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Creating Pride Through Decent Work

Social Enterprises
in Manitoba

By Josh Brandon and Molly McCracken

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**Creating Pride Through Decent Work:
Social Enterprises in Manitoba**

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Photo credit: Leif Norman



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Executive Summary

Social enterprises fill an important gap in Manitoba's economy for those struggling to enter the workforce. The provincial government has seen the value of investing in social enterprises through funding training and procuring housing retrofit services. This in combination with financing from the Manitoba Hydro Pay As You Save (PAYS) program is producing great results. For instance, 194 people are employed in the six social enterprises involved in this study.

Over the past decade, a strong network of social enterprises has grown in Manitoba to help individuals develop the employment and life skills they need to enter and participate in the paid workforce. Social enterprises use a business model to promote positive social or cultural benefits including poverty reduction, fostering environmental sustainability, or other beneficial outcomes.

Social enterprises have emerged to create pathways into the workforce for those who face barriers such as lack of education, racism, histories of involvements with gangs or other involvement with the justice system, and lack of work experience. As one worker describes:

I was having a hard time finding employment because of my criminal history and whatnot.

I just applied and got in and it was quite surprising to me to say the least. I spent so many years not being able to get employed, and then coming to a program like this and they accept you for who you are.

The unemployment rate amongst Aboriginal adults age 15 and over was 14.3 percent, more than six percentage points higher than the rest of the inner-city population (8.1 percent) (Lezubski and Silver 2015: 26). The mainstream route from school to work — graduating high school at age 18, attending a post-secondary institution, and finding a good job — is fraught with roadblocks for young people who experience the intergenerational impacts of colonization. Without a high school education, it can be challenging to find any job, undoubtedly a decent job.

The reverse side of this challenge is that Manitoba has a tremendous underutilized pool of young workers who are a potential springboard for future growth. Manitoba also has a vibrant and growing social enterprise sector that could play an important role in bringing these workers into the workforce if it is given sufficient resources.

Manitoba Housing and Community Development allocated \$5 million in the 2015/16 capital

and renovations budget to provide business opportunities to social enterprises. This procurement is needed to upgrade public housing and do needed energy retrofits. This creates a triple bottom line of this public spending resulting in a needed service of housing repair, job creation and electrical and water conservation.

In order to understand the qualitative impacts on the workers in Manitoba's burgeoning social enterprise sector, we spoke to 51 workers in seven social enterprises that focus on job training and employment for people with barriers to employment in the home renovation and basic construction sector. We spoke with 26 percent of this portion of the social enterprise workforce.

Thank you to the participants in the study for sharing their perspectives and experiences. The themes emerging from the qualitative research depict that social enterprises provide trainees and employees with needed skills in a holistic fashion, from life skills, to budgeting, to accessing identification and driver's licensing, to workplace health and safety knowledge, to construction skills, and employment search skills. Recognizing the whole person in each employee or trainee, social enterprises use a holistic approach.

This is a program where they make a complete person you know. They get you to learn all this

trade but life skills, management and all these skills that you need.

Participants spoke about the positive workplace culture and team environment created in social enterprises. Some participants who had worked in private businesses found the workplace culture different and challenging. When discussing their futures, a segment of participants wished for the opportunity to apprentice in the trade of their choosing.

The pride that comes from working hard and having a decent job, and the benefits that result from it shines through in this study. Participants told us they look forward to brighter futures for themselves and their families. These workers carry forward the virtuous cycle created by their involvement in social enterprise to their families and as leaders in the community.

Manitoba has a successful and growing social enterprise sector that has helped to integrate some of these workers. It is nonetheless still dependent on government support. The support of Manitoba Housing and Community Development, other crown corporations, and government in providing contracts to keep these social enterprises vibrant is essential to meeting community economic development and sustainability goals.

Introduction

Social enterprises fill an important gap in Manitoba's economy for those struggling to enter the workforce. By most measures, the Manitoba economy has done well in recent years, and most residents are benefiting. The healthy regional job market in Manitoba offers diverse opportunities for most people seeking work. Manitoba has low unemployment, steady growth and a lower than average cost of living. For the past decade, economic growth in Manitoba has exceeded the national average, and is expected to continue to do so in the coming years. The prosperity of the province is reflected in increasing population and wages.

However, the distribution of these economic gains is uneven. Despite a strong economy, some Manitobans struggle to get a foothold in the workforce. Lack of education, racism, histories of involvements with gangs or other involvement with the justice system, and lack of work experience are all barriers to getting into the workforce. Aboriginal Manitobans have been left far behind and inner city areas in both Winnipeg and Brandon have large concentrations of poverty. In Winnipeg, areas like Central Park and William Whyte have poverty rates in excess of 50 percent (Statistics Canada 2013), some of the

highest poverty levels in the country. Barriers to employment, often entrenched by racism and colonial histories, leave many Manitobans stuck in poverty. For many young people growing up in poverty, hope for the future is dulled by the dearth of examples of success among their peers and family members. High rates of unemployment combine with lower levels of education and work experience and lead to cycles of inter-generational poverty in many inner-city neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, housing and food costs continue to rise.

The goal of this study is to better understand the impact of social enterprise training and employment programs on the lives of participants.

