 community members have participated in ‘life skills’ programming
- 190 individuals have taken part in short-term programming
- 327 trainees have completed training in non-designated trades
- 60 trainees have completed training in business and management
- 43 trainees have completed training in technical/professional areas
- 53 trainees have completed training in construction project supports
- 323 individuals have completed training in designated trades areas with 15 trainees becoming certified journeypersons (WKTC, 2008)

As of December 21, 2007, the HNTEI initiative reported 146 active apprentices and an additional 161 trainees in designated trades pre-employment programs being prepared for entry into apprenticeship training (WKTC, 2008). At that stage of the project 472 individuals were employed with 88 percent in full-time employment. Forty-four of those individuals were employed with Manitoba Hydro.^{xxvi} It is not known where the remaining 428 individuals were employed and in what capacity. While attempts to contact WKTC representatives for clarification of employment outcomes were unsuccessful, reports available on the website provided insight into outcomes and ongoing challenges to date. More recent attempts to access information have not been

successful as the Consortium's website has been disabled. However, the integrated report for the third quarter of 2007 (WKTC, 2008) notes a host of challenges. Many of the challenges outlined by the CETWG with regard to the Limestone project continue to exist. Issues include:

1. High training costs (under review by the Province).
2. Difficulties securing on-the-job placements.
3. Concerns that trainees are not receiving referrals from the Manitoba Job Referral Service.^{xxvii} Some partners expressed concerns that contractors are looking out of province to fill positions.
4. Concerns with the Manitoba Hydro recruitment process.
5. Absence of programs to respond to trainee interest in structural ironworker and crane operator training.
6. Concerns with outcomes for some individuals (trained but not employed).
7. Driver training and licensing is an ongoing need and challenge.
8. Academic requirements such as math, sciences and English comprehension continue to be problematic and culturally appropriate curriculum development is needed and being explored.
9. Recruitment and assessment requires improvement to ensure adequate interventions.
10. Difficulty maintaining 15 percent guidelines for administration costs.
11. The challenge of convincing key stakeholders such as contractors, unions, government and Manitoba Hydro that there is a need for a larger number of trainees and apprentices on construction projects to expand the labour force. (Recent union negotiations in Manitoba are reflecting a better trainee to journeyperson ratio and the Manitoba Apprenticeship Branch has become more active in removing barriers for northern communities to access the system.
12. Difficulty convincing key stakeholders/industry in Manitoba that it's imperative to implement flexible working conditions to accommodate the northern Aboriginal trainees on off reserve projects. Manitoba Hydro has

agreed to conduct a study on retention mechanisms, which includes flexible working conditions, on five major projects across Canada.

13. Difficulties coordinating with University College of the North (UCN).
14. Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) expressed concerns with insufficient staffing.
15. Attendance issues.
16. Issues with number of number of trainees employed in Hydro operations continue.

The challenges identified by WKTC are not surprising. Like the LTEA, WKTC's mandate has been quite limited. Just as poor communication and unreasonable expectations was identified as a limitation of the Limestone project, it appears to continue to be an issue with the current project. The lack of a clearly articulated description of the Training Consortium and its mandate can lead to a misunderstanding of its role. While it is true that nowhere is it indicated that training comes with a guarantee of employment, nowhere is it made clear that it does not. Communication from Manitoba Hydro has emphasized the number of jobs to be created over the life of the projects and training opportunities available; however there is no connection made between the two. The only connection made to hiring processes is a note to interested individuals to contact the Manitoba government's Jobs Referral Service (JRS).

It was only after personal communication with Manitoba Hydro officials that it became clear that the role of the WKTC is that of 'administrator of funds' rather than a training body. It is possible that this misunderstanding is widespread. While it appears that the communication continues to be wanting, it is also clear that the community-driven approach is an improvement. Most important is that the WKTC model appears to have evolved from First Nation criticisms of the centralized training model of the LTEA,

which suggests that some important lessons have been learned. As will be described further, while it is not clear at this point in time whether the new model has resulted in improved education and employability outcomes, it appears that it has resulted in some important unintended outcomes that may have long-term benefits for participants and their communities.

As noted, in spite of the improvements, many of the challenges identified during the Limestone project some 20 years ago continue. This suggests that there are systemic challenges that have yet to be resolved. Some have argued that critical First Nation human resource needs might have been addressed through more persistent negotiations. These critics have argued that Manitoba Hydro has been given far too much control over the project and the types of jobs that people are being trained to do. For example, a past Government of Manitoba employee suggested that First Nations might have made a better case for a broader range of training in response to local needs beyond the direct needs of the project. This could more broadly meet more chronic needs such as shortages of teachers, nurses, counsellors and other professionals rather narrowly focusing on the number of Aboriginal hires for construction related projects. However, agreeing to this type of ‘trade-off’ would have required trust and cooperation among all parties.

Hydro development in the north is highly contentious and Manitoba Hydro is under significant pressure to demonstrate the direct impact for northern Aboriginal communities. Showing a significant number of Aboriginal hires provides a very clear outcome. An agreement that allowed funds to be used for a broad set of training options to meet community needs would require that expectations for Aboriginal hires on hydro sites be lowered. But attempts to explain low numbers of Aboriginal hires because

training dollars were allocated to train community members in unrelated professions would be a much harder sell and, quite frankly, a potential political nightmare. More flexible training parameters could be beneficial to individuals, communities and contractors alike. Expanding options for trainees would open up opportunities for those not interested in pursuing employment in the construction sector. Providing training to those interested in much needed human service work would benefit these individuals and the community. Further, those contractors reluctant to the hiring process as laid out in the Agreement would likely welcome greater flexibility in hiring.

In an effort to better understand training challenges and outcomes of the Wuskwatim project compared with those of Limestone, I interviewed officials from Manitoba Hydro and the Province of Manitoba. When asked about key learnings from Limestone and how these were integrated into the current project, officials noted in particular the lack of community involvement and community based training in Limestone. It appears that the new model has addressed this issue.

When asked about training and employment outcomes, the province of Manitoba's representative noted that a major problem at this point is that delays in construction have resulted in limited opportunities for trainees who have completed their programs. The intent was to ensure that training would begin well in advance of construction to ensure that a skilled Aboriginal workforce would be available when needed. This was also a lesson learned from the Limestone project—there was minimal lead up time between training and project start-up and therefore trained northern and Aboriginal workers were difficult to find. In spite of significant delays, the Wuskwatim project is near completion. At the end of October 2010, 909 individuals were employed

on the project, 23 percent of whom identified as Aboriginal. The total number of ‘hires’ since the project began in 2006 is 4762, with 40 percent identifying as Aboriginal.

While I could not access the most recent statistics from WKTC, the 2008 report showed that a vast majority of trainees were working full-time (although it is not clear where), and the Wuskwatim statistics show a significant number of Aboriginal workers from Northern communities and beyond. This indicates that trainees continued to find employment as construction at Wuskwatim scaled up after 2008, and opportunities will continue once work at Keeyask commences. As noted by a Manitoba Hydro representative, there will be years of hydro development ahead in the North and for those interested and qualified, there will be work for upwards of twenty years (A. Miles, personal communication, November 25, 2008).

Both Manitoba government and Manitoba Hydro representatives noted that beyond direct employment, a further accomplishment of the training program has been increased capacity development in First Nation and other Aboriginal communities. Communities have been taking the lead role in deciding who to train, what to train for, and how best to train. It is felt that this new model will have positive long-term implications for education and employment outcomes for participants and communities.

After reviewing both the Limestone model and the Northern Hydro Training and Employment Initiative model, it became increasingly clear that the analysis was not about which model was better, but rather how the approach, integrating targeted training and employment in what is essentially a series of large-scale economic development projects, can contribute to addressing the social exclusion of Aboriginal people in Manitoba. Limestone was an important first step and it left a legacy of programs that would continue

to contribute to creating opportunities for Aboriginal people, thereby improving education and employment outcomes.

For this reason, and because of the somewhat high number of Aboriginal hires on the Wuskwatim project, I was particularly interested in knowing whether any of the individuals hired at Wuskwatim had participated in training either directly associated with Limestone or in one of the ‘legacy’ institutions introduced during that time. I felt that this information would be very useful in terms of tracking the long-term impact of targeted training programs. It is very possible that the increase in Aboriginal hires is attributable to an increase in skilled Aboriginal workers in part a result of the Limestone legacy. It is also possible that some of the increase can be attributed directly to targeted training setup during the ‘Limestone days’. I attempted to gather this information from Manitoba Hydro but they reported that this information is not available and it had not occurred to them to ask applicants and new hires this question.

While the projects described in this research, as well as other initiatives targeted toward Aboriginal people have clearly led to progress, an important observation shared by a Manitoba Hydro employee reveals that we have a long way yet to go. She acknowledged that Hydro was somewhat naïve in thinking that the process to train and qualify northern Aboriginal workers for the designated skilled positions so desperately needed would be relatively smooth. She noted that it has since become very clear that many of the individuals seeking training have very low educational attainment, multiple challenges and will require years of training to move through the apprenticeship process. This observation supports the broader public policy challenge described in my research. Aboriginal Canadians continue to lag far behind the non-Aboriginal population in both

education attainment and employment income and much investment will be required to change this.

In fairness to Manitoba Hydro, the complex challenges facing Aboriginal communities and the failure of governments to provide sufficient supports to ensure that all Aboriginal people have access to adequate education have created a challenge that the crown corporation cannot be expected to address. But it does have an important role to play. This is particularly true given the economic gains made by Manitoba Hydro at the expense of northern Manitoban Aboriginal communities. However, it is the federal and provincial governments that are primarily responsible for the education and employment of citizens and therefore the challenge ultimately falls to them.

8.3.3 Manitoba Floodway Authority

In the early 2000s, Manitoba embarked on a project to improve flood protection at the Red River Floodway near the city of Winnipeg. It is a much smaller project than those previously discussed but nonetheless was described as a project that would create “thousands of jobs for Manitobans.” Similar to the objectives of the Hydro projects, the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA, 2009) outlines a commitment to:

- employment equity for designated groups that are underrepresented in the Manitoba construction industry workforce—Aboriginal people, women, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities;
- a pool of skilled equity group members available to work on the floodway and other future construction projects;
- ensuring meaningful employment equity hiring on the floodway project.

The MFA established an Employment Equity Strategy to help meet these objectives.

The strategy consisted of three key components:

1. 20 percent Employment Initiative—To have a minimum of 20 percent of the overall labour workforce consisting of available qualified employment equity hires.
2. Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative—To generate jobs and economic opportunities for the Aboriginal community, through an Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative for Aboriginal businesses and workers.
3. Floodway Training Initiative (FTI)—To increase the pool of skilled equity target group members for work on the floodway project, other heavy construction projects, and the construction industry at large, MFA is working with Manitoba Advanced Education & Training (MAET).

Contractors working on the project were required to meet 20 percent employment equity targets.^{xxviii} Equity targets are waived if contractors are able to demonstrate that ‘equity hires’ are not available or are available but have elected not to work on the project. As of October 20, 2008, the MFA estimated that approximately 500 people had worked on the floodway site and approximately 200, or 40 percent, identified as ‘equity workers’. The Floodway Training Initiative (FTI) reported training 89 individuals for approximately 40 opportunities for work experience as Heavy Equipment Operators with contractors on the project. While the FTI provided opportunities for all of those identified as equity workers, the initial emphasis was to train Aboriginal workers. Training focused on providing skills related to floodway expansion occupations for which there are current or projected future labour shortages.

Programs identified as a priority included Introduction to Construction, Construction Craft Worker (skilled labourer) and Heavy Equipment Operator Training. The FTI described the purpose of the Introduction to Construction program as a program designed to give participants an orientation to construction work so that they can determine if they have the interest and aptitude to pursue further training. FTI

participants in the other two programs were placed at the Floodway site to gain relevant occupational experience.

The MFA outlines expectations of contractors with regard to FTI trainees including:

- Payment of wages in accordance with the project management agreement (PMA).
- Provision of supervision (including workplace coaching and mentoring, as applicable), and the necessary equipment and materials.
- Access to relevant trade or construction work.
- Completion of accurate records of pay, performance hours of work for each FTI participant and make such information available to the MFA Training and Development Coordinator.
- Designation of on-site representative to liaise with the MFA Training and Development Coordinator.
- Provision of Workers Compensation coverage for all assigned FTI participants.

Floodway Training Initiative outcomes:

The MFA reported the following outcomes:

A. Completed Projects for 2006/07:

Heavy Equipment Operator “Gap” Training

Ten Aboriginal people, who had previously received heavy equipment operator training but had not been employed as operators in the previous six months, participated in a four-week “Gap” training program followed by approximately two hundred and fifty hours of work experience on the Floodway Expansion Project. Of the ten participants, six were placed on the floodway, three were not placed because they wanted to pursue other work opportunities and one did not complete the program.

B. Completed Projects for 2007-08:

Upon request, the MFA provided me with the following information regarding their training and employment outcomes:

Introduction to Construction (for all target groups)

Two two-week (plus five days of essential skills for job seekers) courses were scheduled to assist twenty-four participants. Participants included two women, four visible minorities, sixteen Aboriginals and two persons with disabilities. Twenty-two of the twenty-four participants completed their training and seventeen are reported to have obtained employment, although it is not known where.

Heavy Equipment Operator Training (for all target groups)

Six weeks of training were provided to ten individuals who had previous work experience in the construction industry. Each individual then participated in approximately two hundred fifty hours of work experience on the Floodway Expansion Project. Nine of the ten participants completed their training. Eight of the nine participants proceeded with the work experience opportunity and seven of these individuals maintained employment after completion of the training.

Heavy Equipment Operator “Assessment and Accreditation” Training for Aboriginal Workers

Ten Aboriginal participants who had previous Heavy Equipment Operator experience but did not receive or complete formal training and were not currently employed as operators, participated in a three week assessment and accreditation program. This was followed by two hundred fifty hours of work experience on the Floodway Expansion Project. Of the ten participants, nine participated in the assessment (one did not complete the assessment portion of the program), three chose the work

experience opportunity, four were immediately employed on other job sites as heavy equipment operators, one chose to return to his northern community to be with family, and one returned to his community to assist an injured family member. Three of the nine participants were given full accreditation on one or more types of heavy equipment and the other six received partial accreditation with additional information on what needs to be addressed in order to receive full accreditation.

C. Most Recent Projects for 2008-09:

Heavy Equipment Operator Training (HEO) (Aboriginals)

A five-week training program was provided for ten Aboriginal individuals who had previous work experience in the construction industry and were interested in training as Heavy Equipment Operators. This was followed by approximately two hundred fifty hours of work experience on the Floodway Expansion Project for those who wished to proceed.

All ten participants completed the training program. Six individuals proceeded with the on-site work experience component, one person was hired as an HEO in their home community, another returned to their former employment in their community with the intent to pursue HEO opportunities in the future. One individual chose to pursue HEO opportunities in the North without taking advantage of the work experience component, and another was not placed because they wanted to pursue other work opportunities.

Introduction to Construction

At the time this data was collected in 2008, two additional ten-day (plus approximately five days of essential skills for job seekers, e.g. résumé writing, etc.)

courses for a total of twenty participants were planned for the winter of 2009. As noted, the purpose of these courses was to provide individuals with an orientation to the construction industry. However it did not lead directly to employment.

Employment outcomes and training challenges

As outlined in Table 27, as of October 31, 2008, forty-six individuals identifying as Aboriginal participated in the various programs offered by the HTI. Sixteen of those individuals did not proceed past the ‘introduction to construction’ training. Twenty-eight individuals went on to complete the heavy equipment operator training. Fifteen individuals were hired on floodway-related projects, earning a base salary of \$18.86 plus benefits. Nine individuals obtained employment elsewhere and four did not obtain employment.

Table 27
Manitoba Floodway Training
Aboriginal Outcomes 2006-2008

Introduction to Construction	Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO)	HEOs Hired on Site	Other Employment	Unemployed	Total Training Participants
16	28	15	9	4	44

Similar to the situation on the Limestone project and the Northern Hydro project in Waskwatim, there is no way of knowing whether workers will have employment beyond the life of the project. But it should be noted that this situation is not unique to these projects—the precarious nature of construction work is inherent to the industry. Most ‘construction’ workers are hired by contractors on a job specific basis and while they may be paid well, the trade-off is that they are often required to ‘go where the work is’. I would argue that, as discussed in the analysis of the hydro projects, this is all the

more reason for negotiators to ensure that benefits to the community beyond the project are included in agreements.

Floodway Project—Limitations and Challenges

A major concern with the Floodway Project, and similar affirmative action projects, is whether or not those in most need are being reached. The Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD) reported that their organization was not eager to participate in the Floodway Project. A CAHRD representative reported that “we were invited in early but we didn't think it would amount to many jobs because most of our community does not have transportation and the graduated driver's license is a barrier to us helping them get licenses so they can get to the work sites.”^{xxix}

Additional barriers have also been identified. Individuals participating in training were not guaranteed a job once their training placements ended. This is consistent with both the Limestone and Northern Hydro (Wuskwatim) models. Like the other projects, while the Floodway does not promise jobs and does not have the mandate or ability to do so, there seems to be a perception that individuals who sign up for training will have jobs to go to upon completion.

An additional concern expressed by one past employee was the lack of commitment on behalf of contractors to the equity hiring conditions of the contract. A past employee of the Manitoba Floodway Authority noted that “contractors learned how to work the system.... they would identify hiring criteria far beyond what was required and when the Initiative was unable to provide workers with the qualifications asked for, they would go on to hire workers of their choosing.” This was a concern noted by the CETWG in their analysis of the Limestone project and it is a concern expressed by the

WKTC regarding the Northern Hydro project. This concern about contractor cooperation led the past employee of the MFA to be concerned with the “lack of teeth” in the agreement. This past employee said “the agreement has no real provisions that require contractors to comply with equity hiring policy.” In addition to barriers for workers, barriers also existed for contractors qualifying for the Aboriginal set-aside program. The same past MFA employee noted that small Aboriginal contractors were often unable to afford the bonding fees and new contractors had the added challenge of waiting up to two years for the core certification required before they could be awarded contracts.

With training dollars of less than \$1 million, the FTI was a considerably smaller project than the LTEA or the HNTEI, with far fewer and less diverse training and employment opportunities. Nonetheless, it seems odd that there was not a specific budget for the project nor were there clear training targets. This suggests that the training component might have been more of an ‘afterthought’ than a clearly defined component of the project.

A final note on the above three projects is that there is no evidence that training integrates decolonizing methods described in Chapter 5. As will be further discussed in the following pages, through interviews with trainees and staff of other programs, this is a critical oversight that could limit the outcomes for participants.

8.3.4 Building Urban Industries through Local Development (BUILD)

Building Urban Industry through Local Development (BUILD) is a non-profit community based organization with a mandate to combine environmental stewardship and poverty reduction. It incorporates a community economic development approach to the business of retrofitting houses to be more energy efficient. BUILD trains people with limited experience in the formal labour market in the practice of retrofitting existing

buildings. It has a particular focus on installation of insulation and water saving fixtures, and its focus is on public housing and low-income households. It estimates that eighty thousand such homes in Manitoba are in need of energy efficiency upgrades.

The program is designed to integrate training and hiring of unemployed or under-employed inner city residents in the retrofitting of housing in the inner city. An equally important aim is to introduce participants, the majority of whom are Aboriginals who have either been incarcerated or have had some attachment to the criminal justice system, to the trades through a workplace training/employment program. This program has become very desirable for individuals whose primary interest is to find work but have had difficulty doing so. While the program is short-term in nature, the goal is to encourage and assist participants to pursue further training that will lead to certification in a skilled trade. There is a very high demand for skilled trades-people and wages are relatively high, providing greater opportunity to move these individuals out of poverty.