Shauna Mackinnon (2012: 15) painted a picture of the divide in Winnipeg between an inner city populated with a high rate of Aboriginal residents and its predominantly non-Aboriginal suburbs. She found that the “damaging effects of colonization, racism, the concentration of poverty, low educational attainment rates, higher incidence of crime and street gang involvement” have led to self-reinforcing patterns of exclusion

and disadvantage across a divided city. This divide has received political and media attention with one national magazine singling out Winnipeg as “Canada’s racism problem is at its worst” (MacDonald 2015). These divisions will continue to limit further success of the Manitoba economy unless resolved.

The social exclusion of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg’s inner city is exemplified in the labour force statistics. The 2011 National Household Survey found that 40 percent of Aboriginal adults in Winnipeg’s inner city had not graduated from high school (Lezubski and Silver 2015). The unemployment rate amongst Aboriginal adults age 15 and over was 14.3 percent, more than six percentage points higher than the rest of the inner-city population (8.1 percent) (Lezubski and Silver 2015: 26). Unemployment leads to poor health through lower income and poverty, through the stresses and other psychological impacts associated with job loss, and through increased reliance on unhealthy coping behaviours such as tobacco, drugs, and alcohol (Mikonnen and Raphael 2010: 17).

The incidence of poverty is high amongst the Aboriginal population, 49.2 percent in the inner city and 23.8 percent outside of the inner city.

Individuals without employment are more likely to experience deeper poverty and social exclusion. The incidence of poverty is high amongst the Aboriginal population, 49.2 percent in the inner city and 23.8 percent outside of the inner city (Lezubski and Silver 2015: 33). Lezubski and Silver (2015) find that poverty rates have declined in inner-city Winnipeg from 1996 to 2011, however Aboriginal people face disproportionately high rates of poverty, lower levels of income and higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the population. The gains that have been made are likely partially due to public investment in community-based programming like the social

enterprises (Lezubski and Silver 2015). The impact of community initiatives to improve negative labour force outcomes, starting with training and access to employment, needs to be better understood to end poverty. This is the goal of this study, to better understand the impact of social enterprise training and employment programs on the lives of participants. While a job is not a ticket out of poverty, it is one of the most important factors for reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion, and a key social determinant of health.

The mainstream route from school to work — graduating high school at age 18, attending a post-secondary institution, and finding a good job — is fraught with roadblocks for young people in low-income neighbourhoods. Families struggling with poverty and occupied with attending to basic needs are less likely to be involved in their children’s education, which leads to lower educational outcomes (Bernas 2015). Young people from lower income quintiles are less likely to graduate from high school on time (Statistics Canada 2008). For example, in 2009/2010 the graduation rate in Manitoba urban centres was 55.4 percent in the lowest income quintile, compared to 98.5 percent in the highest (MCHP 2012: 207). The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy found that increases in high school graduation rates were positively correlated with income level.

The devastating impacts of residential schools and colonization have had an effect on Aboriginal people. Aboriginal students do not graduate on time due to challenges securing housing and having basic needs met (Silver 2013). In families with survivors of residential schools, school has a negative connotation that is passed on to younger children (Silver 2013). Without a high school education, it can be challenging to find any job, undoubtedly a decent job. For young people entering the workforce, early gaps in employment can have lifelong impacts on earning potential, through a process known as “scarring.” Accord-

ing to a report by TD Economics: “a spell of unemployment at an early stage of a worker’s career imposes a persistent wage penalty that could last for their entire working lifetime” (Schwerdtfeger 2013: 3). Schwerdtfeger calculated that the total cost of this scarring effect on the Canadian economy could amount to as much as \$23 billion, or 1.3 percent of total GDP as a result of elevated levels of youth unemployment.

The reverse side of this challenge is that Manitoba has a tremendous underutilized pool of young workers who are a potential springboard for future growth. Manitoba also has a vibrant

and growing social enterprise sector that could play an important role in bringing these workers into the workforce if it is given sufficient resources. Over the past decade, a strong network of social enterprises has grown in Manitoba to help individuals develop the employment and life skills they need to enter and participate in the paid workforce. Organizations such as BUILD (Building Urban Industries for Local Development), Aki Energy, and Inner City Renovations have received international recognition from their creative approach to helping Aboriginal and inner-city workers enter into the workforce.

Social Enterprises in Manitoba

The term “social enterprise” has multiple uses and definitions. A Canada Revenue Agency (2012) guideline document defines social enterprise as “any organization or business that uses the market-oriented production and sale of goods and/or services to pursue a public benefit mission. This covers a broad spectrum of entities — from enterprising charities, non-profits, and co-operatives to social purpose businesses.” This broad definition, however, blurs the line between social and traditional enterprise models, with no clear criteria for what constitutes a public benefit.

Social enterprises are mainly non-profit organizations that use a business model to promote positive social or cultural benefits including poverty reduction, fostering environmental sustainability or other beneficial outcomes.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network and the Province of Manitoba define social enterprises as non-profit organizations that use a business model to promote positive social or cultural benefits including poverty reduction, fostering environmental sustainability, or other beneficial outcomes (2015). For the purposes of this study, we examined social enterprise

business ventures that are run mainly on a not-for-profit basis and that are providing services in the construction and renovation sector for Manitoba Housing and Community Development. Specifically, we are interested in social enterprises that have a focus on job training and employment for people with barriers to employment.

The Manitoba government has prioritized engaging with these social enterprises in recent years. Under the Housing and Renewal Corporation Act, the primary objectives of Manitoba Housing and Community Development include both activities to ensure adequate supply and condition of housing stock, especially for those of low and moderate income, and also activities that “stimulate and influence ... the housing market to the benefit of Manitobans as a whole” (Province of Manitoba 2013). Broadly, this may include employment practices and the use of Manitoba Housing as an economic driver and a tool for community development. The Department of Manitoba Housing and Community Development and Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation, a crown corporation, have prioritized funding for social enterprises and other programs that help assist inner-city residents and Aboriginal workers develop skills to enter the labour market. In

response to requests from the social enterprise sector, the Province and Manitoba Hydro, under the Energy Savings Act, created avenues to prioritize financing for energy retrofit work to social enterprises employing and training people with barriers to employment. This is a win-win, bridging people into employment to do needed energy retrofit work. These programs have trained hundreds of workers while renovating thousands of units of housing, providing important positive community economic development benefits, reducing environmental impact, and allowing for long-term financial savings through reduced operating costs for heat, electricity, water, and maintenance, a true triple bottom-line sustainability program.

Previous research has documented the benefits in terms of energy savings, income opportunities for workers, and quality of living for residents. A 2013 study of BUILD and BEEP found that these two social enterprises had done retrofits on 4,900 private and public housing units (Bernas and Hamilton 2013). These social enterprises have also generated environmental benefits. From inception through to 2011 BUILD and BEEP lowered greenhouse gas emissions by 2,205 tonnes of CO₂ and the retrofits resulted in over \$1,114,236 million in reduced energy bills (Bernas and Hamilton 2013).

Since inception, the 2013 study documented 337 new jobs created through the BUILD and BEEP programs. Of those trainees who completed the six-month training program, 91 percent of BUILD trainees and 86 percent of BEEP trainees continued on to employment or education (Bernas and Hamilton 2013: 10). This study noted the ongoing challenge of following up with graduates and tracking outcomes. Staff do not have access to current contact information or the capacity to do follow up. Social media provides some mechanisms for follow up, but it is not consistent.

The effect on the participants in their future labour-market participation is less clear. To date there has been little research on the impact of



BUILD trainee at work

these programs and companies on the lives of the workers. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the social enterprises that have been engaged by Manitoba Housing impact their employees and participants in terms of life skills and job training through interviews with social enterprise staff and employees.

The following social enterprises are included in this study:

- Brandon Energy Efficiency Program (BEEP)
- Building Urban Industry and Local Development (BUILD)
- Building Construction Mentorship Program (BCMP)
- North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC)
- Inner City Renovations (ICR)

- Manitoba Green Retrofit (MGR)
- New Directions

Please see Appendix A for more details on each of these entities.

The social enterprises in this study operate under different models. MGR and ICR offer employment with no end date. BCMP from NECRC, New Directions, BUILD, and BEEP operate on training models with constraints to the duration of time trainees may participate. BUILD and BEEP staff suggest that six months is not enough time for some trainees with multiple barriers to overcome all their personal challenges, and that overcoming grief or addiction can require a lengthy process that cannot necessarily take place in a specific timeframe. While six months is too short a timeframe for trainees to overcome their barriers and acquire educational certification, participating in a social enterprise training program of this duration does provide basic skill development. Key informants indicate that trainees can take the motivation, commitment and self-discipline they have acquired and pursue their goals, be it a high school diploma, driver's license, or to apply for a pardon for a criminal record.

From inception through to 2011 BUILD and BEEP lowered greenhouse gas emissions by 2,205 tonnes of CO₂ and the retrofits resulted in over \$1,114,236 million in reduced energy bills (Bernas and Hamilton 2013).

Social enterprises work within a network and rely on partnerships to do their work. The training social enterprises work with the Corrections Services system and trainees' parole officers if applicable. BUILD works with partner agencies SEED Winnipeg and Citizen's Bridge to deliver training. The social enterprises in this study work together to find the right "fit" and support employees to retain work if it is available at another social enterprise.

If participants were accessing employment prior to involvement in training social enterpris-

es, staff note that participants have said they may have tried to do day labour — temporary work that pays minimum wage — but often find it hard to retain on-going work. Social enterprises with training programs (such as BEEP and BUILD) receive funding from Manitoba Jobs and Economy, Training and Employment Services to fund the trainees at minimum wage or minimum wage plus \$0.50 per hour. BEEP and BUILD each have a limited number of positions that pay \$12–\$14 per hour for program graduates. BEEP offers apprenticeships paid according to Manitoba's apprentice standards.

Some trainees are not ready for more responsibility and staff suggest there should be a way to retain these trainees by extending the training period up to twelve months. After six months at BUILD and BEEP, graduates are often only qualified for a minimum wage job or, at best, an entry-level position in the trades (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014: 5). Staff advise that graduates have a better chance of retaining work with the life and work-readiness skills they have gained. If graduates are able to pursue further education and training, they can move along an employment path to apprenticeships with more opportunities for earnings and employment. However, after only six months of a supportive environment, staff explain that some BUILD and BEEP graduates fail to succeed in traditional settings that lack supports to address their remaining barriers.

There are some avenues for advancement through the social enterprise network. Social enterprises do offer second-tier supervisory opportunities. Some graduates are hired by other social enterprises like MGR or ICR that are able to offer a supportive environment for employees who are still facing barriers. For example, MGR hires temporary labour at \$12.5–\$13.5 per hour, technicians at \$12.5–\$16 per hour and pays a lead hand \$17–\$23 per hour. Others pursue educational opportunities. Key informants identified that social enterprises are not resourced adequately to support participants to move on after the

training opportunity has ended, and lose touch with participants. A leading approach to bridge the gap between training and work is a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI).