Table 28
BUILD-Average Training Program Cost and Outcomes

Training Institution	Number of trainees*	Program Completion**	Employment/Continuing Education	Cost Per Student	Cost to student (tuition,books,supplies)***
BUILD	60	75%	NA	\$12,000 (including wages)	No cost

*Includes total registered including adult literacy and job training programs.

**Includes job training programs only—excludes literacy and upgrading outcomes.

***Organizations assist student to find funding. This cost does not include living expenses.

BUILD was incorporated in 2006, and operated as a pilot project until 2008. As of 2010 when this data was gathered, the program receives funding and support on an annual basis from four partners. The Manitoba government's Department of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade covers the wages of trainees and trainers, a life

skills coach, a training coordinator and a 'drivers license' tutor. Manitoba Hydro covers most of the cost of materials related to energy efficiency through the Lower Income Energy Efficiency Program. Manitoba Housing and Community Development covers the cost of materials related to water efficiency and a fee for service on each unit completed, which offsets BUILD's labour costs. Green Manitoba covers the costs of program administration and some labour costs. BUILD has a total operating budget of \$1.5 million (excluding materials).

BUILD offers a six-month training and employment program to individuals who would otherwise have difficulty accessing employment. BUILD trainees are primarily Aboriginal males residing in the inner city who have multiple barriers to employment including criminal records, lack of job experience and low education attainment. Almost all have had some contact with the justice system and most have criminal records and have been unable to obtain driver's licenses because of past offences. These are major obstacles for individuals wishing to work in the construction field. BUILD offers trainees a supportive and understanding working environment, and paid training for up to six months at minimum wage with increases after a three-month evaluation. They receive tutoring to assist them with their education goals and they receive training in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), First AID, and Health and Safety procedures. Workshops and classes are structured to improve individual life skills such as money management, parenting, and obtaining very basic necessities such as personal identification. In addition, trainees are assisted in obtaining their drivers licenses.

The program aims to prepare workers by encouraging basic employment ready skills like good attendance, productive co-worker relations, and by promoting health life choices; providing a supportive and caring work environment that demonstrates respect for all; providing necessary training opportunities including basic literacy, numeracy, first aid, and health and safety; assisting trainees to reach their short-term training and human development goals (BUILD, 2009).

BUILD provides trainees with a basic introduction to the construction industry. They are taught some very basic skills including how to read a measuring tape and basic operation of power tools. The broader aim is to help trainees identify a ‘career’ path and to assist them in getting the skills and education they need to move ahead. Trainees participate in a six-month program where they are trained in retrofitting dwellings for energy and water efficiency. Throughout the six-month period a training coordinator works with each individual to develop a training/employment plan beyond the period of the program.

Although BUILD program staff members recognize the destructive impact of colonization, the programming does not formally integrate cultural reclamation and healing. As noted, there is a life skills coach on staff to assist trainees with the issues that have emerged as a result of colonization but by BUILD’s own admission, there is much more that could be done in this regard.^{xxx}

As is also the case with the previous three programs, calculating the cost of BUILD per trainee is complicated because trainees are also performing a labour market function for which they receive a wage. However, BUILD estimates that it costs approximately \$12,000 per trainee over six-months when wages, supervision and the cost

of other staffing supports are factored in. Trainees are given basic on-the-job training, but they are also provided with additional ‘soft’ supports as staff members work with them to assess their interests and abilities and help them to acquire the necessary requirements to continue down their chosen path.

However, this cost needs to be examined within the context of savings. Trainees are receiving a wage in exchange for their labour. They would likely otherwise be unemployed and either collecting an allowance from the state and/or in many cases, as reported by trainees, earning income from illegal activities. In the case of the latter, there is a much bigger savings to the state. As noted, most of the trainees at BUILD have been incarcerated and have had a difficult time finding legitimate employment. While we cannot know for certain what trainees would be doing if not for BUILD, we do know that these trainees are particularly vulnerable to offend/re-offend. BUILD is contributing to their rehabilitation and giving them options other than the criminal paths that they are familiar with. Keeping these individuals out of jail comes with considerable savings. For example, the annual cost of incarceration for male prisoners is \$94,000 in federal penitentiaries and \$52,000 in provincial penitentiaries (Prison Justice Day Committee, 2008).

As noted, BUILD participants share similar characteristics of other second-chance learners examined in this study. The majority has less than a grade ten education and most have never worked in the formal labour market. Most are male and their criminal histories present an additional barrier to employment.

There are no specific intake dates at BUILD. Trainees are accepted into the program as room is available. This is in part because of a fairly significant turnover. The

Director of BUILD noted that it is not uncommon for trainees to drop out before they complete their program and in some cases trainees have been incarcerated for breaching bail. As a result of this dynamic, in addition to growing market demand for BUILD's services, the program "always has room for one more" and it often accepts applicants on the spot. Preference is given to Aboriginal applicants and the only requirement is that they must be physically able to perform the tasks required. While some might criticize this intake process as being very loose, it seems to work for this particular population. It takes much courage for applicants to walk through the doors and applicants with little experience and little confidence can very quickly be discouraged if put through an onerous application/intake process.

At time of writing, BUILD reports having between twenty and twenty-four trainees at any given time. In addition to trainees, BUILD employs five journey carpenters, one plumber, eight apprentices, five graduates, one life skills coach, one training coordinator, one driver's license tutor and four administrative staff.

Approximately 75 percent of approximately 60 trainees completed the program in 2009.

Although a six-month training program, those trainees who prove to be productive workers and are deemed to have barriers that will make it difficult for them to pursue further education and training are given the opportunity to continue with BUILD in a number of limited positions that pay between \$11.00 and \$18.00 per hour. However, the aim of the program is to act as a stepping stone, assisting trainees to build confidence and experience that will lead them to jobs in the private sector and/or further education and training.

A journey carpenter leads each crew. This is important because individuals who themselves choose to proceed through the journey carpenter program are able to apprentice with BUILD to accumulate the work hours necessary to earn journey status, and they can act as mentors to new trainees.^{xxxi} The program operates like any worksite, with rules and regulations that trainees are expected to comply with. This is particularly important for those individuals who have never worked in such an environment. It provides them with an orientation to the expectations of the work world so that they will have greater opportunity to succeed when they leave the program.

As noted, BUILD does not currently incorporate teaching of Aboriginal culture and history into the program. This is not because they don't see the value in it—they simply do not have the mandate and funding to do so. However, since over 90 percent of trainees and workers are Aboriginal and their lives have been affected by colonial policies, staff are in the process of exploring how they might more formally integrate a cultural component. Program staff members describe behaviour and attitudes that are a clear indication of colonization and oppression. Many program trainees have a background of criminal activity and gang involvement, drug and alcohol abuse. Most have very low self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. Many have extremely low-levels of literacy. While those interviewed very clearly articulate how much they have learned and how the program has contributed to their confidence and self-esteem, they express hesitancy to leave BUILD because they feel safe, comfortable and understood by staff and colleagues. Many remain very vulnerable and require significant support and encouragement to seek opportunities beyond the program. As will be described further, there was a marked difference between BUILD and Urban Circle Training Centre

trainees in that UCTC participants seemed to have a confidence to move forward while BUILD trainees seemed to be hesitant and vulnerable, suggesting that the six-month training period is likely not sufficient for most.

While there are other programs integrating on the job training, BUILD is unique in that it has designed its program in direct response to a market need integrating environmental and social objectives, while taking advantage of government 'green' initiatives. BUILD is an interesting example of an initiative that integrates both supply and demand strategies and meets triple bottom line objectives. There are social and economic benefits from being introduced to the construction field through paid work/training opportunities that trainees would likely not have had without BUILD. This is especially true for those with criminal records and no previous exposure to a disciplined work environment. Environmental benefits come from increase numbers of energy efficient buildings thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There are cost savings for government through the energy savings that come from retrofitted public housing stock and low-income residents benefit from energy efficiency savings in their retrofitted homes.

The major shortcoming of this program is that the training time frame is far too short-term, especially given the vulnerability of the very high-risk trainees, and that the program is vulnerable if any funding partners should decide to no longer support it. The latter is very possible. In 2010, the Province of Manitoba cut funding to BUILD, albeit by a small amount. The program director noted that this will not jeopardize their operations but it demonstrates the ongoing vulnerability of organizations that may seem

expensive in the short-term, but have long-term benefits that are not in the purview of governments concerned only with accounting for the short-term.

9 Overview of Interview findings

As noted in Chapter 7, qualitative and quantitative data were concurrently collected in an effort to more fully explore the research questions that evolved from a review of the social and political context of Aboriginal second-chance learners. In the previous section I provided an overview of data describing the various types of organizations included in this study. In this section I turn to the data gleaned from thirty-six formal interviews with students, teachers, counsellors and program managers conducted during the winter and spring of 2010. It should be noted that the interviews in this section included individuals representing all three of the Category 1 programs (those programs that share neo-liberal characteristics) in addition to a sample of individuals who participated in other Category 1 type programs. It included individuals involved in the ICSWP as a sample of a Category 2 program (programs that do not share neo-liberal characteristics) and participants at BUILD as a sample of a Category 3 program (programs that focus on economic development integrating demand- and supply-strategies). The less formal interviews conducted in the context of the other Category 3 programs were included in Chapter 8.

The interview findings described here were derived from a semi-structured interview with twenty-five graduates of training programs and eleven program staff. Interviews were approximately one-hour in length. Three of the program staff were past trainees of the program they now work in. Thirteen trainees were female and twelve male. Six of the males interviewed were trainees at BUILD, which means that unlike the others, they were both ‘trainee’ and ‘employee’. One interviewee was a past trainee on the Limestone project and currently on staff at BUILD. Although not directly asked, all

but two of the male trainees indicated that they had past involvement in the criminal justice system. In addition to interviews, written testimonials from students attending programs at the Aboriginal Centre were examined.

The purpose of conducting interviews was twofold. The first was to gather quantitative data to better understand the social and economic context of trainees before and after training. The second was to gather qualitative data to better understand, from the perspective of trainees, teachers and program directors, what works, what doesn't and the effectiveness of the policy environment in response to the needs of this specific group of trainees.

9.1 The Social and Economic Context of Trainees

Trainees were first asked a series of questions to determine their social and economic context before, during and after training. Table 29 provides an overview of the quantitative findings as they relate to this first portion of the interview. Interview questions are provided in Appendix 3.

Table 29
Interviews with Trainees-Quantitative data

Interviews conduct	N = 25
Age	Range 19yrs-61yrs Over 60 yrs n = 1 50-59yrs n = 7 40-49 yrs n = 2 30-39 yrs n = 9 19-29 yrs n = 6
Sex	Male n = 12 Female n = 13
Residency in childhood	Off reserve n = 12 On reserve n = 6 On and off reserve at various times n = 7
Employment/education status	Actively working full time n = 8 Of the eight, 3 are working at agency where trained Working part time n = 1 Not working/not training n = 7 (choice n = 1, injured n = 1, full time caregiver n = 1, retired n = 1, relocating for work n = 1, looking for work n = 2) In university n = 3 Working/training at BUILD n = 6
Parental education history	Completed first chance n = 0 Reported at least one parent had returned to school as adult learners n = 8 Reported parents had low levels of education (less than grade 10) n = 9 Did not know level of education but suspected it was low n = 3
Parents (caregiver) Income Source	At least one parent/caregiver employment income n = 5 Partial income, partial social assistance n = 3 Social Assistance n = 2 Uncertain n = 12 Sex trade worker n = 1 Drug dealer n = 1 Trapper/fisher n = 1
Income level growing up	Poor/low n = 25
Caregivers growing up	Various including foster care as a child n = 4 Various including 'streets' n = 2 Raised by two parents (or parent/step parent) n = 10 Raised primarily by one parent n = 5 Grandparent(s) n = 2 Various family (great grandparents/ grandparents/parents) n = 2
Current family situation	Reported having children n = 23 Reported currently having minor children in their care n = 6 Currently raising grand children n = 2
Level of education 'first chance'	Less than grade 8 n = 2 Grade 8-10 n = 14 Grade 11 n = 6 Grade 12 n = 3
Home tenure	Homeowner n = 7 Rent n = 18

It is notable that of the twenty-five graduates, none had parents who completed high school through the first-chance system. Fully 32 percent reported at least one parent returning to school to complete their high school as adult learners. Twelve percent reported that they did not know the level of education of their parents but they thought it was very low. The remaining 36 percent reported parents having less than a grade ten education, 20 percent of whom reported at least one parent having less than grade five and/or being illiterate.

Fully 48 percent of the participants spent most of their childhood in Winnipeg or another non-reserve community while 24 percent spent their childhood in a First Nation and 24 percent reported moving back and forth from their First Nation to the City.

All but two of the past students had children although not always in their care. Two individuals reported that they are currently raising grandchildren.

Twenty percent of the trainees reported having spent time in foster care as children with one male trainee reporting that he lived in thirty-seven different homes in fifteen years and another male reporting fifty different foster home experiences before being placed in juvenile detention as a teenager and transferred directly to adult detention when he came of legal age. At age twenty-eight, he recently completed his first year of university. He has no connection to family and describes himself as being “pretty much on my own.”^{xxxii} Two individuals reported spending much of their time growing up on the ‘streets’.

The ages of individuals ranged from nineteen to sixty-one years of age. The oldest student said that she had dropped out of high school for financial reasons and later returned in her fifties because she always dreamed of doing so. Twenty-eight percent of

those interviewed were between age fifty and fifty-nine, 8 percent between forty and forty-nine, 36 percent between thirty and thirty-nine and 24 percent between nineteen and twenty-nine. All individuals under twenty-nine were currently enrolled in some form of training (including those in BUILD).

Of the twenty five students, 32 percent are actively working full time (not including those now training/working at BUILD), one individual reported working part time by choice, one reported that she is not currently working and not looking for work due to personal problems, one is not working due to an injury, one individual is not working because she is caring for a grandchild and one individual reported being retired. Another student reported that she is not currently working but is returning to her First Nation having found work as a healthcare aid. Twelve percent of the individuals are now attending university. Two (8 percent) individuals reported that they are not working but are actively seeking employment. Three (12 percent) are employed with the agency where they trained and 24 percent are currently working/training at BUILD.

Fully 72 percent of the twenty-five individuals rent their homes while the remaining 28 percent are homeowners. Three of the homeowners went on to obtain a university degree following their initial training experience and later became homeowners. Two of the seven homeowners are a married couple, both graduates of the same program. They purchased their home after completing their training and obtaining employment. The two remaining homeowners are married with working spouses. They were homeowners prior to their adult training experience. While the question of homeownership may appear out of place in a study about training, it is relevant because it has become an indicator of 'success' in North American societies. Homeownership can

be important for families living in poverty not so much because of the type of tenure, but because it provides families with stability. Children are far more vulnerable to fail in school when they move often and a shortage of affordable housing in Manitoba often contributes to transiency (MacKinnon, 2010a).

9.2 Key Themes

As described in chapter 7, quantitative and qualitative data were concurrently gathered through a review of various programs and through interviews with trainees, teachers, counsellors, program directors and administrators. In addition to the program data described in section 8 and the quantitative interview data described in section 9.1, trainees were asked a series of questions related to their training experience as adults (see Appendix 3). They were given additional opportunity to talk about their experience in a final open ended question asking them to “describe in your own words, what you feel has been the impact of participating in training programs for yourself, your family, community etc.” Program staff interviewed were also asked to provide their perspective on the challenges of their trainees and the policy environment (see appendices 4&5).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed into documents that were initially analyzed using NVivo 8 software to identify key themes through various query searches within the NVivo application. While NVivo provided some use in identifying broad themes, I returned to the transcripts to further search for themes in a more detailed line-by-line review of the narratives. From here I was able to identify additional themes and related narratives, and important connections between these themes and program findings as further described in this section.

As outlined in Table 30, I have grouped themes into five categories. The first category describes the shared characteristics of students as described by program staff.

The second includes common themes relating to the experiences of trainees prior to participating in second-chance training. It includes their childhood experiences that serve in part to explain why they did not complete their schooling through the first-chance system. It also includes conditions that may have led to their later decision to pursue training and education.

The third group of themes relates more directly to the second-chance learning experience. This includes how participants came to decide to re-engage in training in addition to their assessment of the impact and outcomes. It includes observations from program staff working with second-chance learners. The fourth category of themes picks up on many of the same themes identified in the first three categories; however it captures them within the context of policy and program design. The final category, identified as ‘measuring outcomes’, was separated out because it captures important lessons for policy makers and program funders while also providing insight into societal notions of what constitutes ‘success’.

Table 30
Themes Derived from Interviews

Characteristics of Students	Experience Prior to Participation	Second-Chance Experience	Policy and Program Responses	Measuring Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple barriers and demanding lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why they dropped out • More than just poverty • Strong foundations and resiliency • Complicated childhoods • Valuing education • Being Aboriginal - learned shame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism continues • Motivation to ‘return to school’ • Choosing <i>where</i> to ‘train’ • Complicated lives • The importance of the learning environment • Self-esteem and confidence • Reclaiming culture • Migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Reporting requirements • Policy inconsistency • Supply vs. demand • Programming within a flawed policy environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meaning of ‘success’ • Unintended outcomes • Unreasonable expectations

9.2.1 Characteristics of Students

Multiple barriers and demanding lives

Program staff and trainees described complicated histories and current challenges that made their training and employment pursuits difficult. Many are single parents and most have experienced life-long intergenerational poverty. Most have limited family supports and significant family responsibilities and challenges. Both the director and the Aboriginal student advisor at the ICSWP said that it is not uncommon for students to have partners and other family members who feel threatened by their personal and academic pursuits and who consciously or unconsciously ‘sabotage’ their efforts.^{xxxiii} They said that is not uncommon for students to separate from their spouses/partners at some point during their programs.

It is also common that Aboriginal students come with deeply rooted internalized oppression. The director of Patal Training described their students like this:

Our students have large gaps in education and employment. [They are] discriminated against. They lack support systems. Some enrolled in our pre-employment programs have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and personality disorder. Some are suffering from depression and have been suicidal in the past. They never have their grade 12—never. [Many] have been involved in the justice system.^{xxxiv}

As described by one teacher, life sometimes gets in the way of attending school in a way that most individuals simply cannot relate to:

Like if I want a house I just go out and buy one, rent an apartment—I don’t have any problem. [Our students] have unbelievable problems with housing and basic stuff like transportation. Daycare. Food—getting enough good food over the 2-week period. I never have to go down to Harvest. My problems on the basics of life are none really. I have no problems—I just come and go to work and I do what I can do but these people have unbelievable [problems]. Insane landlords sometimes and an unbelievable time getting people to look after their children—

unreal situations when it comes to trying to get somewhere.... just getting to school every day for some of these people is really difficult. For example I had a case last year where a woman had some of her relatives in town and they were partying and they ripped the sink off the wall in the bathroom and the place flooded and this is nothing to do with our student at all...[she and her children] were all away at the time. They came back, the landlord's there, he's changed the locks, they are locked out of their own place. It takes a week of time to get this all sorted out and they're supposed to be going to class and all this damage is done, the landlord's furious, doesn't want them back then all the racism comes in and get out of my property and blah blah blah then on top of that you have people come in that have bed bugs, cockroaches, vermin infestations, they got to stay home today because Poulin is coming and on and on and on...^{xxxv}

These examples explain in part why some individuals with complicated lives have difficulty in the mainstream education system. Adults who return to school have priorities that keep them from focusing on their schooling. For this reason many adult learners make more than one attempt—sometimes many—before completing a second-chance training program.

As described by the teachers and program directors, it is common for students to become discouraged when they learn that they will require upgrading before proceeding with employment training. As described by one program director, “things all too often become complicated because the majority of applicants have very low education attainment and insufficient literacy skills to proceed.”^{xxxvi}

In addition, students come with a host of barriers and responsibilities that make participation and completion a challenge. Executive directors and teachers described shared characteristics including low literacy, poverty, family responsibilities, low-self esteem, low confidence and few supports among many other barriers standing in their way. One executive director summed it up this way: “....our people are not ready.”^{xxxvii}

She went on to explain that the majority of students are assessed below a grade nine level and many have very complicated personal and families issues weighing them down.