LMIs bridge the gap between social enterprise training programs and employment. *Making the Case for a Labour Market Intermediary: The Experience of BUILD* explains that LMIs can address the challenges that Aboriginal people with barriers to employment face when transitioning from training to employment (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014):

An LMI links low-skilled workers with semi-skilled and skilled employment in targeted sectors to create job opportunities for people with barriers to employment. It brokers relationships with employers, education and training institutions, government, funding agencies, unions and community based organizations to help clients find and keep good jobs. (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014: 1)

Research shows that the most effective LMIs offer comprehensive supports, linked to marginalized individuals and low-income neighbourhoods through community-based organizations to employers and interventionist in approach (Loewen and Silver 2005).

MacKinnon and Silvius recommended an LMI model led by a consortium of employers, community-based training organizations and staffed by personnel specialized in providing support and cultural teachings (2012). The LMI matches em-

ployees with employers and ensures a successful transition to the workforce. Not yet in place in Winnipeg or Brandon, an LMI would pick up where the training ends and help graduates find and keep jobs. If trainees at BUILD have complex situations in their lives such as family crisis, addictions, or housing issues, the social enterprises are not mandated or staffed to deal with these situations. The LMI would work with social enterprises through a case-management approach to develop long-term relationships with trainees to ensure they access the supports they need to address the barriers and challenges they face (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014). Currently, a Winnipeg-based, Aboriginal-focused LMI model is under study, with the final recommendations expected in Spring 2016.

Previously, BUILD trainees who went on to study at Red River Community College indicated they had trouble with curriculum and did not graduate, with many lasting just a month. In response, a pilot project was developed whereby BUILD graduates who spent a year-and-a-half in the apprenticeship program enrolled together as a cohort in Red River Community College. They were given extra time to complete the program and access to an Aboriginal Cultural component (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014). The program was successful, with 75 percent of students graduating, reporting they felt more comfortable working through curriculum challenges with classmates they knew from BUILD (Bernas and MacKinnon 2014). Despite the success of this pilot, it has not been replicated.

Methods

This study adds to the existing research on social enterprises in Manitoba by documenting the qualitative impacts on trainees and employees. By talking directly with participants, we are able to bring forward their voices and experiences with the view of continuing to build the social enterprise movement in Manitoba. The study was funded by Manitoba Housing and Community Development and Green Manitoba.

We interviewed participants and employees in several Manitoba social enterprises, as well as key staff members of the organizations. In total fifty-one trainees/employees and ten key informants, mainly social enterprise staff, were involved.

Due to privacy concerns we were not able to obtain permission to interview New Directions participants. One other social enterprise, Self-Starting Creative Opportunities for People in Employment (SSCOPE), was initially considered for inclusion but ultimately did not participate because their work with Manitoba Housing was limited. Interviews and focus groups were analysed for common themes and these are summarized in the findings below. The voices of trainees, employees, and key informants are highlighted through quotes used to elicit certain points or themes.

Ages among participants ranged from 18 to 42 with a median age of 26. A high proportion of participants are Aboriginal (86 percent). Only five participants were female; most of the participants in these programs were male.

In the course of these interviews we found that several issues limit the ability of the participants to access and integrate into the employment market. Barriers for inner-city workers include discrimination, limited education, minimal previous work experience, lack of a driver's licence, and, in some cases, criminal history or gang involvement. As well, a lack of life and workplace culture skills such as timeliness and adhering to dress codes kept participants out of the workforce.

Social enterprises help to give people with barriers to employment the skills and experiences they need to thrive. Social enterprises, working together, have built a network of enterprises and training organizations that helps meet the needs of the community. Social enterprises are connected to the social services sector. They rely on resources external to their organization and also generate their own supports and resources. For example, social enterprise training entities partner with Citizen's Bridge to gain access to

TABLE 1 Social Enterprise Interviews

Social Enterprise	Method	Number of Participants
BUILD	Focus group	10
	Interview	15
MGR	Focus group	10
	Interview	2
BEEP	Interview	9
NECRC	Interview	2
ICR	Interview	3
Total		51

identification and SEED Winnipeg for money management skills.

It is possible to for some workers to find a niche at their various skill and training levels within the social enterprise community. Government support and the commitment of Manitoba Housing have been critical to building this network.

We have heard stories of hope and success. For some of the participants, social enterprises provided their first opportunities for legal, paid work experience. For some it has meant an avenue out of crime or an opportunity to complete Grade 12. Others have benefited from further training or enrolment in college. Increased op-

timism and improved quality of life were common themes in many of our interviews.

One area that has seen less success is that there have been few cases of people moving from the social enterprise sector permanently into the private sector. The private sector, where wages and benefits are higher, still employs few inner-city and Aboriginal residents, according to key informants. Some trainees and employees of have made it into the private sector, but for many, life circumstances and challenges intervene, making it difficult to make this transition. This is where an LMI would bridge the gap to employment.

Social Enterprises Provide Supports to Attain Decent Jobs

The International Labour Organization defines decent work as involving opportunities that are productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Previous research from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a good job or workplace as one that pays a living wage, has benefits, has quality human resource policies, provides possibilities for advancement, is open to unionization, and has a healthy workplace culture (Fer-

nandez 2016; Jarosiewicz 2013; Ivanova no date). Many of these aspects employers have control over. Governments also play a role in aspects of the living wage (such as social transfers to subsidize child care, accessible training for advancement, and labour standards). However, not everyone has access to a decent or good job. Employment opportunities are unevenly spread across Manitoban society. Education, neighbourhood, immigration, and Aboriginal status all affect the ability of Manitobans to find work. The following sections discuss some of the key barriers to employment found in our study and how social enterprises are providing supports for decent jobs.

Education

Education is required for an individual to gain employment in an advanced economy like Manitoba. Accordingly, Aboriginal Manitobans who complete post-secondary training have higher rates of labour force participation than non-Aboriginal workers (See Fig 1). These data provide a strong rationale for the need for training and employment programs such as those provided by the social enterprises we studied.

Participants in our study recognized education as key to their employment success. 70 percent identified lack of education as a barrier to their employment. Aboriginal people have great potential, and introducing people to who they are and what happened to their people can be truly transformative. A decolonizing curriculum teaches Aboriginal people about their history and culture and situates their personal struggles in the context of the broader historical and socio-economic process of colonization.

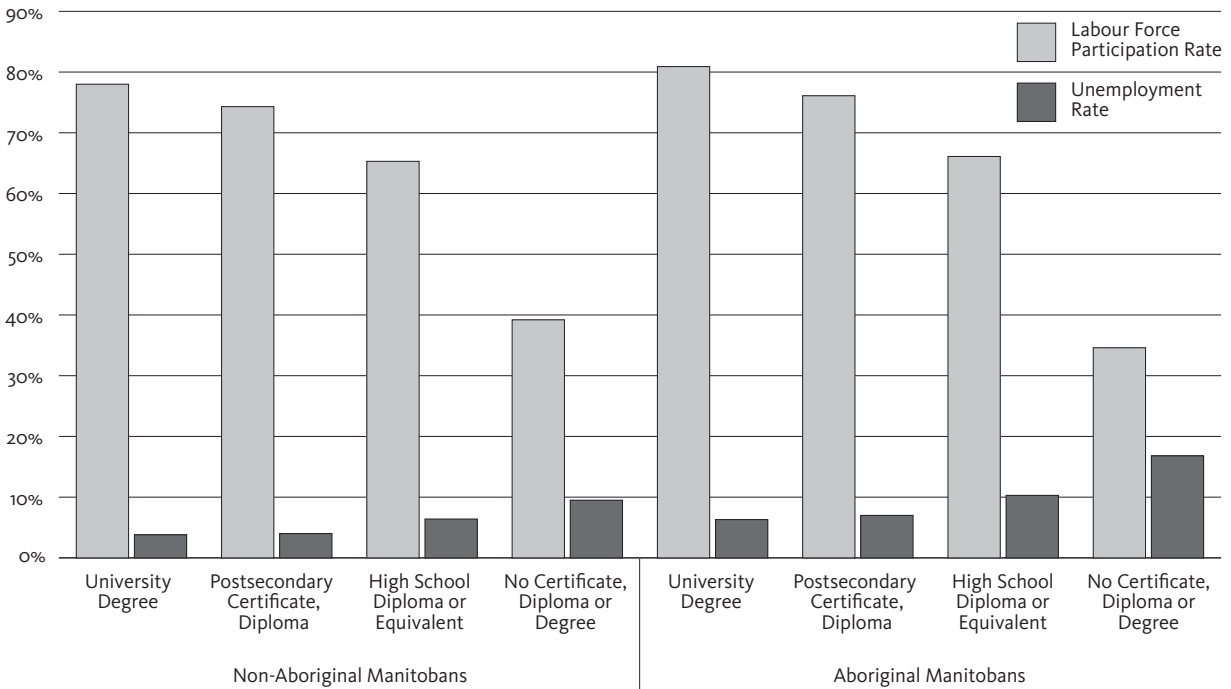
Research shows that successful adult education is not a linear process. Good adult education keeps the door open, and tells those who leave that they are welcome to try again (Silver 2013). In *Moving Forward, Giving Back: Transformative Aboriginal Adult Education*, Jim Silver (2013) explains that adult learners

do better when they are in studying in familiar neighbourhoods alongside others of similar backgrounds. Small classes and warm personalized environments create safe spaces where Aboriginal adults can take risks associated with learning. Most importantly, a holistic approach is essential as poor people's lives are complex and those complexities affect the ability to learn. A central part of adult education involves supporting learners in dealing with problems outside the classroom so that this does not impact their ability to function inside the classroom (Silver 2013).

Silver explains that this type of approach transforms Aboriginal learners' personal lives, and the positive effects ripple out to their families as they become role models for others. This impact transforms the broader level of the community as people are in a position to give back and become leaders in the community and contribute to the broad socio-economic changes necessary to break the cycle of poverty (Silver 2013).

The flexibility of social enterprises in combining work and education was also cited by several of the participants as a benefit of working at a social enterprise. Participants explained:

FIGURE 1 Labour Force Participation and Unemployment, by Education and Aboriginal Status, Manitoba, 2011



I was struggling to find a job, because I didn't have my GED. With this BEEP, they give me a chance to work and get my GED at the same time. I would like to get an apprenticeship. I think as soon as I get my Grade 12, there's a chance that they will move me up.

Another thing about BUILD if you don't have the proper math skills, the only thing you really need is basic math and that's what BUILD will help you do, bring up your math skills.