9.2.2 Experience Before Participating in Training

Why they dropped out

As shown in table 30, twenty-two of the twenty-five trainees dropped out of high school before reaching grade twelve. The main deterrent to completion was that school was “a bad experience” and that they did not feel they ‘fit in’. Most reported feeling very disconnected to school. For some this was a result of family transiency and therefore never feeling ‘attached’ to a school or community. High absenteeism was a common experience and this further led to their feeling disconnected and disengaged, falling behind, and eventually dropping out.

Some said that having more Aboriginal teachers and more relevant program content might have helped to make the school experience more relevant; however just as many felt that this would not have made much difference for them. As will be further discussed, the most common reason for poor attendance and lack of engagement was that little value was placed on education at home and therefore attendance was not strictly enforced.

More than just poverty

All 25 of the student/trainees described their families of origin as being ‘poor’ or ‘low-income’. All of the trainees experienced multiple barriers throughout their lives. In general, the data shows, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the more negative forces individuals experienced, the more likely they were to drop out and stay out of school. The better the material conditions; the greater the sense of stability, security, self worth, self esteem and pride, the greater chance of successful outcomes.

Individuals in this study described powerful forces of instability, poverty, family crisis and systemic racism that made it extremely difficult for them to complete education through the first chance system. Unlike the case of middle-class children who are protected from adult worries, children in poor families are often drawn into their family troubles. It should be of no surprise that high school dropout rates for Aboriginal people, and especially those living in poverty, continue to be so high.

However, while the trainees talked about their complicated childhood lives and the impact this had on the choices they made, they also spoke of factors that contributed to their resiliency.

Strong foundations leading to later resiliency

Those individuals, who appeared to have had the greatest ‘success’ in education and employment outcomes were those who described stability in childhood. This does not necessarily mean that their parents or caregivers valued education and/or provided them with any significant guidance in this regard, but ‘stability’ seemed to have made a significant difference in the long term. For example, one respondent said that she received very little ‘parenting’ and her parents were often not home in the evenings. But she lived in the same home and in the same community throughout her childhood. She felt safe. She always “knew where home was” and that her parents would eventually be there. And while she did not receive a lot of guidance, she said she thinks that she always somehow knew that education would be her way out of poverty. She became pregnant as a teen, and later completed her high school education in an alternative program that allowed her to bring her infant with her to school. After spending several years at home caring for her young child, she later obtained funding from her First Nation, which

enabled her to return to school to further her education. She obtained a college certificate and now works full-time earning a living wage at a job that she enjoys.^{xxxviii}

Another trainee talked about the significant role her great-grandmother had in creating stability in an otherwise difficult situation. Unable to adequately care for her, her very young parents sent her to live with her aging great-grandmother, with whom she stayed until she was a teenager. When her great-grandmother died, she left school to find work. She described a childhood of poverty but she said she felt safe and loved. She described her great-grandmother as “the most positive person in my life.” School was not an entirely positive experience for her, but the main reason she dropped out was financial. She knew that she would return someday. These two individuals described challenging childhoods similar to others interviewed, but pointed to the sense of security in their early years as having provided them with a solid foundation for the future.^{xxxix}

Four individuals assessed their childhoods as extremely unstable, including life on the streets and/or multiple foster care placements. In spite of this instability, three of the individuals pointed to someone who had made a significant positive impression that they felt contributed to their resiliency and eventual decision to turn their lives around. Of these three individuals, one identified a family member, one identified a teacher and another identified a community worker. While each of these individuals described relationships with their ‘role models’ that were tenuous at best, these relationships provided them with some sense that they were valued and this seemed to have had an impact on them in later life. The individual who presented as the least hopeful was unable to point to any individual who had made a significant impact.

While others described experiences that appeared to be less stable, they did not always describe them as such, and so I am hesitant to quantify the number of trainees to have grown up in ‘unstable’ environments. Doing so would require an assessment based on subjective criteria. For example, several individuals described childhoods that involved frequent movement within the context of immediate and extended family. While this geographic instability might have interfered with their schooling, it was not necessarily unstable in terms of continuity in connection with family. This is a reminder of the need to understand the cultural and experiential differences for many Aboriginal people and the impact that this has on the future design of education curriculum as well as the manner in which it is delivered.

Complicated childhoods

Many individuals described childhoods marked by ‘adult’ worries. They described worries such as wondering where their next meal would come from, whether their parents would be home and if they were, whether they would be sober. They worried about whether or not they would have a roof over their heads; they worried about younger siblings. One interviewee described it this way:

As Aboriginal people we start surviving too early. There is no prom, there is none of that stuff. You’re a child and the next thing when you’re about eight or ten years old you have to fuckin’ start surviving.^{xl}

He went on to talk about losing the adolescent years—experiencing a ‘gap’ between childhood and adulthood. He believed that this explained why it is so common for Aboriginal people to drop out of school as youth and pursue their education later in life. He said that many miss the opportunity to do so as teens because their energies are focused on survival. While others did not describe their experience in this way, this

theme was implicitly clear. For example, none described carefree childhoods that included dreams of attending university or college. “It was just one day at a time for us” noted one interviewee who said she thought that middle-class families likely talk about education and careers around the dinner table. “Not us” she said “[laughter] we didn’t even have a dinner table!”^{xli} She said she just accepted that being a doctor, lawyer, police officer was something that other people did. It was not an option for her.

The ‘one day at a time’ reality for people living in long-term and/or intergenerational poverty has a considerable impact on the choices they make and the course that their lives take. The ‘lost’ adolescent years described by one participant have an impact on future decisions. While individuals often come to reconsider education as a possibility, few begin their second-chance learning journey with a long-term plan. Unlike individuals who have parents to guide them through the first-chance system, encouraging them to think about what they might “be when I grow up” and what they will need to do to accomplish their dreams, planning for the future is not the norm for multi-barriered children who are living life one day at a time. For those who drop out, the decision to return to school is often the first step. And while they see it as a step toward something more, what that ‘something more’ might be is often not clear to them. It is therefore logical that the choice of what institution to attend and what program to take is often based on criteria other than what the best program might be for their needs. Such decisions may come later but they also may not. Many students proceed down a path because it is the program that is offered at the institution that they come to know and feel comfortable with. Time and time again respondents emphasized the importance of

“relationships”. As will be further described in the final chapter, this has important implications for policy.

Valuing education

Another important indicator of future outcomes related to education attainment is the value of education held by parents and other caregivers. Few of the individuals came from households where education was valued and encouraged. As described by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), there is much evidence to show that “children do better if their parents have higher incomes and more education themselves, and they do better if they come from a home where they have a place to study, where there are reference books and newspapers, and where education is valued” (p. 105).

Participants in this study described a range of negative attitudes about education in their households. Some of the individuals described a deep mistrust and cynicism with regard to education in their households, but most described their caregivers’ values in education as ‘ambivalent’. For example one trainee said that “education was not necessarily discouraged, but it wasn’t encouraged either.”^{xlii} It was simply that if they did not feel like going to school, they didn’t. For these individuals, education was not talked about as a way out of poverty. In fact poverty was not talked about at all. They learned to accept their circumstances as the norm. This was especially true for those whose social networks included only others who were poor like them.

Testimonials currently being shared by residential school survivors through the Government of Canada’s *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* are providing Canadians with a deeper understanding of the pain that residential schools caused generations of Aboriginal families. The stories of survivors shed light on a disbelief and distrust in the

promise of education as a ticket to a better life (TRC, 2011). This was raised by some of the individuals who said that they knew of family members who had suffered bad experiences in residential schools. Those who expressed awareness of the residential school experience in their family histories were aware of the pain that it had caused those personally involved and the generations to follow. However, they said it was not something that they talked openly about in their homes.

Those individuals who reported having parents who later returned to complete their education, as well as those who themselves returned as adults and currently have their own children in school, appear to have a more relaxed attitude toward education than seems to be typical in middle-class families. Those interviewed had come to place greater value on education, and they hoped that their children would stay in school, but they seemed to feel less urgency that their children complete school through the first-chance trajectory. They seemed to accept the second-chance trajectory as an acceptable alternative. It is also notable that formal education appears to be viewed in context of holistic development. Trainees felt it to be important, but only one aspect of an individual's journey through life. This might explain why dropping in and out, while not the preferred route for parents and caregivers who have come to value education, is acceptable.

This attitude toward education might be attributed to a different cultural understanding of education as more than a means to economic success and not solely obtained through 'formal' education. But since all of the individuals interviewed came from poor families with low levels of education, it might also be the case that social class has a role to play. Without a sample of Aboriginal people from middle-class homes, it is

not possible to attribute these attitudes toward education entirely to cultural values.

However, culture must be a consideration when considering alternative policies that may be more appropriate for the type of learners discussed in this study.

Being Aboriginal—Learning to feel shame

The ICSWP Aboriginal student advisor emphasized that the program's Aboriginal students come with deeply rooted internalized oppression and many continue to experience the lingering effects of shame that they learned through childhood. She stressed the importance of extensive personal healing to "lift them out of that shame place."^{xliii}

The effects of racism were both implicitly and explicitly referred to by most of the trainees. It was common for respondents to have felt a sense of shame of their Aboriginal heritage as a child and something they continued to struggle with as adults. As described by Little (2005), it is impossible to spend time with Aboriginal second-chance learners without seeing how deeply they have been affected by colonization. Some of those interviewed said that they learned to survive racism by taking advantage of their ability to 'pass' as non-Aboriginal. They said that this sometimes allowed them to avoid direct expressions of racism but they also said that they still felt the pain of racism because they knew they were Aboriginal and it hurt to hear the terrible things that people would say about Aboriginal people. One trainee who said she could "pass" as non-Aboriginal as a child said she remembers a friend asking her "how come those Indians are coming to your house?" and another saying "we can't hang around with you because my dad doesn't like Indians." This individual and others talked about parents encouraging them

to not identify as Aboriginal because it would be ‘easier’ for them. However, she said that it wasn’t really easy at all because she became confused about her identity.^{xliv}

Not all of the individuals had come to terms with their shame. One individual talked about continuing to feel ashamed of being Aboriginal: “I’m sometimes embarrassed. I’ll see people walking and they’re sniffing or they’re falling down drunk, asking for money and it’s them that give us a bad name, that make the rest of us look... I hope it’s not racism that I’m forming or whatever but I see these types of people and it disgusts me.” But this individual also recognized that she had herself experienced racism. “I’ve had the door closed in my face because they see the colour.”^{xlv}

Several respondents talked about having come to their feelings of shame as a result of the way they were depicted in course materials. “We were called ‘savages’ in the books” noted one respondent.^{xlvi} Others simply said that they felt the history they learnt in school was inaccurate.

9.2.3 The Second-Chance Experience

Being Aboriginal—Systemic racism continues in adulthood

As described in section 9.2.2, these effects of systemic racism began in childhood. However they also continued through adulthood. While not all interviewees identified them as such, all of the trainees described experiences that demonstrate how the experience of being Aboriginal has factored into their education and training trajectories as adults.

Some interviewees openly expressed being targets of racism while others inferred dealing with racism by denying it. For example, one of the males from the BUILD program was aware that others in his cohort had experienced racism, but he said that he had not. This assertion was followed with “I’ve always been big.”^{xlvii} Two other males

and two of the females also alluded to protecting themselves by presenting a threatening physical presence. One female dismissed the idea of experiencing racism as a child by stating “I did the bullying.”^{xlvi} Another female said that she experienced racism but the problem was solved when “instead of waiting for me, I waited for her and set it straight.” Two of the males acknowledged that physical intimidation was the way that they had learned to deal with racism. One individual described incidents where he was, without provocation, called a “fuckin Indian” by non-Aboriginals. His response was “bring it on!” and he went on to describe the experience as “just another racist white person, can’t do nothing about that.”^{xli} Another described using his physical appearance, being large in stature with several tattoos, as a means of saying “don’t mess with me.”^l Others implied that they learned to use their physical appearance as a means of shielding them from racist comments and several noted that they felt they were able to avoid direct racist comments by avoiding interactions with non-Aboriginal people. As noted, this was a major reason for many to choose education and training programs in Aboriginal focused programs.

While not all of those interviewed understood the meaning of the term ‘colonization’, most understood the general idea when described in the context of the intentions of residential schools. For those individuals who had attended Urban Circle Training Centre and the University of Manitoba Inner City Social Work Program, colonization was a familiar term and they said that learning about it had been a very important part of their journey. Although not naming it as such, four of the six trainees/apprentices at BUILD had some awareness of the impact of colonization and expressed a curiosity in learning more. The remaining two BUILD participants said they

had no interest in learning more. Shame continued to be a theme for some second-chance learners who had not been exposed to cultural reclamation programming. Two individuals from the snowball sample (but not associated directly with the training initiatives examined in this study) stated that they were embarrassed to be Aboriginal. Others identified having at some time felt ‘ashamed’ of being Aboriginal but they had since learned about their past and were now very proud of their Aboriginal lineage.

Motivation to re-engage in education and training as an adult

Trainees reported various reasons for re-engaging in education and training as adults. Some saw it solely as a necessary step toward employment. Others reported attending because they felt pressured to do so by social assistance workers, while others participated in longer-term training because they had a strong desire to do so in spite of what they described as their workers’ attempts to discourage them. Others said that although they had dropped out as adolescents for various reasons, they always had a desire to return.

Choosing where to ‘train’

Once they made the decision to return to school, trainees reported various reasons for choosing ‘what to take’ and ‘where to go’. While some individuals chose a specific program because it was described as leading to a specific type of job, this was not the most common reason for their choice. Some simply wanted to obtain their grade twelve but had no definitive goals beyond that. Most chose the programs based on the experiences of friends or family who had themselves attended and spoken very highly of the experience. This was particularly true of those who attended Urban Circle Training Centre and BUILD. Most of the individuals who attended these programs said that they

heard about them through friends and family who spoke of them as safe and supportive environments.

Many individuals described the inner city generally, and Aboriginal focused training programs within the inner city, as buffer zones from racism, and this was a factor in their training choices. For many, venturing beyond the inner city, where many Aboriginal people live, to neighbourhoods where there are fewer Aboriginal people is unpleasant at best. For many, the prospect of working outside of the inner city or in workplaces with few Aboriginal people is something they resist. One person described an experience leaving a restaurant in the suburbs where he had been employed for a short time: "...like I'd be walking down the street and somebody will open their window and yell "fuckin Indian...[for no reason] like I'm just a gang person but I'm not....I'm just trying to live my life and work." Another student talked about attempting to train at Red River College but having dropped out because she felt very uncomfortable there. As further described below, very often the choice of where to train had much to do with individuals wanting to be around others who are Aboriginal.

Complicated lives

The theme of 'complicated lives' that emerged through interviews with program directors, teachers, counsellors and other program staff was supported by the narratives of trainees. They spoke about their responsibilities and worries as caregivers of children and extended family members. They spoke of financial difficulties and housing insecurity. Some spoke about ongoing challenges that resulted from past behaviours such as addictions and criminal involvement that has now created additional barriers to finding

employment. The implication for these individuals with complicated lives, as noted in section 9.2.1, is that the short-term training path is often not a realistic goal.

The importance of the learning environment

The learning *environment* of the training program students attended, as opposed to the program *content*, is key. In many instances they described feeling very connected to program staff. They also described a level of comfort being in an environment where students shared similar circumstances. Those students who experienced training at the programs described in this study in addition to programs at large institutions were quick to note the difference. They described feeling “lost”, “uncomfortable”, “scared”, and “overwhelmed” in large post secondary institutions that they attended. One trainee talked about her difficulty when she tried to transition from her First Nation to a large post-secondary education institution in Winnipeg.

you come to the city... I guess it's really hard to transition to the city life....
[they] don't care if you don't come to class, it's up to you to come to class...this
program...it really makes me feel like accepted here, the people...they try to help
you get your license and they try to help you get your I.D. and it's...your other
co-workers, the ones that are in the same boat as you have all been through
everything and you can relate to them so you're kind of psyched to come here and
talk about things...^{li}

When asked about how the experience differentiates from her previous experience she said: “I felt pretty alone when I was over there.”

For the Aboriginal second-chance learner beginning to explore who they are and what they want to do with their lives, the small, focused programs described in this study seem better able to respond.

Creating a comfortable accepting environment is a critical component of training programs aimed at the most vulnerable populations. Many second-chance learners enter

programs with reluctance and skepticism. If they don't feel welcome they don't hesitate to drop out. As noted by one BUILD participant, sticking with a program was a big accomplishment. "Well it's been really good. All these people here—they're really nice. I've never made a commitment like this before." When asked why he felt this time was different, he talked about finding something he thought he would like to do since working at BUILD: "I'm not sure, maybe because what I'm doing...I feel more responsible."^{lii}

Another individual, who began as a trainee at BUILD and is back as an apprentice carpenter, said that:

This program has been life changing. Without it I would be back selling drugs...probably dead...It was like I was in the dark and now I got some light on me you know what I mean? ...this very, very bright future.^{liii}

Self-esteem and confidence

All of the trainees said that their participation in training helped to build their self-esteem and confidence. When asked about self-esteem, one BUILD trainee quickly responded:

Oh ya. I feel more confident in waking up in the morning. Being sober and being part of something. You know like we're fixing up houses around the north end here. Ya—they're all ugly but some of them are nice and we're fixing them up and keeping them warm and a lot of them are little old ladies.... it feels good to help them all because when I was with my old crew, we would—we'd do little extras. Some of the crap these people have in their basements—and these are little old ladies and this stuff has been down there for 20 years and they don't even know what's going on down there and they can't get down the stairs so we'll take some the junk and throw it in our bin and fix up their basement and if they got a leaky pipe we'll try and fix it too.^{liv}

Another trainee said, "I feel better, I feel good. Everything's just so different—the life I used to live [is gone]."^{lv} Many spoke about learning more about themselves and their interests and feeling better as a result:

...I want to be a carpenter....I didn't even know how to use a measuring tape, like six months ago, and now I'm just flying by making all these basements.....this job kind of gave me the inspiration to go back to school and get my apprenticeship... and they do some really good testing ...they do a lot of career testing...to see what you're good at.^{lvi}

...I would recommend it to anybody because you've got—here for me—was Urban Circle—is where I needed to be. Other people can do it—you know—they find their place where they feel safe and they feel secure and they can do it and this was my place. This is where I accomplished what I wanted to do. Not only that—that gave me insight to be able to move forward—to go out, because like when I applied to this program, my goal was just to get the grade 12 and basically that was it. But by coming back to Urban Circle and going through the courses, the cultural program made me open my eyes and realize that I can go further. If you have the ability, you have the desire to do anything you wanted—you can do it. And I know that now. I never thought—oh I can't do it, and I was always so negative because that's how it was—oh you're never going to work—if you don't do that you'll never get here and there and that's how I always thought and then when I came here I realized I could do it and the biggest thing is I didn't have to ask my sister. And that's what I'm so proud of because I was able to reach out, ask for help here, get the help that I needed and they explained it to me in a way when I went home I was able to do it on my own...^{lvii}

Reclaiming culture—healing the spirit first

While a few individuals felt that racism was of limited concern to them, many described experiences that would suggest it was limiting their ability to move forward. This seemed especially true for the male participants of BUILD. In spite of their tough, tattooed appearances, these individuals were quick to talk about how safe and accepted they felt at BUILD because of the shared experiences of program participants. Some talked about their reluctance to leave the safe and welcoming environment to find work in the private sector or further their training at a large mainstream institution. This is a very real problem for trainees who remain very vulnerable after completing short-term training programs that have been limited in their ability to prepare them for life beyond the program. It speaks to the importance of integrating a strong historical and cultural

component to increase participants' ability to withstand the challenges they will inevitably face once they leave their safe and sheltered training environments.