Education is also important for increasing opportunities workers to pursue more rewarding paths. While labourers in the construction industry in Winnipeg typically make between \$15 and \$17 per hour, workers who successfully study for journeyman status typically start at \$28 per hour (according to our interviews). Social enterprises can also be a conduit for workers getting an education. Over the last two years, thirty-six BUILD trainees have gone on to further their education. Other enterprises like ICR and

BCMP have also seen employees continue on to further education opportunities.

However, the road from training to employment is not always a straight line. Life circumstances, family, and health problems can intervene. For lower income Manitobans who may lack the resources and supports wealthier Manitobans take for granted, the path to employment can be derailed. In these cases, the role of social enterprises to provide an alternate avenue to success may be especially important.

These social enterprises also refer participants to other programs that help them to meet their goals:

Yeah BUILD is going to help me find funding to go to [name of program] to get my level one, I want a career in carpentry.

The programs provide a range of important skills for being successful in the workplace:

BUILD gave us life skills that kind of set you up for what you should do, what you're going to do



BUILD trainees learning painting techniques

after BUILD. Help you make goals, and know your strength and work on your weaknesses so that your life skills are good, that's really how to know what to do after.

Cover letters. Job interviews. Life skills. Shop skills. Hard skills. How to learn management.

Journey to Employment

Over half of the employees at BUILD had exited to employment in 2014. Training programs provide job-searching skills and help build participants' resumes:

Without BUILD I would have never been able to build up my resume, man. I would have never been able to install this, [to say] I installed that or I built a house. I would have never been able to say that without BUILD.

Training programs help to introduce more options to participants and support them to move on to education, which can lead to more work:

I did my apprenticeship and now I've got my level one carpentry I got through BUILD. Then went to Red River and I started working last month.

One of our key informants described a case of a woman who had recently worked her way up to supervisor status:

She was looking for work. She came through BUILD, she got her first level of apprenticeship in carpentry done, then she was working for

PCL. She went to Red River, got her first level of CET [Certified Engineering Technology]. Well, she had another child, so that made unfeasible [to finish her training], so she came here, and within three months she went from working on the crews to being trained as a project manager.

Social enterprises act as a bridge to education or employment.

Some participants who had graduated from training programs were struggling to find work:

BUILD got me ready for Red River College, now I'm looking to find employment. It's right in the middle of the construction season so it's really hard to get employment since April or May.

Right now I haven't been working for a couple of months. You keep handing out resumes...

An LMI could help these workers and support former social enterprise workers who are laid off and need to find more work subsequent to their initial education or employment opportunity after their experience with social enterprises.

Safety Skills

When asked what skills they gained through social enterprise training programs, safety skills were mentioned first by participants in both focus groups for this research. Several participants explained that when they were looking for work prior to being involved in a social enterprise, they could not meet the requirements of many worksites for safety certification such as First Aid, CPR, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems (WHMIS). Participants were not able to obtain this certification prior to being enrolled in social enterprise training programs:

There was only twelve spots (for WHMIS), I would show up every month for the last three months, every month I showed up I would show up front person in the morning and there would already be a line-up, most spots were taken.

Some companies require you to have First Aid, some companies don't. First Aid would get you a dollar more on a jobsite. I got that training at BUILD.

Participants indicated they were very appreciative of learning safety skills on the job, including how to handle tools properly.

Construction and Maintenance Skills Gained

Participants described the types of training and skills they learned through social enterprise:

For me it's like it's definitely positive and helping me advance. I worked in the trades before I got here, but it's all being advanced in skills definitely benefiting.

I've learned skills like painting. My biggest goal is getting my carpenters license.

Well it was everything. I learned from BUILD how to do drywall patching, and painting, basic carpentry. Floors, carpet installation, building decks, fences, insulating homes properly by Manitoba Housing standards,

You know basic carpentry thinking, drywall repair, and holes in walls, I never had the opportunity to do decking, insulation, and stuff like that.

Participants used their skills outside of the training program when needed. One participant explained how she's been doing work on the side in her apartment building:

Once in a while I'll do some work in my apartment. This elderly guy he said I've been waiting for this hole to be fixed and can you come fix it over here? Okay I'll come check it out, and I borrowed stuff from BUILD and brought it home and fixed his wall because he had been waiting a month for it and paid me \$15 and I fixed it. The caretaker goes, [name withheld] did you patch a hole in somebody's unit? I can't lie I smiled and I said why? Am I in trouble? He is like no, you did a good job. I was like okay thanks. I was relieved. So he's like if we need patching you can come do it.

Life Skills

Orienting trainees and employees to the expectations of paid work culture is a key function of the social enterprises discussed in this study. This type of training is not available in the private sector, where workers are expected to know to show up for work on time, appropriately dressed, with a packed lunch. Timeliness, the ability to navigate transportation to work, and showing up to the job prepared to work with proper equipment clothing, food, and water were cited by managers as some of the biggest challenges faced by students. As one key informant put it: “The biggest skill set they need is just getting people to show up for work.” A student explains, “We have learned responsibility. I didn’t learn it before. Being punctual, be responsible.” For new workers there is a lot to learn upon entering the paid workforce for the first time.

Adapting to modern workplace cultures requires a significant shift for individuals who have limited work experience and who have barriers to employment. Finding and maintaining a job requires specific skills (for example, timeliness, budgeting skills, dress codes) that are often presupposed by employers to be natural, but are in fact social products. In Western society, the industrial concepts of work time, thrift, and dis-

cipline were inculcated over several generations through combined institutional pressures from schools, workplaces, and popular culture. For many first-time employees, learning the culture of working life may be as significant an obstacle to long-term employment as lack of workplace-specific skills or broader math and literacy.

Widespread intergenerational unemployment on some First Nations reserves and in some inner-city neighbourhoods provides limited employment examples from peer groups and family members. One trainee at BUILD commented: “The way I grew up, I didn’t want to work. I didn’t know many people that had jobs.” It was only after seeing another family member obtain employment that he realized finding work as an option:

Before working here, I didn’t really see any reason to work harder. But seeing my brother-in-law paying bills, buy groceries, buy things for his kids, I thought I would like to do that. It would give me something to do, and get paid doing it.

Stepping into the role of a worker in the for-profit work sector requires acceptance of time and discipline codes that are often lacking. Re-



BUILD Trainee

quirements such as calling in when you are sick may be new for some workers. Social enterprises take on the important role of intermediation, training workers to accept basic workplace discipline. According to one participant, “For me, waking up at 6:00 a.m. is one of the hardest parts to get used to.”

Another described an incident:

You are supposed to call if you don’t come in. If you do not, they might let you go ... I missed a couple of days, so I kind of got in trouble. I was sick, and didn’t bother calling in. I didn’t really know I had to. If I was in a different job I would have gotten fired, they gave me another chance.

Another barrier some people identified is that they did not dress the part for finding work. “The way I dressed always wearing baseball caps backwards when I dropped off resumes. I didn’t

think about it, but now I see how it gave people a certain impression of me.”

Social enterprises have to balance tolerance for employees learning the basics of how to fit in to the workplace with instilling workplace discipline, meeting deadlines and completing quality work. While the social enterprises we studied sought to establish minimum standards, there was considerable flexibility and recognition that a hard line approach would cut individuals out of the programs.

Social enterprises take a holistic approach with participants, considering the whole person to ensure they have success in the program:

This is a program where they make a complete person you know. They get you to learn all this trades but life skills, management and all these skills that you need and you go out there and need these things to live and you know to do the

things it really helped to learn those things. This is one of the best programs I have known and I would recommend it to anyone.

Social enterprises have an opportunity to positively influence life skills development. In training social enterprises, workshops and life-skill classes help employees to manage important obligations and issues like child care, housing, and finance that can otherwise challenge work readiness. Parenting classes offered through social enterprise help workers learn new skills as parents as well:

There is a lot of things I learned from my parenting course that I didn't even know, I didn't know, say, when you're at the park for like two hours, and you say "okay lets go home," I've been like walking away and saying to my kid "okay daddy is leaving now, bye." But that creates fear in a child. I didn't know that's not how to do it.

Workshops for the life-skills curriculum also includes budgeting and saving, which is important for trainees who start earning a wage:

It's helped me more in saving like trying to budget and paying my bills. It's good. They taught

me here too, I took that course about budgeting and I took that course and kind of helped me to learn how to budget on my own, I knew how because I am a mom, when I'm by myself I had to start all over, when I got here I was on welfare, then I got more money. I could afford this, I could pay more, pay more rent, so that's how it impacted me just to be independent again.

Many of the participants have never had a bank account or lack identification (ID) to obtain an account. Social enterprises help participants get ID and a Social Insurance Number if needed, and set up with a bank account, some for the first time in their lives. Trainees or workers may not have had the information or supports to access identification or a bank account until they participate in a social enterprise. This can have an important impact as gaining access to foundational identification opens up access to government entitlements through the tax system and child benefits such as the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) and Canada Learning Bond. Obtaining identification is significant for some employees and can also be a source of responsibility as they become accountable to creditors, including child support payments and other responsibilities.

Gaining Work Experience

Lack of previous work experience was also a barrier for many of the participants. Referring to BEEP, one participant said:

It's a good place to work if you are starting from nowhere. It's a good place to start, but not if you already have other experience. Before I found out about this place, I went to the provincial offices, tried to get help with a resume, but I didn't have enough references.

Many of the participants had little experience writing resumes or knowledge of how to present themselves at interviews. Others who had had work experience were stuck in low-wage jobs.

Not all social enterprise employees are new to the labour force. Some have considerable work experience, but need an entry point into the workforce in a new city or a new career. One worker had been working on the railroad in northern Manitoba. He moved to be closer to his daughter in Winnipeg: "I like it a lot better than where I came from, everyone doesn't know me. If you go out or do anything the whole town doesn't know about it." Still finding work experience was difficult, he said, "I was having hard times, couldn't really find a job here, I heard the West Bran [a job training centre in Brandon] actually pays you to take a training program." From West Bran, he got connected to BEEP program.

Participants' Housing

Participants in the focus groups were asked how many were also living in Manitoba housing. 40 percent were public housing tenants. At New Directions, staff identified that 50 percent of participants live in Manitoba Housing dwellings. Participants described how being involved in a social enterprise impacted where they live and their housing:

I have my own place, because of the work here. The hours [from] my last job, I was only making \$600–\$700, so not much to live off of for a month. I started here and I got more hours here.

When I was at BUILD I stayed in the North End. Then, once I got my education, I started getting money, I started at MGR [and] I was able to afford anything, like not anything but I was able to afford better house and move to the West End.

This participant was living in a public housing complex when the units were being renovated,

this is how she learned about BUILD and became employed by MGR:

I live in Manitoba Housing and when they started repairing the units and painting the benches I asked. I asked [name] who she worked for, who's the company you work for? She's like MGR, oh okay, if you want to get with them just go apply with BUILD and if you do good in BUILD, MGR may take you on, and that's what happened I went straight from BUILD to MGR.