The benefits of integrating decolonization and cultural reclamation are very clear. As noted by one participant, "learning about my culture and colonization was as important to me as the technical training I received....it helped me to understand why I had so much difficulty in the past...I needed to do that before I could move forward."^{lviii}

Individuals who experienced a 'cultural re-awakening' very strongly supported the integration of decolonizing pedagogy in training for Aboriginal second-chance learners. As noted by one respondent:

Shame—I think I was ashamed of being Aboriginal because all of the negativity that I have received and when you come here, they—how can I say—they don't push it on you but you [participate] in it—because I'm a Christian and, like, to me—oh they say "that's voodoo stuff" and I respect it but it gave me a better understanding of who I am even though I'm a Christian. It's my heritage—it's me as an Aboriginal woman that I was able to understand what it was to be an Aboriginal. Not only the cultural but the history class that we took, we took the English class—we read the material of the Aboriginal books and whatnot and it was very, very helpful...^{lix}

Another student said she knew very little about her Aboriginal heritage before she attended the Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP):

It was kind of... my parents didn't really talk about—there's some sense of shame attached to it and you know...I remember once they asked me what my mother's family background was and she would just tell me to say she was Canadian or things like that so there was really no sense of, you know, plus my mom was born and raised in the city, and my mother is still very secretive about where she comes from.

On my dad's side as adults, people were starting to feel proud about having Aboriginal descent and so other family members on my dad's side, you know, had done research and things like that and I remember the first, one of my aunts on my dad's side told my mother that they traced their genealogy and found out their Aboriginal roots and my mother was just enraged "why are you doing that!!! Let things be! ...because she had been brought up with the shame herself.

(crying)—me, I'm so emotional.... just having some sense of that all your life and some of the effects but, it's time we start exploring and recognizing and oh—you know—having a better understanding—how you might fit and for myself I always felt that I never really fit...^{lx}

Another graduate of the ICSWP said:

The great part about it was that I had an opportunity to learn from what I've been told all my life and whatever in school, I've been taught different things about Aboriginal people.

...It was enlightening. I felt sad that I hadn't been taught this all my life in school. All that I used to be taught was that we were—it seemed to me that we were bad people.

[learning otherwise] had an impact on my self esteem for sure....a validation of us as a people, Aboriginal people. But anger too knowing that we weren't taught this stuff in school as kids.^{lxi}

A graduate of UCTC said this:

Before I came to Urban Circle I was always ashamed of being Aboriginal. We took Aboriginal history and I would go home every day and tell my family what I learned. [I was] really excited—social studies, world issues which is very interesting, and now I watch the news and I'm aware of the other Aboriginal people around and...It's difficult it's still difficult for me, I'm sort of a timid person but I'm starting to realize that I have to assert myself. I'm trying to do that even though it's not a comfortable place for me... feel much better... throughout my life I always felt I was on the outside.^{lxii}

The damaging effects of racism and colonial policies are well documented and were reaffirmed by several of the individuals I interviewed. It is very clear that tackling this issue 'head on' is essential if we are to stop the cycle of poverty. While changing racist attitudes and perceptions is one way of turning things around, another equally important strategy is the integration of decolonizing pedagogy and culture reclamation into education programs beginning in the early years and extending through to adult education. There is a very strong sense among Aboriginal educators of the need to 'heal the spirit first'.

All of the program directors understood the experience of colonization and more specifically the residential school experience to have had a very damaging effect on their students. When asked if she felt that awareness of colonization is a necessary component of training one director said “there is no doubt in my mind.” But she also said that there continues to be a lack of awareness among policy makers and prospective employers as to why this is so important and therefore it is difficult to integrate cultural reclamation programming to the degree that is required. She said that she has experienced resistance to integrating Aboriginal culture into training and gave the example of a member of an industry sector council that she worked with who said “other people don’t get to have their culture in training programs, why should Aboriginal people?”^{lxiii}

The founding director of UCTC describes the cultural ‘life skills’ component as critical to helping their students overcome their challenges and reclaim their identities as Aboriginal people so that they are able to move forward. As noted earlier, UCTC graduates also stressed the importance of this component to their successful completion of their program and life after UCTC. Programming at UCTC has evolved over a twenty-year period to a place where they fully understand the unique challenges of their students and have responded with a holistic training model that includes multiple supports. For example, students participate in an intensive orientation and are assigned a ‘life skills coach’ with whom they meet regularly and they participate in weekly life skills/cultural programming.

Also of note is the observation of one provincial government employee who is keenly aware of the UCTC and their success. She confirmed that governments are hesitant to provide supports to cultural reclamation programs which she believes has led

programs like UCTC to label cultural reclamation programs ‘life-skills’ programs in an effort to access funding.^{lxiv} This is ironic given the recent federal government apology for imposing residential schools on Aboriginal people and the subsequent establishment of the Government of Canada’s *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. One might think that this would be followed with policy responses aimed at reversing the damage by including support for decolonization and cultural reclamation as a commonly accepted programming response. This has not been the case.

On/Off reserve migration

Another theme that is unique for many Aboriginal learners—children and adults—is the reality that ‘home’ is both on- and off-reserve (First Nation). Many families migrate between cities and First Nations for a variety of reasons. This has an impact on school attendance, which in turn affects completion rates. This dynamic is likely to increase as the Aboriginal population grows and more families migrate to the cities yet continue to have strong ties to their home communities. Policy makers and educators will need to find new ways to adapt to Aboriginal learners to provide an education experience that accommodates this reality.

Negative training experiences

The training experience is not always positive. This became evident in the experiences described by three individuals. Each of these individuals described participating in various training programs over many years. Only one participated in a program examined in this study. It is notable that all three of these individuals came to the study through snowball sampling. This would suggest that there are other individuals with less than glowing reports of their training experiences that I did not have access to. One of these individuals said this about her training experience:

I think training...I think you go and take the same courses over and over again, they don't do any good. You need to find your interest...everybody has an interest, like, everybody has an interest in something and everybody's good at something. That's what I feel. I'm good at baking and somebody else might like cleaning. My friend loves to clean up. I hate cleaning.

They want you to take [training] but if you don't enjoy it what's the point? All that training and just wasting time.^{lxv}

This individual went on to say that she believed many people take training because they are being told to do so, and that she believed this does not work. She also said that more must be done to help individuals as they transition from training to work:

There seems to be nothing in between there. Once you're done your course you're on your own right? The government pays for this course then there's nothing there to get you to your next step...they should, like when they have these programs, make sure they have practicum placements where the person can go do what they enjoy doing. There would be so much less hostility and anger and shit like that.

[people are frustrated] because they don't ask you like, what do you like to do? "Oh—there's a course—you gotta take it." You gotta find out what people like to do. What makes them tick, what makes them happy. What makes them want to do it you know?

Another individual, who reported taking various training programs, said that he did not regret taking any of them but he felt some were better than others and he questioned whether some were of any use at all. For example, he referred to a program that ended with a Microsoft Certificate that he felt did not prepare him for employment at all.^{lxvi}

9.2.3 Policy and Program Responses

Directors, teachers and counsellors spoke explicitly about the difficulties they encounter as a result of policies that limit what they are able to do. While trainees were not asked to comment on policy and program design specifically, many comments they shared reflected similar concerns.

Funding

Funding was an issue raised by program staff and trainees alike. Administrators spoke about their ongoing frustrations trying to access sufficient funding for their programs and their students. They say this has become much more difficult over the years. As noted, governments have reduced support for second-chance learners since the early 1990s when student aid was scaled back. For example, the provincial government no longer provides living allowances for multiple-barriered second-chance learners in addition to covering the costs of tuition, books and supplies. The availability of funding for First Nation students has also become increasingly more difficult to access and for shorter periods of time.

Funding limitations pose problems for training institutions and students. One administrator noted that it is increasingly common for funds approved by First Nation administrators to be delayed for months into the program term. And when funding does not come through for students it creates a lot of stress:

We get a sponsorship letter saying we will pay this...and we go to register them for a term and their fees aren't paid and we have to chase these Bands down constantly to get their fees paid. They have no money. It puts their entire student records on hold. They can't use the library, they can't take out books, they can't do any of the things that a university student needs to do, they can't get their grades, they can't register for more courses...^{lxvii}

Funding for students on social assistance is another extremely difficult issue that was raised repeatedly by several of the individuals. One administrator felt strongly that it makes good sense for social assistance to continue to provide social assistance to trainees while they attend school. "I like to think of it as an incentive so that you have your basic living and I'll say 85%-90% of our people who come to us are on social assistance." She noted that they had recently completed a pilot project that involved a cohort of students

supported by the provincial governments Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program and they are now waiting for the results. She felt strongly that it is in everyone's best interest to support the long-term unemployed through grade twelve and some PSE training using a 'carrot' approach that would pay them their benefits only if they attend and maintain a passing grade. Another administrator shared a similar view. She talked about the constant battle she has with EIA workers who have the discretionary power to approve funding but commonly say 'no' to students for no clear reason:

I call these workers all the time and I talk to them and I explain...and then some of the workers say, well, they have the right to choose, they have the right to tell us if they think their client [should be supported through the program]. That should not be...government is making it too difficult for people.

Students often talked of having difficulties accessing funding. The most common barrier was access to a living allowance while taking training. Students who graduated from the ICSWP prior to funding cuts in the 1990s were grateful to have had full funding support. They were dismayed that this support is no longer available to students. As one graduate of the inner city bachelor of education program, community leader and recent recipient of an honorary doctor of law at the University of Winnipeg has publicly stated, "I was a single mom on welfare. If I hadn't been given the opportunity to get my degree, fully funded, I would not now be doing what I am doing..." lxviii

Reporting requirements

Administrators also talked about the increasingly stringent reporting requirements that they believe to be time-consuming and unnecessary:

We have to do this on a monthly basis, we have to submit a document with everything that we've spent every month for every program. Every nickel. It's very time consuming. That's what our financial administrator—most of her job is—reporting to people where we've spent this money and if there's any kind of deviation from what we agreed to in our contract we have serious issues.

It is also notable that programs are reporting to multiple funding organizations, each of which has its own arduous reporting process:

We receive funding from the provincial government from a series of different [funders] like Adult Learning and Literacy, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade, Neighbourhoods Alive!, different programs that the government has established. And they all have their own little requirements. So for one program—let’s say Family Support Worker, our financial administrator might have to make five cost report/monthly statements for the amount of money we’ve spent. Who’s got the salary all that kind of stuff. For the federal government, we have a monthly audit. They come down, check our books and make sure everything’s...it’s a full time job and I understand why they’re doing it. At the same time it makes it extremely expensive for us because we’re spending a lot of time doing this and it’s the same thing as getting the money. We have to submit a major proposal to each one of these funders every year so it takes a huge amount of time, whereas in a public school system you got a student in the room, you get the money and with no question.^{lxix}

Other than the Inner City Social Work Program, which very recently was given permanent funding after years of being reviewed and renewed on an annual basis, none of the programs in this study have multi-year funding commitments. They must apply annually for funding. This poses very serious challenges on many fronts, including implications for staffing. As noted by one program director, “nobody that works here is permanent—nothing is permanent. It could be gone tomorrow.”^{lxx}

For example, in the case of Urban Circle, a program that has been in existence for twenty-some years and is viewed across the country as a model of success, the absence of permanent funding in spite of their very strong record is extremely frustrating for the program administrators, and it makes it difficult to keep qualified teaching staff:

I mean it’s a problem for a lot of reasons just in terms of the security in terms of people working here....It really has a huge effect on our hiring.I put an advertisement out and [applicants] ask us “when do I get tenure.” No tenure here, you just teach here. If we have the funding you can be hired, if we lose funding, that’s it. So a lot of people that have younger children and that, they’re a

little...they don't want to do that. I don't blame them. So you're always ending up with staff that are taking a chance by coming to work for us and that's hard—there's no job security. No pension. We don't—we can only give you the money, that's all we got. We don't know if we're going to be around next year so we don't qualify to be a pensionable organization. Everybody has to be responsible for their own pensions, own benefits—we do have dental—although it's a very poor program. We have holidays—paid holidays. That's about it.^{lxxi}

Policy inconsistency

Interviewees gave several examples of challenges created as a result of government policies that do not align well with the needs of second-chance learners, such as the Manitoba Hydro policy to disqualify trainees with criminal records, and the EIA policy to limit training opportunities while the overarching government policy emphasizes 'education first' and 'lifelong learning'. The situation is becoming more constraining. For example the Harper government is intent on passing legislation that will make it more difficult for ex-offenders to be granted a pardon, and therefore more difficult to find work. While I am not condoning criminal behaviour, it seems counter-productive to make it impossible for ex-offenders to turn their lives around. If they know that they will not be able to get a job at the end of their training, they are not likely to participate in training and there is little motivation to give up a life of criminal activity if there is little hope to earn income through legitimate means. While choosing to commit crime is not a good choice, where there are no other options, it is not an irrational choice.

The failure to recognize the unique training trajectory of multi-barriered Aboriginal second-chance learners is a critical flaw in current policy. Policy makers expect trainees to complete their programs and find employment after one attempt. Those who do not succeed the first time and try to re-enter training at a later time find it increasingly difficult to find financial support. Without it they are unable to proceed.

The current model does not allow for failure because it does not recognize training as part of a longer journey of healing and self-discovery. It is simply a means to an end—the necessary step to respond to the needs of the market. This short-sighted policy response not only fails to meet the needs of Aboriginal second-chance learners, but it also serves to lessen the number of qualifying applicants competing for shrinking resources, which makes it easier to deny training and education to those who need it most.

Supply vs. demand

As described throughout this paper, current labour market policies focus on supply-side (training) solutions. The literature reviewed shows why this approach will be limited in its ability to address poverty for various reasons. One explanation is that there is a limited demand (jobs) for workers. But the experience in Manitoba in more recent years suggests that there is at least some truth to mismatch theory as described in Chapter 3. There are labour shortages in some sectors and employers are turning to new immigrants and the Aboriginal population in an effort to find workers to fill these jobs.

The Executive Director of CAHRD agrees that it is not the demand for workers that has been the most significant challenge, but rather the preparedness of the ‘supply’ of Aboriginal people. She says that employers seeking Aboriginal workers are constantly contacting CAHRD and some of the jobs they seek to fill are very well paying positions in the skilled trades. However, employers want workers who are job ready, and the reality that Aboriginal second-chance learners require interventions beyond those which neo-liberal policy environments provide makes it difficult to respond to employer needs. This speaks to the needs of employers to themselves be more understanding of the realities of Aboriginal people and more flexible in their hiring practices.^{lxxii}

For some, successful transition to a mainstream work environment remains a very distant goal and there must be a way to ensure that these individuals do not fall through the cracks. BUILD is an example of one organization that has responded by providing employment for those trainees who demonstrate promise but remain unemployable due to significant limitations. For example one trainee with a grade-two literacy level excelled as a worker but was far from ready to access employment. He was kept on as an employee and is being supported through literacy upgrading so that he can obtain the education level necessary to allow him to pursue his desire to apprentice as a carpenter. BUILD kept him on because staff feared that he would have a difficult time finding and maintaining employment given his literacy challenges. The director of BUILD described the poignant moment when tears welled in the eyes of the tough-talking ex-gang member and ex-convict when they offered him a permanent job and offered to support him to reach his literacy goals. Unfortunately BUILD is limited in its ability to respond in this way for all trainees due to the complex situations of so many of the men and women who walk through their doors.^{lxxiii}

Doing their best within a flawed policy environment

Teachers, administrators and other program staff interviewed in this study believe that training and education is critical to ending the cycle of poverty that their students are caught up in. However none are naïve enough to believe that supply-side solutions alone, especially in the constrained policy environment described, will end poverty. While they did not explicitly identify neo-liberalism as an underlying factor limiting their ability to respond adequately to the needs of their students, they all recognized the shortcomings of current policies that emphasize training people quickly and sending them out to fend for

themselves. The ICSWP, the longest established of the organizations examined in this study, clearly identified a shifting policy framework as limiting opportunities for multi-barriered students.

All of the organizations recognize that short-term solutions do not work for their trainees and they have found ways, to varying degrees, to work around government policy that limits what they are able to do to help their students escape poverty. As noted by one director, and a sentiment shared by all of the teachers and directors interviewed:

My clientele have huge gaps in social development, they have huge culture shock when they come to Winnipeg [from First Nation communities]. [Many have] addiction issues [in the] present or in the past, and extended family that sometimes interfere. They have so many barriers that I can't sufficiently train people in the time that we have designated. You can't make a new person in 24 weeks. We have to be very creative.^{lxxiv}

9.2.4 Measuring Outcomes

The meaning of 'success'

This theme was arguably the most enlightening theme to have emerged through the interview process. The primary measurement of 'success' in the world of training is program completion and employment attainment. Measuring success in this manner makes sense since that is the goal of each of the initiatives described. However, measuring success in a linear manner is less appropriate when the less than linear trajectory of the Aboriginal second-chance learner is considered.

Not all of the individuals interviewed would be viewed in the narrow sense as having had successful outcomes. Excluding the six BUILD trainees, only seven of the remaining nineteen, reported full-time employment. However, discussions with trainees and others revealed a different perception of 'success' that was more consistent with a subjective versus objective assessment. All of the individuals interviewed felt that their

participation in training was beneficial to them in some way. For some, the benefits were minimal, for others they were life changing.

As noted, assessing outcomes is more complicated than checking off boxes that describe if and where graduates work and how much income they earn. One graduate of the ICSWP who was one of the last to graduate from the program when students were fully funded, said this about outcomes:

I guess with my experience—especially going through [ICSWP] and it being a funded program—really made a difference. It gave you a bit of room to breathe and think, ok, that part's looked after so maybe I can do this because your energy's on really—at ease... I started to do my own work. I don't think that's something that's written and I can see that even while I was in school for people that maybe needed to do some more homework emotionally you know.

.... and I find myself—and I don't know if it's still that I have to work harder because I have to prove myself still, because—and it's again, my own stuff that I carry, that I have to overachieve or over do in terms of how much I work and that. Is it because I'm still trying to prove something? I really think that the training I got at [ICSWP], allowed me to be able to really learn how to learn—you know...?

... and I learned so much. I think they really value, too, people's experiences and recognizing that there is not just the academic intelligence.^{lxxv}

While this individual is employed full-time as a social worker and has long left poverty behind her, the main 'outcomes' she spoke about had nothing to do with financial 'success'.

Five of those not currently working were enrolled in further training and felt very strongly that their initial adult training experience led to opportunities beyond that which they thought to be attainable when they first thought about returning to school. It was particularly interesting that these trainees had a very different view of success than do program funders and policy makers who continue to exclusively look for 'hard' measurable outcomes.

The difference in perception of success appears to begin prior to participation. All participants began their training with relatively low expectations. Some simply wanted to obtain their high school equivalency while some initially saw training as a quick means toward employment. Others admitted to taking training because they felt they had no other options. Regardless of their motives and expectations, many of the trainees said that they began to see a world of opportunities open up to them as they learned new things and gained confidence in their abilities.

Most of the individuals described their training experience as part of a bigger journey toward personal development, rather than simply as a direct connection to the labour market. The majority of individuals placed greater emphasis on the relationships that they built, the healing that they experienced and the lessons that they learned. When given the freedom to talk freely about their training experience and what they felt they had achieved, employment outcomes did not figure prominently. Some of their comments described profound experiences beyond labour market outcomes. For example one individual said this about her training experience related to her self-esteem:

[at first I felt] I can't do this stuff. But once I started studying it was like, hey, I can do this! Because I grew up not knowing about education...not ever thinking like hey, I can go to university and I can go to college. But I continued through school and I got really good grades.^{lxxvi}

While all individuals acknowledged that finding secure, decent-paying employment was a goal, this wasn't their only goal. None of the trainees expressed aspirations that emphasized employment and income as central to their dreams and motivations. They spoke more of aspirations tied to their values pertaining to family. They spoke about wanting to be good role models for their children and wanting parents/grand-parents/siblings to be proud of them. The idea of attaining a grade twelve

diploma was a primary motivation for many. The idea of jobs and careers and income was often secondary in the narratives.

This was a particularly important discovery in this research and one that would not have come through quantitative data collection alone. It does not change the overall hypothesis but rather strengthens it because the neo-liberal model would not consider that non-market related aspirations such as building self-esteem might be a good enough reason alone to build a program. This finding supports the idea that neo-liberal approaches do not serve Aboriginal learners as well as they should and demonstrates the shortcomings of the narrow set of employment and income indicators described in Chapters 2 and 3.

The experiences described by these learners suggest that the impact of training and education must be examined beyond economic terms. Understanding individual participants' aspirations is also important when evaluating the success of Aboriginal second-chance learners because it provides insight into how success is measured and what indicators might be used. For example, those who entered into training programs with the sole purpose of getting a job in a short period of time appeared to be less satisfied with the outcomes than those who experienced education and training as part of a longer holistic journey. Those individuals who initially obtained their grade twelve diploma at UCTC and continued on to further their education were particularly pleased with both the experience and the outcome. All of the UCTC graduates talked about the importance of their spiritual journey.

This leads me to conclude that outcomes for Aboriginal second-chance learners who seek and experience something more than technical training, who are engaged in a

process of healing—learning who they are, what they are capable of so that they can move forward—should be measured with this in mind. Limiting measurement to quantifiable employment outcomes is insufficient because it doesn't tell us all that we need to know about the impact of participation in education and training programs on people's lives.

While listening to participants talk about their training experience, it became increasingly evident that there is a mismatch between what policymakers understand as 'successful outcomes' and the 'success' as measured by Aboriginal second-chance learners. Individualistic measures that stress financial independence as the primary objective are limited. But far worse than this, they fail to capture how powerful learning can be for individuals who have experienced the kind of exclusion that many Aboriginal people have experienced as a result of systemic forces that keep them poor and marginalized.

Determining the effectiveness of training and employment programs in improving individual economic outcomes was a central focus of this study and also the central focus of each of the training programs examined (although at least in part because government funding requires them to be). However, the interviews with participants very clearly revealed some incongruence between their aspirations and the more narrow program objectives created in a socio-political context that emphasizes self reliance and individual financial prosperity therefore this finding cannot be ignored. It is a reminder of how powerful culture and context can be in influencing the assumptions that we make. For example, as noted in Chapter 3, human capital theory assumes that economic

outcomes are the basis of our motivation to invest in our education and training. But such aspirations were not reflected in the interviews with these second-chance learners.

In fact, the individuals who were interviewed spoke very little about economic success for themselves. They appeared to be more interested in becoming engaged in community life, becoming role models for their children, and finding personal fulfillment for themselves. The lesson to be learned from this is that the employment objective of education and training is but ‘one’ objective for Aboriginal adult-learners. Many seek a more holistic learning experience that is simply incongruent with the neo-liberal approach to education and training.

Unintended outcomes

Important ‘unintended’ outcomes were described by trainees who spoke about the impact the programs had for them but also reached far beyond them. For example, one student talked about proceeding through a journey that has had an intergenerational impact that has been transformative for her family:

Once one person graduates, boy does that open a door. It’s huge! My youngest sister and my nephew went to school there so all together there were five of us that graduated from Urban Circle. My two sisters are in their last year at the inner city social work program. My daughter has graduated and she’s been working and my other daughter is on main campus and is hopefully getting into nursing in the fall. So within a matter of ... seven years... we will have five university degrees—every woman in my family will have a university degree. My granddaughter is graduating from grade 12 this year. She’s talking about what university she’s going to. My grandson who’s 16 is talking about what he’s going to do. It’s the norm now. It’s not just a dream.^{lxxvii}

This experience demonstrates how powerful participation in training can be—both subjectively and objectively defined. But it takes time. Long-term commitment and investment in the first-generation is necessary to paving the way for generations to

follow. So it is important to have both a broad and long-term understanding of outcomes. This same individual, whose second-chance training journey spanned several years resulting in the intergenerational benefits described in addition to a university degree, and a job she loves that also pays well said this:

It's not just economic. This [job] is a bonus. But it's not the driving force. When you've got the world telling you you're never going to amount to anything and all of a sudden you know you can do whatever you want to do. Oh my God, it's life changing. I mean money is sweet but it's a small piece of it. You know, when I graduated and took jobs money was always the last thing. I never even asked about salary.

Graduates of Urban Circle in particular were quick to point out that in addition to finding satisfying employment and financial independence, the spiritual and emotional growth they experienced had an equally significant impact for themselves and their families. For example, one individual brought her young adult son with her to the interview. He sat quietly by as his mother talked about the strength she gained during her time at UCTC. At the end of the interview I asked him if he had any thoughts he would like to share. He said that he was very proud of his mother and inspired to follow in her path. He said he was now planning to return to school to complete his grade 12 and he hoped to pursue a career as a police officer. Other UCTC graduates also talked about the 'ripple effect' that their participation in training has had on their families. They talked about their parents obtaining education as adults and inspiring them to do the same. Others talked about their motivation to become role models for their own children and the importance of education and training as a means to breaking the cycle of poverty:

My daughter is twenty-seven and she is actually going back to finish her grade 12 now. Oh God—I think four more credits and she's got it. I guess in a way I inspired her.....she says mom—if you can go back (they call me an old lady)! If you can go back and get your grade 12 and you're an old lady I can do it now.^{lxxviii}

...we're like role models—they come and ask “auntie did you do...?” And even what I learned—my niece is in grade ten, I was able to show her how to do some of her work. I helped her on that. Auntie—you know what—I got 100 percent on my project. I said 50 percent of that is mine! And then that's what she does and now she likes school.^{lxxix}

The limitations of mainstream outcome measurement was clear from interviews with trainees, but administrators and other program staff also consistently raised concerns about narrowly defined ‘outcome measures’ and their insufficiency in the context of the complex lives of Aboriginal second-chance learners. They felt that measures do not take into consideration the many outcomes that are more difficult to measure but extremely important for individuals, families and the broader community. For example, administrators talked about the increase in self-esteem, improved relations with children and families, strengthened social networks and engagement in the community as additional important outcomes that will have an impact on future generations.

As I myself developed a deeper understanding of the breadth of outcomes for these learners, I realized that it is near impossible to quantify the social and economic outcomes that I outlined in my research questions. Many factors, including but not exclusively training, contributed to various outcomes for the individuals that I interviewed. What individuals learned and where it led them depended on their individual context. While the data of most interest to funders is quantifiable employment outcomes and program completion rates, these are not necessarily the outcomes that meant most to trainees and in fact were often less meaningful to them than other outcomes. For example, several students had completed programs and had chosen to continue with their education. Their incomes had not increased and they did not have employment, but they were very satisfied with where they were at in their lives and they felt that they had achieved something significant.

The qualitative data captured the complexity of factors contributing to individual outcomes. While I continue to believe that obtaining employment that is satisfactory and pays a decent wage is ultimately an important objective of training, I have come to believe through this research that for Aboriginal second-chance learners whose identities, experiences and realities are influenced by the legacy of colonization, poverty and other complicated factors, it is equally, if not more, important that training programs include the broader objective of ‘healing’ the whole person. The idea that ‘individuals were unable to move forward until they understood their past’ was too common a theme to be ignored.

Unreasonable expectations

Related to the discussion of outcome measures and other themes that emerged as trainees talked about their lives as children and as adults, who had later returned to school, is the theme of ‘expectations’. Virtually all of the teachers and administrators talked about the complexity of challenges and the length of time needed to effectively train people who need much more than job specific training. Most come with low levels of education and literacy, and many are dealing with challenges such as addictions or family violence. Most have children and other family responsibilities that take precedence over their education. Increasingly students are faced with housing-related challenges that have an impact on family stability and learning, and administrators report an increase in the number of trainees and/or their families entwined in criminal activities and gang violence.

Program staff reported an increase in the number of trainees with a long way to go before being ready to meet the needs of employers. One program director said: “We’re

finding now, each year as we go forward, that it's getting harder and harder to find people in the pool of trainees that we have, who are ready to benefit from [job-specific] training, even, well how do I say, without a good couple of years of upgrading, they're not able to do the training."^{lxxx} This is hard for employers to understand, and it can be very discouraging for individuals who simply want to take some quick training that will lead them to employment, only to find out after being tested that they will require several months of upgrading before even beginning the process of job-specific training.

Manitoba Hydro is an example of an employer interested in hiring Aboriginal people. Manitoba Hydro is one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in the province with 16 percent of its staff — close to 1000 persons— being Aboriginal. But even they continue to have difficulty hiring Aboriginal people for some positions, in part as a result of unreasonable expectations because they do not fully understand the challenges experienced by trainees. In addition to unreasonable education expectations that do not necessarily align with job requirements, another major problem is Hydro's policy to immediately disqualify applicants with a criminal record. The Director of BUILD said: "this pretty much rules out any of my trainees." He went on to explain that while it is true that most of BUILD's clients have criminal records, their records would not necessarily make them unsuitable for jobs at Manitoba Hydro. He felt that there should be some way to screen applicants with criminal records to determine whether their past offences would impede on their ability to perform the work required by Manitoba Hydro.^{lxxxi} It does seem counter-intuitive to create un-necessary barriers to individuals who have served time for their crimes and are trying to prepare themselves for

reintegration into society. Nonetheless, this is Manitoba Hydro's current policy and it has yet to indicate that this policy will change.

Another program director also reported that expectations have become increasingly unrealistic. She said that there is often an adjustment period for students transitioning into the learning environment after being absent for a long period of time and/or experiencing multiple responsibilities and barriers, and that sometimes means they get off to a slow start. She noted that students do not all begin at the same level of preparation and they learn differently. While it is reasonable to expect that they perform to a certain level before graduating, some need more time to get to that level and they should not be cut off if their performance is initially poor.^{lxxxii}

10 Synthesis of Findings

The aim of this research was to better assess the effectiveness of current labour market policies as means to address the poverty and social exclusion of Aboriginal second-chance learners. I began by examining the political economic context within which labour market policies have evolved since the 1980s. I examined a sample of programs focused on supply-side measures as well as those taking a more comprehensive supply/demand approach. Even though less exhaustive data was collected on the latter, this was very important for purposes of comparing and contrasting the two approaches. Finally, I spoke with policy makers, past and present program employees, and individuals who participated in these programs as students/trainees in order to better understand the outcomes of individuals directly affected by current policies and programs.

10.1 Answers to the Research Questions

In Chapter 7 I outlined a series of research questions that I developed after reviewing the literature on social and economic exclusion and the theoretical foundations of existing policies. I found that the current policy tools used to address poverty and social exclusion focus on supply-side solutions, and more specifically short-term training. The questions I aimed to answer through my research were:

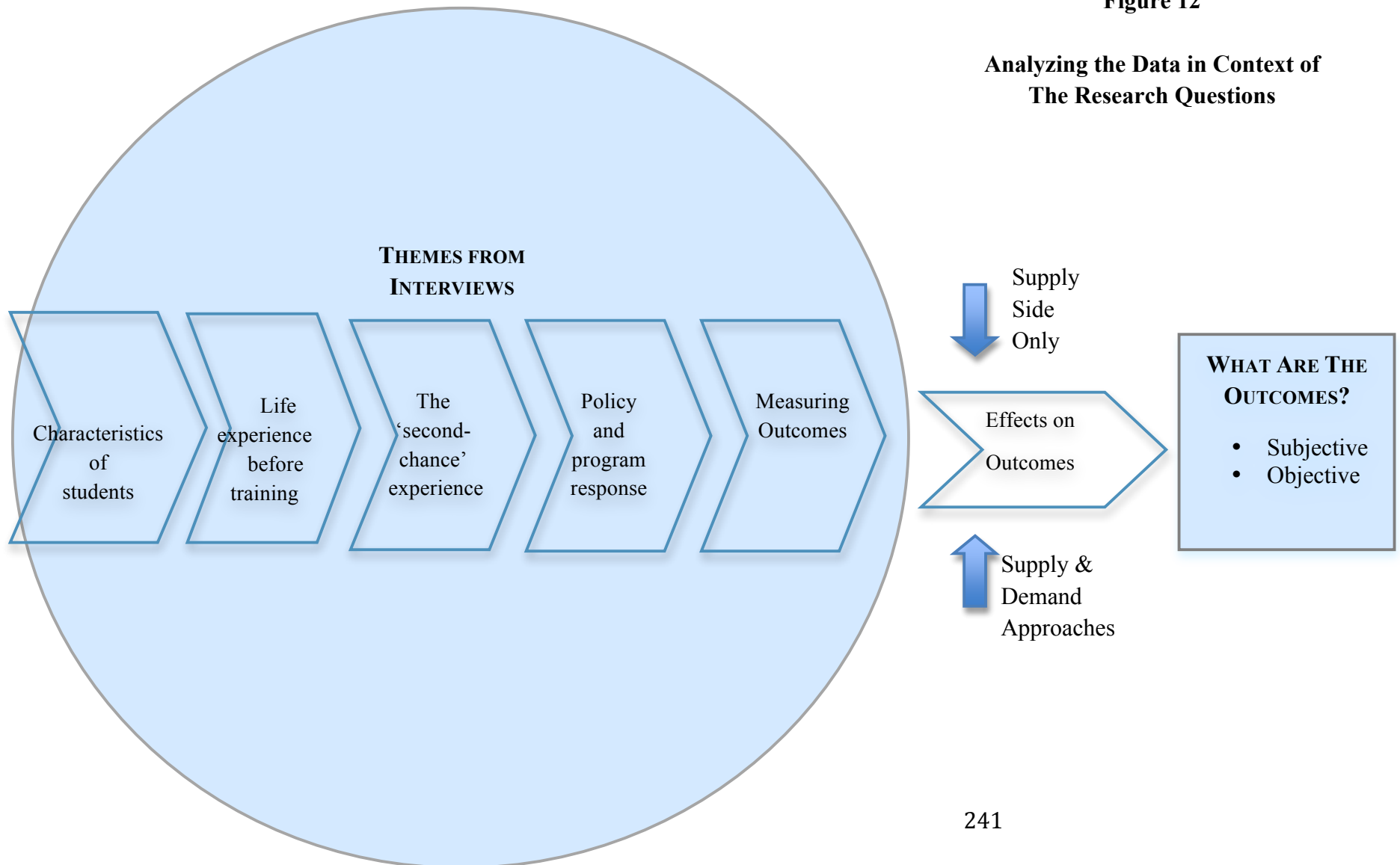
1. What are the social and economic outcomes of training for Aboriginal second-chance learners?
 - a. Objective outcomes (income, employment, program completion)
 - b. Subjective outcomes (satisfaction with program, income, employment)
2. What are the outcomes affected by?
 - a. Characteristics of trainee
 - b. Characteristics of program
 - c. Characteristics of the environment
 - i. Including those that influence training available and those that influence job prospects.

Consistent with the literature on mixed methods research and analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2007), I attempted to answer these questions by examining research data derived from program reviews and interviews, which I described in the previous two chapters. In this final chapter I reflect on my conclusions in the context of the research questions as well as in the context of the themes I extrapolated from the interview data as described in Chapter 9.

As illustrated in Figure 12, situating the themes described in Chapter 9 within the context of the research questions helped me to understand how the broad contextual experiences and perspectives of trainees and program staff related to policy, program design, and outcomes of participation in programs and how those outcomes might be improved.

Figure 12

**Analyzing the Data in Context of
The Research Questions**



1. What are the social and economic outcomes of training for Aboriginal second-chance learners?

Objective outcomes

I was particularly interested in understanding the economic impact of policies and programs on individuals who are directly affected by them. Essentially I wanted to know if trainees' socio-economic status had improved as a result of their participation in training. This was more difficult to assess than I had envisioned. While programs have data on program completion, and some limited data on employment outcomes post-completion, none of the programs have data on the long-term outcomes of their trainees. The programs I describe as categories one and two programs (Table 20), as well as the BUILD program described as a category three program appear to make some effort to follow-up with their graduates within the first year to determine whether or not they have found employment. However, this is not done in a systematic manner and the reality is that these organizations have minimal capacity to track their graduates. For this reason, data on the long-term employment and income-outcomes for trainees is not available. Long-term employment and income data on the Limestone project is not available and it does not appear that Manitoba Hydro, HNTI nor the MFA track such outcomes.

Through interviews with past trainees, I was able to get some sense of individual economic situations pre- and post-training. Those individuals who had completed the university ACCESS program and the one individual who had attended Red River College reported having the most significant change in economic status. They were also fully funded throughout their time in these programs. It is also important to note that nine of the individuals were actively participating in training/education at the time I interviewed

them therefore it was premature to assess the full economic impact of their education and training.

This was interesting for two reasons. It showed that it is not uncommon for individuals to find ways to continue their education beyond the short-term training programs that they are initially confined to. However, they are most likely to do this when they are able to find financial support. It also showed, albeit through a limited sample, that graduates of longer-term degree/certificate programs are more likely to be employed in good jobs and are less likely to re-enter the training/unemployment 'loop'.

A particularly important finding was the reality that long-term employment and income data for participants in labour-market programs is simply not available. This brings into question how policy decisions are being made. Lack of conclusive socio-economic outcome data is a significant limitation and while it is likely difficult to track this information, it is essential to do so if we are to have a more conclusive understanding about what works and what does not in order to better guide future policy and program development.

One suggestion for further research on the outcomes of second-chance learners would be a longitudinal study that captures the long-term trajectory of trainees. This would provide a better understanding of the non-linear education and employment journey of these learners and how interventions might be improved to make their journey easier, and with fewer interruptions.

Subjective outcomes

Through my interviews with program employees and past trainees, I was able to learn much more about subjective outcomes and in particular about the more difficult to

measure outcomes for trainees and their families. As noted in Chapter 9, this was especially enlightening because it showed how creating opportunities for one generation has far reaching benefits for those to follow. All of the individuals who participated in training felt that they were the better for it. This was true regardless of what program they participated in. Several participants also spoke about the impact their experience had on their families and in particular their children and grandchildren. Their responses suggest that their participation had led to perceptions of greater inclusion even though it may not have had a significant impact on economic outcomes at the time they were interviewed.

2. How do the characteristics of programs, trainees and the broader environment affect outcomes?

Interviews with program employees and trainees very clearly showed that the more complicated the lives of trainees prior to participation, and the more challenging their lives remained while participating in training, the more difficult it is for them to ‘succeed’. The effects of colonization were clearly identified as a complicating factor in people’s lives and the programs that respond to this ‘head-on’ show better results in terms of the subjective experience reported by trainees. This is important for future policy because as noted repeatedly by program employees, the policy environment limits their ability to integrate decolonizing pedagogy into programming.

The more program staff are able to support trainees when “life gets in the way of attending school” as described in 9.2.1, the greater the chance that trainees will persevere. The fact that adults with complicated lives are committing themselves to pursuit of education and training shows a level of resiliency that can be further nurtured. Programs that are able to do this because they have empathetic staff and are small enough to

develop trusting relationships with trainees, have the best results. Alternatively, second-chance learners are less likely to succeed in large impersonal institutions that leave students feeling “lost”, “uncomfortable” and “scared” as described in 9.2.3. Trainees in these situations are less likely to ask for help and are more likely to give up when they fall behind further placing them at risk to either fail or drop out. This too is important learning for policymakers because it reinforces the need for increased support for small, specialized supportive programs like those described in chapter 8.

In terms of employment outcomes, trainees and program staff spoke to the benefit of having ongoing supports in place to ease the transition into work. While programs do provide some help with job placement, they are not currently funded to work with trainees after they graduate. For those who have not had past experience working for wages, the transition can be daunting.

10.2 Policy Approaches and Outcomes

As described in Chapter 3, policy approaches have moved away from demand-side interventions to focus solely on training the supply to meet specific market demands. Manitoba is somewhat unique in that there has been a commitment, at least when NDP governments have been in power, to integrate supply-demand approaches. In this section I provide a synopsis of key findings of supply-side approaches and integrated approaches and I describe the kinds of features that should be included if we are to implement what we have learnt from best practices and maximize both subjective and objective outcomes.

10.2.1 Supply-Side Programming – best practices

As previously emphasized, the intention of this research was not to evaluate programs per se but to examine the effects of labour market policies on individuals and the programs designed to reduce poverty and social exclusion by providing education and

training opportunities that lead to employment. Because the emphasis of current policy is on supply-side measures and more specifically training in its most narrow sense, I examined a selection of training programs. While my findings support my hypothesis that supply-side measures are an insufficient response, my findings also have led me to conclude that they can, especially when they integrate the best practices described in this chapter, have an important impact on the lives of Aboriginal people who have for various complex reasons failed to complete their education through the first-chance system. They can also have further reaching benefits than intended.

My findings affirm at least two important findings of research on Aboriginal adult learners by Silver et al. (2006). They concluded, first, that the small, warm, friendly and nurturing environments of community-based training centres are more appealing to Aboriginal second-chance learners than are large institutional settings. And second, that the programming that is most effective and transformative is that which Silver et al. describe as education rooted in the experiences of Aboriginal learners, and that creates the opportunity to “reflect on those experiences in a critical way, and [provides] a new way of thinking rooted in Aboriginal culture” (p. 95).

While it is common for students from more privileged backgrounds to seek out universities and colleges with reputations in specific fields of study, and they are often more than willing, and even prefer, to relocate to pursue their studies, second-chance learners look for very different criteria. For many of the Aboriginal second-chance learners that I interviewed, the importance of trusting relationships between students, teachers/counselors/administrators was a central theme. This must be taken into consideration when developing policies and programs aimed at this group. As described

by an administrator of ICSWP, "...I think when they come in here they don't know who to trust because they've had such a problem with trust issues all their life and then when they come in here it's like a little cocoon and they feel so safe and so protected..."

It is also common for multiple-barriered students to return to training organizations more than once even if that organization does not offer programming that they are particularly interested in. This is because so much of what drives their decision to participate is trust. When their education and unemployment goals are not clear to them, and they often are not, students return to the organizations where they feel most comfortable. One trainee in particular said outright that he returned to the same organization he previously received training from not because of his interest in the courses being offered, but because he felt comfortable there. This speaks to the primary importance of relationships to these students, and the fact that they are much more likely to 'succeed' in small organizations where students of similar backgrounds and experiences will be found and where staff are caring and understanding of their complicated lives. While the programs they participate in may not be their final training experience, their participation may lead to a clearer path as they build confidence in their abilities and begin to shape their dreams and set goals.

One trainee talked about the confidence she gained as a result of the supportive environment she studied in: "I always thought I was stupid, but now I know that I am smart!"^{lxxxiii} Students like this who have limited confidence in their abilities often give up quickly. Staff in small trusting and supportive environments work closely with students and are able to see when they are struggling and provide them with reassurance and encouragement. Students are less likely to fall through the cracks because their peers

share similar experiences and they provide a network of support and encouragement for each other. These students thrive in smaller settings because larger institutions are not designed to provide this level of support. While supports may be available, it is left up to the students to seek them out and those with low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and complex challenges often do not do this. As described earlier, many students fall behind and either drop out or fail, further reinforcing their feelings of inadequacy.

Decolonizing pedagogy

Examining the themes as they relate to ‘outcomes’ led me to conclude that trainees who are most successful, however that may be defined, are those who have come to understand their troubles as deeply rooted in their oppression. Individuals who understood their learning as part of something more than just a means to an end have a much richer experience that often leads them to pursue further training, which in turn opens up far better opportunities.

Programs that have been most successful in this context are those that fully integrate decolonizing pedagogy into their programs. These programs have learned that ‘healing the spirit first’ is the key to success for their students. I found that trainees who participated in training programs that helped them to understand the history of colonization and its continued effects were better able to move forward.

Additionally, environmental factors clearly contribute to outcomes and it is clearly evident that students with the fewest barriers are most likely to succeed in their studies. Students who are well-grounded in their identity, have families that are supportive, have financial stability including funding supports for their education, stable housing, and spiritual and emotional support are much more likely to remain focused on

their studies by balancing the demands of learning with the demands of family and other responsibilities.

While not all of the programs examined integrate decolonizing pedagogy to the same degree, all of the program staff agreed that this is a critical component. Among the organizations included in this study, I found UCTC to have a particularly well developed program that might provide a model for other organizations. However, UCTC continues to find it challenging to find stable and adequate funding to support this component of their programming even though it has been shown to be so important to their students' success.

Graduates of UCTC and the ICSWP in particular described lives that have been transformed and they attributed much of this to learning a more accurate version of their history and the impact that it has had on Aboriginal people. Those that were working at the time they were interviewed reported having found jobs—careers—that they say they are pleased with. Others have continued on their education journeys having gained the self-esteem and confidence to do so. Those who reported that they are not working are unemployed because they have chosen to attend to immediate family responsibilities, caring for children or grandchildren. But what is common for all of these individuals is that they now strongly value education, are proud of their Aboriginal heritage, and they are passing these values on to the next generation of their families.

One graduate spoke passionately about the importance of decolonizing education:

...[without it] there is a piece missing. You can take lots of different training and go out there and get a job and you can earn money and you can do this and that, but you know—you're still ashamed of being an Indian.

I had the benefit of experiencing something different, and if I had not, I would not be talking about this.

For 44 years I walked around with my head up my ass because I'm supposed to be all those terrible things and I'm not all those terrible things. I come from tribes of people that were amazing. But I never knew.^{lxxxiv}

As described in Chapter 9, through the process of collecting and analyzing data in this study I have come to believe in the importance of 'healing the spirit first' as central to reducing poverty and social exclusion for individual Aboriginal second-chance learners but more important, as a means to end the cycle of poverty and despair for their children and generations to follow. This is not to suggest that strengthening the social safety net, addressing income inequality through redistributive policies, and creating jobs through demand-side interventions are not also important. Creating good jobs and working with employers to encourage more training and hiring of Aboriginal people for these jobs is an important part of the 'solution'. To be successful, this approach will require greater emphasis on raising awareness of the complex challenges that have resulted from colonial policies and a commitment on behalf of non-Aboriginal people to be open to doing things differently. While we like to think that we have learned from past mistakes, we continue to repeat them by trying to fit Aboriginal people into development models that ignore the deep and lasting damage that our past mistakes have caused. Full social and economic inclusion will require many systemic changes and interventions aimed at both supply and demand. It will also require the integration of decolonizing pedagogy to correct the damage done by colonialism.

Neo-liberal constraints

As anticipated, the political economy context influencing program design (i.e. neo-liberalism) is an important contributing factor to limiting opportunities for Aboriginal second-chance learners. In each program examined, this model has placed

unhelpful constraints on design and delivery. Trainers have adapted by working around them as best as possible. However, in some cases, the effectiveness of programs has been maximized in spite of the confines of their neo-liberal characteristics when they have managed to build decolonizing pedagogy into their programming under the guise of ‘life-skills’ programming.

While it is true that University ACCESS programs have been severely compromised as a result of policy changes influenced by neo-liberal ideology, at time of writing they appear to be out of the immediate line of further fire. The ICSWP is one ACCESS program that continues to be designed with anti-oppression/decolonization practice in mind. This appears to have a lot to do with the values and beliefs of program staff who find ways to work around restrictive policies, in addition to curriculum design. The ACCESS model continues to demonstrate how Aboriginal learners can be personally emancipated through their learning experience.

It is my observation that the very promising demand/supply models have not yet embraced the importance of integrating decolonizing pedagogy into their programs and have therefore missed an important opportunity to provide students with the holistic programming that seems to have the most significant impact on Aboriginal second-chance learners’ lives. This is beginning to change with BUILD and there are hints that Manitoba Hydro is gaining a better understanding of the impact of colonization.

Albeit in a limited way, this research affirmed the hypothesis that neo-liberal labour market policies that evolve from the narrow analysis that the market will solve all problems, are unable to ensure that excluded workers will find decent work at the end of their training. But more importantly it showed that it is not just about job creation. In

addition to much needed demand-side measures that create jobs, comprehensive programs are not only necessary to ensure improved economic outcomes, but are essential to reversing some of the damaging effects of colonization, intergenerational poverty, and the complicated lives that are a common experience for Aboriginal second-chance learners.

As noted by the executive director of CAHRD, the market may have jobs available for Aboriginal workers but it does not adequately provide them with what they need to meet the expectations of those jobs. She acknowledges that this goes beyond job-specific training. The inability of the market to consider the complicating factors that create obstacles for Aboriginal second-chance learners to be 'job-ready' means that there will continue to be a disconnect between employers and workers, further perpetuating Aboriginal exclusion from the labour market.

As argued in the first part of this dissertation, the objective of training and education in the neo-liberal context is to prepare individuals for the labour market. Within this paradigm it is the responsibility of individuals to invest in their own education and training; those who make "wise" choices will be justly rewarded through the labour market. In this paradigm there is no consideration of the context within which such choices are made. This research has shed more light on what that context is for Aboriginal second-chance learners.

While the programs described in this study are quite different, they similarly attempt to respond to the reality that, "mainstream education has not proved to be a good fit for many Aboriginal people" (Silver et al., 2006, p. 70). They are attempting to be flexible because they understand the complexities of their students' lives. But they are

doing so within a policy context, based on neo-liberal economic theories, that does not consider the non-economic economic factors that affect employment and income outcomes including the many complex realities described in this research. The result has been the failure of mainstream education and training models to meet the needs of these learners.

The reality is that for individuals who lack previous training and/or have low educational attainment, short-term training will not sufficiently prepare them for anything more than the most precarious jobs in the market unless opportunity for further training is available. But it is also true that this initial training can act as a stepping stone toward further education, and when it integrates decolonizing pedagogy, it can be a powerful experience that helps individuals move forward on a path of self-discovery and healing that can transform their lives and the lives of their families.

It follows however that there must be openness on behalf of governments to understand training in this context and this is not currently the case. As previously emphasized, training is not a panacea. It must be viewed more broadly as one intervention among many and often as a first step, introducing individuals to the possibility that education and training might be a useful path.

Rethinking the ‘lens’ that shapes policy

Many Aboriginal people simply do not see the possibilities that education can provide because they have seen no evidence of it. On the contrary, the very damaging fallout of residential schools has taught generations of Aboriginal people not to trust education and this is likely at least in part the reason that so many describe education as not having been a priority or encouraged by caregivers when they were growing up.

For individuals who have had a very negative experience with education and have been made to feel “incapable of learning” (Hart as cited in Silver, 2006, p.19) entering a training program can be a frightening undertaking. But as this research shows, doing so brings them a step closer to inclusion. Participation in formal and informal training programs helps people feel engaged, contributes to a sense of self and sometimes, although not always, leads to employment (MacKinnon & Stephens, 2010). What it also does, as evidenced in the interviews, is provide hope for the next generation. But policies and programs must respond to ensure that people are able to realize their hopes. For this reason there should be no limits to the training opportunities provided. For children, seeing their parents actively engaged in training and learning new things can be the inspiration they need. And parents who participate in training may begin to see the value in education and encourage their children to make education a priority.

As one program director put it:

I just don't see who benefits when we make it difficult for people to take training. In my view we should pay people who have the kind of history our students have to take training as if it were a job. These are individuals who have not learned the very basic things that others take for granted. We need to teach them the basic rules of work-life while also teaching some basic things that most of us learned as children. It took most of us 18 years to learn what we needed to know to move forward with training for careers etc. How is it that we expect people who did not have this experience to get all that they need in 3 months, 10 months, 2 years. It simply isn't realistic.^{lxxxv}

While policy has never been as flexible as described here, there was a time when multi-barriered students were provided with sufficient support to allow them to participate in long-term training while collecting a training allowance. The successful outcomes for the many individuals who were supported in this manner through Manitoba's ACCESS programs shows that this policy has had a positive long-term impact. Graduates of ACCESS programs are leaders in the community, employed as

social workers, teachers, executive directors of non-profit organizations, elected political representatives, doctors, lawyers. They are proof that investing in long-term education has lasting benefits.

It should come as no surprise that short-term training often does not lead to permanent employment and an end to the cycle of poverty for many trainees even though it does have some positive effects. But it is important to be honest with students. The neo-liberal promise that short-term training is a ‘ticket’ out of poverty is a fallacy. Helping students to understand that the journey will be much longer than this is essential so that they are not set up for disappointing outcomes leading to further distrust and exclusion.

Of utmost importance is the fact that government policy continues to be developed through a middle class non-Aboriginal lens by people who, for the most part, were raised in a culture where planning for the future was central to their childhood experience. From a very early age, middle class students internalize the priority of education and career planning. It is a central message they learn at school and one that is reinforced at home through the modelling and guidance of their families.

As described in Chapter 9, many Aboriginal and other second-chance learners who come from a context of intergenerational poverty and low-education attainment did not share this experience but rather became accustomed to living life one day at a time. As adults, they need to be given the opportunities they missed in adolescence—to explore who they are and the options available to them so that they too can plan for their futures. They must also be given the flexibility to change course along the way as they learn more about their interests and abilities. Trainees and program staff acknowledged that students

often do not choose training based on interest and opportunity. Many simply take what is offered to them.

The lives of individuals who are poor and socially excluded are often complex, and so too are the solutions. This is especially true for Aboriginal second-chance learners who have had the added layer of oppression resulting from colonialism and racism. The neo-liberal paradigm is inherently unable to accommodate the complexity and therefore a different paradigm is required.

10.2.2 Supply/Demand Initiatives

While I believe it is fair to say that all of the job/creation-training programs discussed in this research were designed with the best of intentions, and that they have had some success placing Aboriginal people into good jobs and/or leading them to pursue education and training that they may otherwise not have pursued, there remain critical challenges and lessons yet to be learned.

A central issue is the lack of understanding and interest in equity issues on behalf of some stakeholders. For example while staff of the MFA appear to be deeply committed to the objectives of equity hiring and tendering, other stakeholders have been less enthusiastic. One individual involved in the project noted that the engineers and contractors “seemed to find it all an intrusion” and that “most contractors had very little patience for equity provisions and they would do what they could to work around them.”^{xxxvi}

In terms of outcomes, MFA representatives point to the work experience, skill development and certification that will increase individual chances of being hired in the future. This was certainly an objective of the Limestone project and the Northern Hydro

project. In fact since none of the models discussed provided guaranteed employment, the hope that training would have long-term value would be their primary ‘raison d’être.’^{lxxxvii}

A positive and less-explicitly intended outcome is a change in perception some employers reportedly have of Aboriginal workers. This observation came from a representative of the MFA. He noted a change in attitudes emerging among contractors. He pointed to anecdotal reports from contractors who said that they were “pleasantly surprised” with the quality of the workers hired through the Floodway Initiative. Given their initial resistance to the hiring requirements outlined in the agreement, it is hoped that their positive experience will have an impact on their attitudes and hiring practices in the future. Perhaps, for example, there might be connections made with BUILD. It would be interesting to know if similar changes in attitudes resulted from contractor hiring experiences on Limestone and whether this had an impact on hiring practices at Wuskwatim.

Related to this is the relationship between hiring practices and the labour market. The same MFA employee expressed some concern with the long-term implications of the reluctant cooperation of employers at a time when skilled labour was in short supply. It was noted that contractors essentially had little choice but to seek out equity hires because they could not find workers through their regular channels. The implications of this is that voluntary equity hiring may be a ‘fair-weather’ phenomenon and discrimination in hiring may resurface when the economy takes a downward turn and skilled labour is in abundant supply. The Floodway project and the Wuskwatim projects have been operational during times when skilled labour is in short supply. There is some

concern that contractors seeking workers may be inclined to return to discriminatory hiring practices as described in Chapter 3.

In a final analysis, it is useful to expand on the components of successful equity construction projects outlined by Cohen and Braid (2003), and some of the features of successful retraining programs outlined by Little (2005) to address some of the specific concerns directly related to the Manitoba experience and the findings of this research.

Collaboration between governments, crown corporations, contractors, trade unions CBOs and intermediaries

In the cases described in this paper, government agencies, crown corporations and unions involved in the projects demonstrated a willingness to adapt their practices to ensure opportunity for target populations. The past director of the LTEA emphasized that the construction union and the main civil contractor (Bechtel-Kumagai) were deeply committed to the objectives of the LTEA.

However anecdotal reports from people involved in both the Floodway and Northern Hydro projects indicate that many businesses and contractors involved in the projects have been less committed. It appears that many contractors ‘play along’ only as much as they are absolutely required to. Findings from the Limestone project and experience to date on the Northern Hydro Training project demonstrate that in the case of skilled trades, contractors have not hired as many apprentices as they could have, and they have been more likely to fill lower-skill positions through mandated equity training initiatives. This is an ongoing challenge not unique to Manitoba. For example, in 2009 the Nisichawayasihk Cree accused contractors of favouring Quebecois over local Cree workers in their hiring practices. (CBC News, August 14, 2009). Given the objectives of both the Limestone and Hydro projects to train and employ high/skilled workers, this is a

major failing that could be resolved with greater cooperation between stakeholders, as well as through more stringent project labour agreements.

My examination of Limestone, the MFA and Manitoba Hydro showed that all three initiatives experienced some resentment and resistance to the contract requirements regarding equity hires and contract set-asides. While all three projects have resulted in access to training opportunities for participants that may have lasting benefit for participants to various degrees, the actual employment outcomes are less clear, and are near impossible to measure since employment has not been an actual mandate of the training initiatives.

Establishing ‘a critical mass’ of job-ready Aboriginal workers

There is a shortage of Aboriginal people ready to step into many of the best jobs available. This has particularly been the case for the skilled trades, which have been in high demand in Manitoba in recent years. As described in this and the preceding chapter, the barriers are complex and there are no quick fixes. Bringing Aboriginal second-chance learners ‘up’ to the level required by many employers is a slow process. This was a problem expressed by trainers, as well as representatives of Manitoba Hydro and the MFA. This becomes particularly problematic with pressure to provide skilled workers to meet immediate labour shortages. Employers needing workers immediately become frustrated when they are not readily available and this further reinforces their negative attitudes toward equity hiring expectations.

Also of note is the reality that the level of funding is insufficient to meet the needs of those individuals most marginalized and for whom intensive support and training is required. However, while some of the barriers to participation might require

long-term interventions, others might be more quickly resolved if there is willingness to do so. For example, in the case of the Floodway project, the lack of transportation to sites was a primary issue for individuals wanting to work but unable to obtain a driver's license and without means to transport themselves to the work site. This has also been identified as a major issue for the NHTI. This should be a problem that could be creatively resolved thereby ensuring greater participation of capable workers.

Cooperation and commitment

This remains an important but yet to be realized objective in general and one that is difficult to attain. The commitment of some key stakeholders in large-scale projects such as those described in this research has clearly been very weak. The same can be said for both private sector and public sector employers in general. There continues to be a lack of understanding of the complicated issues for Aboriginal trainees and perhaps more serious is the issue that many contractors have no interest in understanding. As noted, some comply at the most basic level and only as much as they are forced to do so by the terms of contracts, human resource policies, and human rights and labour laws. This is due in part to the fact that insensitivity and systemic racism continue to create barriers for affirmative action training and hiring in projects such as the ones described. But it is also fair to say that what appears to be a lack of cooperation and commitment is in part a result of the competing priorities of employers, policy makers, job referral services, workers and the organizations training them.

In addition to the above, the reality that different stakeholders have different objectives is a central issue that will not change. For this reason I would argue that in the case of large scale public sector-driven economic development projects that integrate

targeted training and employment supply/demand initiatives, it is incumbent upon governments and those working on behalf of marginalized groups to more shrewdly negotiate agreements to respond to the following critical issues:

The longer-term education and training needs of excluded groups

Knowing that there are limitations to the training and hiring of workers for time limited projects should encourage greater advocacy for programs and supports that ‘live on’ past the project. For example, the expansion of ACCESS programs resulting from the Limestone project resulted in a legacy that continues to provide opportunities for Aboriginal Northerners. Recognizing the damaging effects of colonial policies and integrating decolonizing pedagogy as described in Chapter 5 will serve trainees and all of society in the long-term.

The broader education and training needs of the community

The example provided earlier, that Aboriginal communities continue to need nurses, teachers and other professionals, provides a starting point for negotiation for projects where First Nations are directly affected, such as hydroelectric development. There could be benefit to both contractors and communities to negotiate agreements that would reduce equity hire requirements of contractors where there is an immediate shortage of needed trained tradespeople, in exchange for expansion of education opportunities outside of the needs of the project to meet other pressing community needs, especially in areas of health, education and human services.

Guaranteed work for trainees

The misperception that project training initiatives leads to guaranteed employment is an ongoing problem for governments and communities. Developing a more integrated

model where contractors and initiatives build more collaborative and trusting relationships so that trainees are hired directly through the initiative, as is the case at BUILD, is a model that should be aggressively pursued and improved upon.^{lxxxviii} This might eliminate ongoing challenges with government job referral agencies. It could also eliminate a bureaucratic layer that was identified by LTEA and more recently WKTC, as a major barrier.

Labour Market Intermediaries (LMI)

The establishment of an Aboriginal labour market intermediary might help with the above noted challenges. An LMI could play a role in matching Aboriginal second-chance learners with ongoing training needs, and could identify and work with well-informed employers willing to go the extra mile. This would serve to address concerns such as those expressed by BUILD's program director and training coordinator who emphasized that complex barriers and challenges remain for their trainees when they complete their six-month program. They know that their trainees remain very vulnerable and can easily fall off their path without the supportive environment that BUILD provides. They also know that the six-month training that they provide does not sufficiently respond to the complex challenges of their trainees, but the reality for these trainees, and all second-chance learners, is that they are on their own once they complete their programs. The existence of an entity to transition second-chance learners into the labour market does not currently exist—trainers are left with this task if they are able to find the time but they are not provided with funding to support their 'graduates' in this next stage of the process.

An LMI working closely with the existing network of community-based training organizations could provide an important additional support bridging the divide between supply and demand. LMIs have been shown to be effective in other jurisdictions (Harrison and Weiss, 1998; Silver and Loewen, 2005). Analysis of the initiatives described in this paper reveals limitations and challenges that might be addressed through a permanent LMI such as described by Silver and Loewen (2005) and that which is currently being explored in Winnipeg with the provincial government, CBOs and public sector employers (Silvius & MacKinnon, 2011).

In the case of large-scale infrastructure projects, challenges result in part because of the time limited, project specific nature of the projects and the incredible amount of time it takes to get organizations up and running. There is also a significant cost in setting up entities to support the employment and training objectives of the large-scale projects such as those discussed. In the case of smaller scale initiatives, there is limited capacity to broker between employers and trainers. As noted, trainees are not formally ‘tracked’ after graduation but we know anecdotally that many either do not find work or they move back into training. A permanent LMI could help to develop long-term relationships with employers and trainers; it could provide graduates of training programs with a resource to help them find work; and it could provide individuals exploring both work and training opportunities with a central place to go to direct them to their various employment and training options. It could also provide cultural sensitivity training for employers and cultural reclamation programming for Aboriginal job/training seekers by linking with existing organizations like UCTC that have developed this expertise.

Another major problem that could be eliminated through a permanent LMI is the steep learning curve that is recreated when new large-scale development projects emerge. As seen with the examples provided, past mistakes are often repeated as key stakeholders and project staff learn to negotiate their roles and relationships with prospective employers. The fact that stakeholders involved in the current northern hydro projects were surprised by the low level of education attainment in First Nation communities^{lxxxix}; the fact that MFA and the WKTC identified issues and challenges that were also identified by the Limestone project; that BUILD expresses concerns about vulnerable trainees and the difficulties moving trainees into jobs in the private sector; and the challenges that other training organizations have as a result of lack of funding and resources to support their graduates find work, suggest that a permanent LMI could be an effective addition to the programs that currently exist.

Another important role for an LMI could be the ongoing evaluation of projects and institutionalization of knowledge so that the long-term impact of equity training and hiring is better understood. This is something that has been missing. This is in part because projects are understandably focused on evaluating their own outcomes and have less interest in the broader public policy implications of the targeted training and employment approach.

The past director of the LTEA emphasized the “important connection between the development of the policy and the manner in which it is carried out” (Peter Ferris, personal communication, November 13, 2008). He attributes much of the success of the LTEA to the political decision to establish a limited life crown corporation that could “overcome the bureaucratic and systemic government impediments that tend to check,

rather than enable, innovative programming [thereby] translating political will into an effective political mechanism which was translated into an effective delivery vehicle” (Peter Ferris, personal communication, November 13, 2008). An LMI could be established in this spirit while avoiding some of the pitfalls identified with the project specific model. A permanent LMI could be less vulnerable to political whim if solidly institutionalized and embraced by stakeholders.

A major challenge for a permanent LMI as opposed to a project specific, time limited model, such as the LTEA, HNTI/WKTC and the MFA, is that it would need to be constantly seeking new labour market opportunities and employer contacts. But an established LMI would have the benefit of experience to expedite processes and ensure greater success in establishing the components outlined.

As noted by (Harrison & Weiss, 1998), a critical attribute of the Centre for Employment Training (CET) model that they examined is its relationship with the Hispanic community in its region. While this element—a relationship with the Aboriginal community—would also be critical for the success of LMIs in a Manitoba setting, it will be much more politically challenging given the heterogeneity of the Aboriginal community and the size of the region. It may be necessary to address this through a distinct LMI in the North, or a northern subsidiary of a central LMI in order to address the distinct needs of the North. Nonetheless, the development of an Aboriginal LMI would require the input and involvement of several key stakeholders including First Nation, non-status Aboriginal, and Métis representation. Also critical is the involvement of existing CBOs that are working to address the fall out of colonial policies, community-based trainers, community colleges and universities, since strong linkages with these

entities would be a critical feature of an LMI to ensure that the valuable resources already in existence remain central to the process of educating and training workers.

5. Learning from past mistakes and successes

Improving upon current approaches requires that we reflect upon and learn from past mistakes. A good example that shows how we failed to learn what we might have from the past is the example of the Limestone project. The successes and failings of the Limestone project were clearly articulated in the CETWG Retrospective. Important lessons are there to learn from in subsequent projects and more lessons will be available now that the Northern Hydro Project is well underway. The Province indicates that the current model has greater involvement of Aboriginal organizations and significantly greater involvement of First Nations in the delivery of training at the local level.

Another important legacy of Limestone that has had a significant impact on the current development model was the empowerment of First Nations who learned from the Limestone experience and have since become increasingly insistent that they have a greater role in the decision making process on current and future hydroelectric development. But as described in Chapter 8, there are other lessons to be learned as we move forward with similar projects.

6. Decolonizing pedagogy

The importance of integrating decolonizing pedagogy was discussed in relation to supply-side initiatives however it is equally essential that it be integrated into supply/demand initiatives. Several individuals interviewed in this research very powerfully described the significant impact of cultural reclamation through decolonizing

pedagogy. Its importance should be taken very seriously in any future policy and program development that relates to Aboriginal people.

10.3 Limitations of the Research

In the previous section of this chapter I speak to significant insights derived from my research. Here I point out some limitations related to validity and reliability in the research methodology.

Earlier in section 10, I allude to difficulties accessing data on the employment outcomes of trainees. This information is not currently being tracked in a systematic manner for various reasons. It is difficult to say whether this can be resolved entirely and if so, who should be responsible for this task and where resources would come from. And even if a system of tracking graduates were to be implemented, graduates could not be required to comply. Results would at best provide an inconclusive picture of outcomes. It is possible that they would be skewed because individuals with the most satisfying results might be more inclined to respond. Nonetheless, establishing some manner of tracking graduates over the long-term could prove to be informative for future research and evaluation.

Because the trainees interviewed in this study participated on a voluntary basis, limitations similar to the above apply. While I attempted to find a mix of trainees and a large number of individuals were invited to participate, it is not evident why some agreed to participate and others did not. While their reasons cannot be known, it is possible that the individuals who responded were those most satisfied with the experience and outcomes. In the case of the small number of individuals who came to me through snowball sampling, it is possible that their relationship to the individual who led them to the study was the result of a similar training experience and or outcome.

The best way to resolve the potential limitations described above would be to formalize as best as possible, a method of tracking trainees and conducting longitudinal analysis of their journey.

10.4 The Bottom Line—Comprehensive Policy Measures are Essential

I began my research with a review of the literature on labour market policies and found an emphasis on supply-side measures that have evolved within the context of a political economy that views the market as the means to address poverty and social exclusion. Through secondary data collection I have shown that in spite of the rhetoric that a market left to its own devices will create high-skill opportunities and well-paying jobs for individuals who invest wisely in their human capital, the reality has been an increasingly polarized labour market that consists of a relatively small and shrinking number of ‘high-skilled’, decent paying, secure jobs in the primary market and a growing number of precarious jobs in a secondary market.

In this same context I described how policies are shaped from an expectation that individuals will be motivated to invest in their human capital to compete for the best jobs. To illustrate the broad impact of the current political economy, I provided evidence of how an increasingly polarized labour market finds highly educated people under-employed. However, I turned my attention to the multi-barriered segment of the population for whom opportunities are increasingly limited to low-wage precarious jobs. I went on to hypothesize that for these individuals—and in particular those who are Aboriginal—the neo-liberal approach to labour market policy is particularly ineffective. To test this hypothesis, I looked at the experience of Aboriginal second-chance learners in Manitoba.

Statistics very clearly show that Aboriginal people are overrepresented among those with the lowest incomes, have lower levels of education, higher drop out rates, higher rates of incarceration, and poorer overall health. Aboriginal adults are entering training programs regularly and government policies are designed to push them through quickly. While quantifying employment and income outcomes was not possible, of the individuals interviewed, few had proceeded on to well-paying jobs after completing brief training stints.

However, as I learned from the men and women I interviewed in this study, positive outcomes come in different forms. A renewed sense of self and value in education can have far reaching benefits for individuals, families and generations to follow. Yet these outcomes are difficult to measure and are often ignored in the current political milieu.

It is certain that training programs are not a panacea for ending poverty and exclusion. However they do have a more important role to play than I initially understood. In spite of a host of challenges and complex barriers, and the ongoing struggles and limitations of education and training providers, many programs are making a big difference in the lives of second-chance learners and are contributing to breaking the cycle of poverty. However it is also true that it is less the job-training components that are having a transformative effect in people's lives than it is the building of positive relationships and the expansion of social networks as well as increased self-confidence and the reclamation of culture that leads trainees to a sense of who they are and where they want to go in life. While these experiences can lead to improved social and

economic outcomes in the long-term, the immediate impact can also be quite profound, yet difficult to measure.

The positive experience described by many of the trainees is in large part attributable to the creativity of training organizations who fully understand the complex lives of their students and find ways to ‘work around’ narrowly focused government policies and programs built from a lack of understanding of the deep and damaging impact of colonization, a flawed ideological framework and erroneous assumptions.

In terms of demand-side strategies, the programs described in this study show that Manitoba is in some ways ‘bucking the trend’ to rely solely on market solutions. Inserting equity provisions into large-scale public infrastructure projects as described in Chapter 9, providing financial support for innovative programs like BUILD, and funding for ACCESS programs and CBOs like those described in this research, are providing new opportunities for individuals who would otherwise have few.

It is also notable that all of these projects, past and present, have been implemented under the leadership of NDP governments that have clearly made political decisions to make equity hiring a priority. History in Manitoba and elsewhere tells us that initiatives such as those described above are less likely to survive, let alone be initiated by governments more closely identified with the neo-liberal paradigm. This is not surprising given their favour of unregulated, non-interventionist approaches. This was clearly exemplified in the case of the British Columbia highway development project described in Chapter 9. Brought to life by the NDP government in the 1990s, the project was dismantled when the Liberal government was elected in 2001 (Cohen & Braid, 2003).

Just as supply-side strategies are insufficient in responding to a very complex situation, so too are demand-side strategies. As noted by several individuals, their emancipation came not from their jobs or their technical training, but from developing an understanding of who they are, where they came from and how the historical context has complicated their lives. From here they are able to move forward. Creating jobs does not address the fact that colonization has had a deep and damaging affect on Aboriginal people and our failure as a society to acknowledge this in a systemic way results in continued oppression. Jobs are simply not enough.

In this study I questioned whether the neo-liberal model is able to adequately respond to a very complex situation that includes the complicated effects of colonization on individuals, families and communities, the reality that good jobs are in short supply and short-term training programs do not prepare trainees to qualify for these jobs, and the reality that racism and discrimination continues to be systemic. I conclude that it cannot.

The projects described in Chapters 8 and 9 are examples of how programs are doing their best to work around the neo-liberal paradigm. They demonstrate how we can ensure better social and economic outcomes by improving supports for supply-side interventions, inserting cultural reclamation programs as core programming, combining supply-side strategies with the creation of good paying jobs through public infrastructure and economic development projects, and connect multi-barriered Aboriginal people with training that is right for them and to employers willing to go the extra mile.

The most profound learning that I take from this study is that unless we are willing to fully understand and systemically respond to past mistakes, we will fail to significantly reduce poverty and increase the social inclusion of Aboriginal people. But

this approach is incompatible with the neo-liberal market-based solution model. It requires significant systemic change, state investment and intervention. It must include the full integration of decolonizing pedagogy into curriculum at all levels of learning, and not just for Aboriginal people, but for non-Aboriginal people so that we can all better understand the damaging impact of past policies. Understanding and acknowledging past mistakes is the necessary first step toward a fundamental shift in the attitudes and values that ultimately shape policy and practice.

I might also note in these final pages that this learning came to me as a result of interviews with trainees who very generously shared some very powerful stories of pain and despair, and of lives changed as a result of decolonizing pedagogy. Quantifying completion rates and employment statistics does not capture the power of reclaiming cultural identity and pride that several trainees very passionately described to me.

While it was not my intent to evaluate individual training programs, it became very clear that those that found a way to integrate decolonizing pedagogy into their programs had better results and I felt it important to stress this. This is not to say that these programs led immediately to high paying jobs, but they appear to have created a safe environment for individuals to learn as well as understand that often what they need first, and sometimes most, is a healing of spirit and a reclaiming of self that then frees them to move forward. This was particularly evident in the ICSWP, a supply-side program meeting labour market demand but less characteristic of neo-liberal supply-side programs because of its long term nature ending with a university degree with transferability beyond specific labour market demand. It was also very evident in the UCTC program. While characteristic of the neo-liberal model, UCTC has found a way to

maximize impact by finding creative ways to integrate decolonizing pedagogy. While promising in theory, the supply/demand programs, with the exception of BUILD to minor extent, are less effective than they might be because they make little if any effort to integrate decolonizing pedagogy. There is also a timing issue in terms of labour market demand—it takes several years to train and certify trades-people and this timing does not always align with the needs of the market.

It is very clear that within the context of a comprehensive ‘package’ of policy and program tools, the integration of decolonizing pedagogy is integral to responding to the poverty and social exclusion of Aboriginal people. In terms of training, program administrators, teachers and counsellors made it very clear that there is much room for improvement at the policy level to make it easier for Aboriginal adults to heal from their past, explore what is possible, develop plans of action and work toward new found dreams. The most ‘successful’ trainees were those who described a journey of healing and self-discovery that had made so much more possible.

On a final note, none of the above changes the fact that neo-liberalism has created a polarized labour market and a world where the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. Reducing poverty and social exclusion will require improved social supports, redistributive tax policies, fair wage policies and labour regulations—all which are under attack under neo-liberalism. Until we deal with this elephant in the room, it is unlikely that we will adequately address the social and economic exclusion of Aboriginal people and others living on the margins.

Appendix 1

Sample of Training Organizations Included in the Study

The Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD)

describes itself as a community-driven, non-profit human resource development organization serving Winnipeg's Aboriginal community. Its vision is “to share the responsibility of self-determination for all Aboriginal people in Winnipeg by providing quality education, training and employment opportunities through partnerships with community, educational institutions, business/industry and government”(CAHRD, 2008).

Urban Circle Training Centre Inc. identifies as a community-based, non-profit organization governed by an independent Board of Directors. Currently entering its nineteenth year of operation, Urban Circle has developed expertise in pre-employment training and employment for Aboriginal women and men utilizing the philosophy of the medicine wheel. The first program grew directly from a need expressed by Aboriginal women in Winnipeg's inner city for training which would lead to meaningful employment (Urban Circle Training Centre Inc., 2008).

Patal Vocational Training is a private sector vocational training centre with programs targeted toward the Aboriginal population. Patal has been in existence in Manitoba since 1986. Its clientele is primarily Aboriginal and it provides training in Winnipeg as well as in various reserve communities.

The University of Manitoba Inner City Social Work Program was introduced in the 1980s as one of the ACCESS programs designed to provide a university degree program for students with multiple barriers. Students are provided with special supports and academic preparation to help them through the degree program. Students are those

who would otherwise have difficulty completing a university degree program. Until the 1990s, all students without funding from other sources and who qualified for social assistance were provided with income assistance through to graduation. In recent years it has been more difficult for students to access assistance and the program finds that they spend a great deal of time advocating for students on a case-by-case basis. (K. Clare, personal communication, September 27, 2008). This initiative was selected as an example of a program that provides academic supports and university training that results in a professional degree. Unlike the other initiatives selected, the training term is beyond the two-year limit of government supported training initiatives. While not specifically targeted toward Aboriginal students, the program has a high number of Aboriginal students.

Building Urban Industries through Local Development (BUILD)

BUILD integrates hiring and training of unemployed and underemployed inner city residents into its program, which retrofits housing in the inner-city.

Other Models to be examined

As noted, in addition to the in-depth study of the agencies identified above, the sample includes past and present models that are examined through a review and analysis of existing government records and reports, and interviews with program administrators where possible. Due to limited time and resources, these programs were examined in as thorough a manner as the agencies in the sample subset identified above. Nonetheless, these models are representative of the continuum of training possibilities and are therefore important to include in the study.

University ACCESS Programs

As noted, preliminary investigation of second-chance opportunities in Manitoba demonstrates the emphasis on short-term programs that support the ‘work first’ mentality that feeds the secondary labour market. In addition to these types of programs, Manitoba has a variety of university and college ACCESS programs that continue to provide opportunity to individuals who would have difficulty completing a university education without extra academic and other supports (Government of Manitoba, Advanced Education and Literacy, 2008). This has been an important model as it recognizes the special circumstances of Aboriginal and other disadvantaged students. Manitoba ACCESS programs currently include:

University ACCESS Programs

- **Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP)**
An off-campus Bachelor of Education degree program serving the North.
- **University of Manitoba Access Program – North and South (UMAP)**
Provides access to educational opportunities on-campus for northern and rural residents.
- **Special Pre-Medical Studies Program (SPSP)**
A 2 to 4-year program preparing Aboriginal students for entrance into medical and dental schools or other health-related faculties.
- **Professional Health Program (PHP)**
Provides support to students in the Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry, and Pharmacy and Medical Rehabilitation for those who have gained admission to these faculties.
- **Northern Bachelor of Social Work Program (NBSWP)**
A 4-year Bachelor of Social Work program in Thompson.
- **Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP)**
An off-campus Bachelor of Social Work Program training social workers for Winnipeg's inner city.
- **Engineering Access Program (ENGAP)**

Provides a 4-year Bachelor of Engineering degree for Manitoba Aboriginal students.

- Winnipeg Education Centre – Education Program (WEC-ED)
An off-campus Bachelor of Education program training teachers for Winnipeg's inner city.

College ACCESS programs

Red River Community College:

- College Access Program (CCAP)
Provides opportunities for college diploma and certificate programs to northern and rural residents.
- Southern Nursing Program (SNP)
Provides training to southern residents to obtain a nursing degree.
- Business Administration Integrated Program (BAI)

University College of the North:

- Preparation for Health Careers (PHC)
Provides training for northern residents to enter the health field.
- The Pas Campus: University College of the North

Government-funded largescale infrastructure projects integrating targeted training and employment

In addition to the programs described above, I also gathered data on two current Manitoba infrastructure projects and a similar initiative dating back to the 1980s. These projects were selected as they are examples of how targeted training and employment can be integrated into publicly funded infrastructure/economic development projects thereby creating demand and training 'supply'. The projects to be studied include:

The *Manitoba Floodway Initiative* – a multi-million dollar infrastructure project funded by the federal and provincial governments. The purpose of the project is to improve the quality of the flood protection system in Manitoba. Central to the project has been the aim to create employment opportunities for 'equity groups'. As outlined on its website (2008), the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) is committed to:

* employment equity for designated groups that are underrepresented in the Manitoba construction industry workforce – Aboriginal people, women, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities

* [creating] a pool of skilled equity group members available to work on the floodway and other future construction projects

* ensuring meaningful employment equity hiring on the floodway project.

As a result, the MFA has established an Employment Equity Strategy to help meet these objectives. The strategy consists of three key components:

1. 20 percent Employment Initiative—To have a minimum of 20 percent of the overall labour workforce consisting of available qualified employment equity hires.
2. Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative—To generate jobs and economic opportunities for the Aboriginal community, through an Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative for Aboriginal businesses and workers.
3. Floodway Training Initiative (FTI)—To increase the pool of skilled equity target group members for work on the floodway project, other heavy construction projects, and the construction industry at large, MFA is working with Manitoba Advanced Education & Training (MAET).

The Northern Hydro Training Initiative— established to ensure training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in the construction of two new hydroelectric generating stations in Northern Manitoba. The Government of Manitoba anticipates the projects will generate up to 20 years of direct/indirect employment for northern Aboriginal Manitobans. The Manitoba Métis Federation and northern First Nations through the the Wuskwatim and Keeyask Training Consortium Inc. (WKTC) manage training for this project. Training is provided for a variety of positions including designated trades (carpenters, electricians, ironworkers, plumbers, millwrights), non-designated trades (heavy equipment operators, teamsters, labourers), construction

supports (catering, security), technical/professional, business/management (Government of Manitoba, Competiveness, Training and Trade, 2008).

The *Manitoba Limestone Hydro Project*—a past major hydro construction project on the Nelson River. Construction began in 1985 with completion in 1992. The *Limestone Training and Employment Agency* was established to ensure training and employment of Northern Manitobans with particular focus on Aboriginal northerners. The LTEA's objective was to coordinate and train individuals for jobs directly and indirectly created as a result of Limestone.

Appendix 2

Organizational Data Collection ‘Checklist’

Organizations were selected to represent various types of training initiatives. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate programs, but to understand how policy relates to their program design and the outcomes as measured through the eyes of participants (administrators, teachers and past student/trainees).

The following is an example of the basic information that will be gathered from each organization. Other information may also be gathered.

- Organization mandate
- Training initiatives/programs offered
- Duration of program(s)
- Percentage of Aboriginal students
- Is there a cultural component to program(s) (specifically Aboriginal focus)?
- Other supports provided
- Expected employment opportunities resulting from training/program
- Cost of program per student/client
- Cost of program to student/client
- Characteristic of trainees (education attainment, family responsibilities etc.)
- Number of program participants per year
- Funding sources (government, individual etc.)
- Labour market need (employment prospects and targeted employment sectors)
- Completion rates
- Dropout rates
- Intake procedures
- Eligibility requirements
- Employment outcomes
 - Wages, benefits, employment security, opportunities for advancement
 - Organization role in employment outcomes (does organization assist with job finding?)

Appendix 3
Draft Interview Instrument #1 – Interviews with past students

The following questions were asked in face-to-face interviews. The interviewer used an audio recorder to tape the interviews. All students interviewed met the basic criteria (they identify as Aboriginal and are a past participant of one of the agencies involved in the study.) The objective of the interview was to determine individual experiences and perceptions about their lives before training, during training and after training

Part 1 Student characteristics and background

1.0 You and your family

1.1 Age_____

1.2 Gender

Female_____

Male_____

1.3. Do you own or rent your home?

Own_____

Rent_____

1.4 Do you have children living at home in your care?

Yes_____ If Yes, how many and what are their ages_____

No_____

2.0 Your family history

2.1 Did you live in a home with one or two parents or other caregivers? (I.e. two parents, grandparents, mother only, father only, grandmother only, auntie etc.)

2.2 What level of education did your parents (caregivers) receive? Beside each, indicate caregiver (mother, father, grandmother, etc)

Below grade 9 _____

Between grade 9 and 12_____

Completed high school_____

Dropped out in grade__ but later obtained a GED

Completed college (if yes, what program)

Completed university (if yes, what degree)

2.3 How would you best describe your family income growing up.

Income level

Low income _____

Middle income _____

High income _____

Source of family income

Social assistance _____

Employment _____

Other (explain) _____

Part 2 Education, Training and Work

3.0 Your personal experience with training

3.1 What level of education have you obtained?

Below grade 9 _____

Between grade 9 and 12 _____

Completed high school _____

Dropped out in grade__ and later obtained a GED _____

Completed college _____

Completed university (if yes, what degree) _____

3.2 Did you return to education as an adult to complete your education?

4.0 Describe any/all training you have taken as an adult learner (ask them to name all of the programs, length etc.)

4.1 Did any of the training you mentioned lead to the employment that you currently have? Explain.

4.2 How would you describe your training experience(s) (was it useful, positive, etc.)?

5.0 Your experience with work—before and after training

5.1 What was your work experience before participating in training?

Did you work? (for wages)

Where did you work?

What were your wages?

Did you enjoy your job?

Did you have benefits?

Did you work full-time, part-time, casual? Were your work hours satisfactory to you?

Did your training help you to get the job that you now have?

5.2 What is your current work situation?

Do you work? (for wages)

Where do you work?

Where do you work?

What do you do?

Do you enjoy your job?

Do you work full-time, part time, casual? is this satisfactory to you?

5.3 Are you currently looking for another job?

5.4 Are you currently thinking about additional training?

5.5 Is there training that you would like to take but do not feel able to pursue it?
Explain

Part 3—Impact of Colonization

6.0 Aboriginal history and culture

- 6.1 Are you familiar with the terms 'colonization' and/or 'decolonization'? If yes, were these concepts taught to you in any of your training programs? If yes, has this been beneficial to you? Explain.
- 6.2 Did you learn about Aboriginal cultural and the historical context of Aboriginal people in any of the training you have participated in? If yes, what are your thoughts on what you learned? If no, how would you feel about having such content included?
- 6.3 Describe in your own words, what you feel has been the impact of participating in training program(s) for yourself, your family, community etc.?

Appendix 4

Interview Instrument #2 – Agency Directors

Note that the source of data was gathered prior to the interview so program information was available.

This guide was used to gather qualitative data from agency directors in a face-to-face interview. Interviews were be tape recorded and transcribed.

1. What from your perspective (if any) are concerns that arise as a result of policy parameters that you are confined to?
2. How do you choose the training programs that you offer?
3. How are your trainings programs designed? (who designs them? how is the timeframe of training determined? How is course content determined?)
4. Do you believe that the programs content and timeframe is sufficient to adequately train students for employment? If no, explain.
5. Does your agency assist students to find employment after completion?
6. Describe the characteristics of your average student?
7. Do your students have challenges that make participation in the training program more difficult than students in the first-chance system? (explain what you mean by this)
8. Do you see different challenges for your Aboriginal students vs. non-Aboriginal (If program is not targeted solely to Aboriginal students)? Explain.
9. Do you address in your programs the historical context that is the reality for Aboriginal students (colonization, racism)? Explain.
10. Do you believe that colonization has had an impact on your students that affects their learning? If yes, explain.
11. Do you integrate decolonization or healing into your programming? If yes, please tell me how you feel this contributes to the students' education. If no, explain why you don't include such a programming.
12. Do you believe that providing a historical context for Aboriginal learners can help them in their studies? Explain.

13. How would you best describe the students' motivation for taking the training program that they enroll in? (e.g., choose based on what funding is available; choose based on interest and aptitude; other)
14. Do successful students share any particular characteristics? Explain.
15. Do you believe that the jobs that you are training your students for will result in their moving out of poverty?
16. What reporting mechanisms are you required to follow to account to your funders?
17. Do these expectations in anyway impact who you accept into the program?
18. What would you say are the major challenges you face as director of your organization?
19. What do you see are the limitations of training programs?
20. If you could make changes to government policies regarding training, what would they be?
21. Do you have anything you would like to add?

Appendix 5

Interview Instrument #3 – Program Instructors

This guide was used to gather qualitative data from instructors in a face-to-face interview. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

As a program instructor, you will have excellent insight to both the challenges of the organization and the challenges of your students, in addition to the challenges that you might face as an instructor. Can you share with me your experience as an instructor here at _____? For example,

1. What program do you teach in?
2. Describe the characteristic of your average student?
3. I have interviewed your Executive Director, and I am aware of some of the challenges the organization and students face from her perspective. What are the challenges that you as a teacher face as you guide through to successful completion of the training program?
4. Do you see any particular challenges for Aboriginal students? If yes, what do you see as the most difficult challenges your Aboriginal students face?
5. Are their challenges (i.e. policy/program content) that are beyond your control as a teacher?
6. Is there programming/content that you think would help your Aboriginal students that is not currently part of the program (agency in general or your program specifically)?
7. Do you feel that providing a historical context for Aboriginal learners can help them in their studies? Explain.
8. How would you best describe the students motivation for taking the training program that they enroll in? (e.g., choose based on what funding is available; choose based on interest and aptitude; other).
9. Do successful students share any particular characteristics? Explain.
10. Do you feel that the jobs that you are training your students for will result in their moving out of poverty?
11. Do funder requirements/expectations influence your teaching in any way?
12. Do you have anything you would like to add?

Appendix 6
LTEA, HNTI, MFA Training Opportunities

	Limestone Training and Employment Agency	Northern Hydro Training Initiative	Floodway Training Initiative
Training Opportunities			
Designated Trades			
• Carpenters	X	X	
• Electricians	X	X	
• Ironworkers	X	X	
• Plumbers/Pipefitters	X	X	
• Millwrights		X	
Non-Designated Trades			
• Heavy Equipment Operator	X	X	X
• Teamsters	X	X	
• Rebar Workers	X		
• Labourers	X	X	
Other Supports			
• Catering/Cooks	X	X	
• Office Workers	X		
• Security	X		
Technical	X	X	
Business Management	X	X	
Other Professionals • Engineers	X		
Pre-employment	X	X	X
• Security	X		
Technical	X	X	
Business Management	X	X	
Other Professionals • Engineers	X		
Pre-employment	X	X	X

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Endnotes

ⁱ For the purposes of this research, ‘Aboriginal’ includes Canadians of indigenous ancestry who self identify as Aboriginal. This includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit persons.

ⁱⁱ Stakeholders include representatives of education and training initiatives as well as Aboriginal second-chance learners who have participated in training initiatives.

ⁱⁱⁱ Work-first policy emerged in the context of welfare reform in the U.S. in the 1980s. It has been widely adopted across Canada. The basic idea of work-first is to address poverty by moving the poor from welfare into work as quickly as possible.

^{iv} Early discussions with staff at CAHRD and North End Path Centre described their experiences with training of health care workers. Their learning resulted in a scaling back of training in this area. Urban Circle Training Centre continues to train HCAs but they have coupled this with training that results in placements in hospital settings that are more suitable for their trainees.

^v Because production takes place in a situation of diminishing returns, profit maximization takes place where marginal revenue product is below average revenue product. So, according to marginal revenue productivity theory, profits are maximized where $w = MRP_n < ARP_n$ (Rima, 1996, p. 194).

^{vi} The concept of a social structure of accumulation (SSA) stems from the idea that the process of capital accumulation takes place in a particular institutional context. “Without a stable and favourable external environment, capitalist investment in production will not proceed” (Gordon, Edwards and Roth, 1982). This external environment is referred to as the social structure of accumulation. Gordon et al. describe the social structure of accumulation as consisting of “all the institutions that impinge upon the accumulation process” (p. 23).

^{vii} PLMP can be defined as income supports not directly integrated with work requirements. ALMP include policies that integrate income support with work expectations.

^{viii} The EI surplus is a bookkeeping concept only as EI net revenue is spent annually through the federal budget.

^{ix} In this research I will explore the possibility that there is in fact no intention to create a more equal world as inequality is essential for the market to function effectively.

^x As defined by the OECD, a person is in low-paid work if they earn less than two thirds of the median wage of full-time wage-earners.

^{xi} Low-income defined as one-half the median family income

^{xii} Persistent low income defined as earning low-income for at least 5 years

^{xiii} Note that the exclusion of on reserve Aboriginals skews the statistic downward.

^{xiv} “For the period 1992/93 to 1997/98, after adjusting for inflation, the Conservative provincial government had cut expenditures by the following amounts: education, \$111.9 million; health, \$121.7 million; social assistance, \$143.9 million; and total government spending less debt charges, \$519.8 million.” By 1997 the government boasted that the Manitoba government is now smaller than at any time since the mid-1970s” (Black and Silver, 1999, p.13).

^{xv} Chung, (2006), notes that there continues to be a significant gap between university-educated and high-school educated workers. Between 2000 and 2005, the average weekly earnings of young male employees with a high school diploma rose by 5 percent while that of university graduates of the same cohort dropped by 3 percent. This is attributed to the increase in blue collar jobs resulting from a boom in the oil industry and earnings growth among less-educated workers is not likely to be sustainable.

^{xvi} Private schools and charter schools are also an option but are generally accessible only to those able to pay high tuition fees. The majority of the population continues to attend public schools.

^{xvii} Consistent with the transformative paradigm, I would normally include community partners throughout the process (design, data collection, analysis, dissemination) however this was not practical in the context of this study given the parameters of the PhD program.

^{xviii} Having conducted research in the inner city for the past six years, I have gotten to know many participants of various programs, including training programs. While many of these conversations have not been part of formal studies, they have inspired this research as they have raised important issues about the current policy response to training and employment of the excluded.

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- ^{xix} Urban Circle recognizes that it does not factor in potential indirect savings that may result from breaking the cycle of poverty that many of the participants feel trapped in. It also makes some assumptions that participants are not receiving financial support from government after leaving their programs. Some will likely continue to receive support for a period of time as they pursue further education.
- ^{xx} Interview #30, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 4, 2010
- ^{xxi} Interview # 1, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 9, 2009
- ^{xxii} Interview # 7, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 26, 2009
- ^{xxiii} A breakdown by gender is not available
- ^{xxiv} Limestone figures shown reflect 1991 constant price.
- ^{xxv} There is a difference of opinion on this. Some argue that Northern Ministers and MLAs actively sought input and feedback from Aboriginal communities. The Limestone Aboriginal Partnership Development Board (LAPDB) included representation from Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Manitoba Métis Federation, and National Association of Community Councils.
- ^{xxvi} It should be noted that since the project is scheduled to run to the end of 2013, these reports came at a somewhat early stage.
- ^{xxvii} Similar to the model used for Limestone, the Manitoba Job Referral Service is the government service that employers go to for worker referrals.
- ^{xxviii} The Initiative's definition of 'equity workers' includes Aboriginal people, women, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities.
- ^{xxix} Interesting to note the 'drivers license' issue comes up frequently as a significant barrier for participation in training and employment
- ^{xxx} The Executive Director of BUILD has stated on many occasions that they would like to have more cultural programming for participants.
- ^{xxxi} It is interesting to note that one of the journey carpenters on staff at BUILD reported to me that he had gained his training through the Limestone project.
- ^{xxxii} Interview # 32, Winnipeg Manitoba, June 10, 2010
- ^{xxxiii} Interviews #19 and #20, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, January 18, 2010
- ^{xxxiv} Interview #1, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 9, 2009
- ^{xxxv} Interview #, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 26, 2010
- ^{xxxvi} Interview #30, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 4, 2010
- ^{xxxvii} ibid
- ^{xxxviii} Interview #13, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 21, 2006
- ^{xxxix} Interview #9, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 10, 2009
- ^{xl} Interview #6, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 14, 2009
- ^{xli} Interview #13, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 21, 2009
- ^{xlii} Interview # 5, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 14, 2010
- ^{xliii} Interview #20, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 18, 2010
- ^{xliv} Interview #7, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 26, 2009
- ^{xl} Interview #15, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 22, 2009
- ^{xlvi} Interview #11, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 13, 2009
- ^{xlvi} Interview #26, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{xlvi} Interview #17, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 22, 2009
- ^{xl} Interview #25, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^l Interview #24, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{li} Interview #29, February 11, 2010
- ^{lii} Interview #25, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{liii} Interview #24, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{liv} Interview #29, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 11, 2010
- ^{lv} Interview #24, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{lvi} Interview #25, Winnipeg, Manitoba, February 1, 2010
- ^{lvii} Interview #10, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 13, 2009
- ^{lviii} Interview #7, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 26, 2009
- ^{lix} Interview #9, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 10, 2009
- ^{lx} Interview #7, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 26, 2009

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- ^{lxi} Interview # 8, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 3, 2009
- ^{lxii} Interview #10, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 13, 2009
- ^{lxiii} Interview #1, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 9, 2009
- ^{lxiv} This was noted in the context of a meeting where I presented some of my findings.
- ^{lxv} Interview #17, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 22, 2009
- ^{lxvi} Interview #18, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 22, 2009
- ^{lxvii} Interview #33, January 20, 2010
- ^{lxviii} Josie Hill received an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Winnipeg in 2011
- ^{lxix} Interview #22, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 26, 2010
- ^{lxx} *ibid*
- ^{lxxi} *ibid*
- ^{lxxii} Interview #30, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 4, 2010
- ^{lxxiii} Interview #34, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 15, 2010
- ^{lxxiv} Interview #1, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 9, 2009
- ^{lxxv} Interview #7, Winnipeg, Manitoba, October 26, 2009
- ^{lxxvi} Interview #13, Winnipeg, Manitoba, December 21, 2009
- ^{lxxvii} Interview #19, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 18, 2010
- ^{lxxviii} Interview #10, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 13, 2011
- ^{lxxix} *ibid*
- ^{lxxx} Interview #30, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 4, 2010
- ^{lxxxi} Interview #34, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 15, 2010
- ^{lxxxii} Interview #3, Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 29, 2009
- ^{lxxxiii} Interview #9, Winnipeg, Manitoba, November 10, 2009
- ^{lxxxiv} Interview #19, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 18, 2010
- ^{lxxxv} Interview #30, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 4, 2010
- ^{lxxxvi} This comment was made to me by a past employee of the Manitoba Floodway Authority during a conversation not specifically related to this research project.
- ^{lxxxvii} In this regard, it would be interesting to know whether individuals trained through the LTEA and/or through the ACCESS programs that resulted from the LTEA were later hired at the current Wuskwatim site. Tracking this type of information would be extremely useful to demonstrate the potential long-term impact of this type of model. But as noted, this information is not being gathered. It was only by chance that I learned that BUILD's journey carpenter/crew supervisor had trained through the Limestone project.
- ^{lxxxviii} The current 6 month training and employment period for BUILD participants is grossly insufficient to meet the complex needs of the target population.
- ^{lxxxix} Low levels of education attainment and the many other challenges that many Aboriginal learners face is well documented. It is not new nor is it surprising.