Participants often expressed a deep understanding of the sources of poverty. Being able to give back to their community was a dream for one participant:

If I could help build more housing, including different kinds of housing, that would be great. Lack of housing is a big cause of poverty. Housing helps prevent poverty and reduce homelessness. Once I get more training here, I would like to volunteer at Habitat, if there was a way I could be involved there.

Transportation

Many of the participants had issues with transportation to work or found it to be a barrier to further employment development. Getting to work sites by bus is challenging when sites are spread throughout the city. One interviewee quit a job because he became disheartened by the difficulties of reaching a job site by bus. ICR has tried to organize carpooling with one driver picking up other employees at central places to get their workers onsite, though this option was not consistently available. Some social enterprises help set up transportation or car-share programs to enable workers to get to job sites.

Obtaining a driver's license is key to many employment opportunities in the construction sector. Many social enterprise workers did not have a driver's license when they first began. Drivers' education is offered in high schools, but as an adult, accessible programs offered at no charge are hard to locate. Social enterprises in Brandon and Winnipeg work with other agen-

cies to help get their workers into driver training programs. Citizens Bridge is a non-profit that provides adults drivers training for many of the participants.

Social enterprises have been innovative to help participants deal with past driving-related infractions and tickets. Some social enterprises have programs where they work with trainees to help them gradually pay off debts to Manitoba Public Insurance. This enables them to get their driver's licences by deducting a certain amount of each paycheque to pay down debts. Some social enterprises also help negotiate fine reductions for their participants. The creative work social enterprises have done around driver's licensing and fines is an essential part of the process of equipping people with the qualifications needed to do paid work. The barriers facing participants required a specialized approach, developed by social enterprises and tailored to the needs of adult learners.

Criminal Involvement

Participants cited previous criminal records as a barrier to employment and involvement in other programs. Up to two-thirds of BUILD and BEEP participants have a history with the justice system (Bernas and Hamilton 2013: 13). It can take up to five years before someone with a criminal record can apply for a pardon and social enterprise staff say that many participants do not see the benefit of applying as they tend to not engage in long-term thinking (Bernas and Hamilton 2013: 13). For this reason, BUILD accepts applicants with criminal records and suggests employers conduct a risk assessment to determine which positions would be suitable. One participant explains how he was surprised to be accepted since he had a criminal record:

I heard about it [BUILD] through a friend of mine. I was having a hard time finding employment, because of my criminal history and what not. I just applied and got in and it was quite surprising to me to say the least. I spent so many years not being able to get employed, and then coming to a program like this and they accept who you are.

Some participants from BUILD got connected to the program while in the Winding River Program at Headingly Correctional Centre. Having

a training program to join when coming out of prison helped their transition.

Up to two-thirds of BUILD and BEEP participants have a history with the justice system

Another participant had received some construction skills while in prison, but lacked work experience. Prior to going into prison, he had bounced around a lot, never having stable housing. He had felt discrimination that seemed to cut off his opportunities: “They wouldn’t talk to me the same way as other people. I felt like a hot knife.” He sold drugs to make ends meet, and had little hope for a better life. At BUILD he said, “This is one of the first places I can come and feel comfortable, feel at home.” Another participant described being referred to BUILD from another program:

There were kids on probation and you see kids trying to get out of gangs or whatever and trying to be in a gang and all that. BUILD gave me a chance to work so I took it. Now I’m a role model poster child, it’s a kind of weird because I’m trying to learn how to speak at conferences now and stuff like that.



BUILD Trainee

If it wasn't for BUILD I would probably still be in prison. Because there was nobody out there, I tried when I got to out of jail. I tried getting a job but I can't, especially when you have armed robbery. [I had] not only one charge, but a bunch. Nobody wants you. For BUILD, they said yeah come down, you're done with your charges, I said yeah I'm ready. Changed my life forever because these guys, somebody supporting you everyday telling you, you do better than that.

This participant went on to explain how they know many more people who are in the situation they were in:

Person like me, the stock would be in inner city probably like, I don't know, two to three

thousand people just like me. We're not getting jobs. And we're resorting to crime. How much money does it take to incarcerate those people and keep them in jail? It's like millions of dollars of taxpayer's money. Meanwhile we can have places like BUILD or MGR saying okay well you guys want to work, this is the wage you're going to start at and the outputs of working before you can upgrade you go to school you can get this you can get that. Like, that's how it worked for me.

Social enterprises offer a particularly important service transitioning individuals out of prison and into the community through employment.

Social enterprises offer a particularly important service transitioning individuals out of prison and into the community through employment. Manitoba has one of the highest rates of incarceration in Canada at 242 people incarcerated per 100,000 (Statistics Canada 2014). This has come on the heels of tougher federal laws and parole rules resulting in increased overcrowding in jails (Hutton 2014). At the same time, federal austerity measures mean that programs and services are being reduced inside the federal prison system, resulting in prisoners being less equipped to reintegrate and find work upon release (Comack 2015). "An ex-offender's ability to find and keep employment when they return to the community has long been seen as a key factor in reducing recidivism" explains John Hutton, Executive Director of the John Howard Society. Social enterprises accept trainees with criminal records and provide an alternative to the destructive cycle of crime. If social enterprises could train and employ more criminalized people, the destructive cycle of crime and high incarceration rates could be reversed in Manitoba. It is promising that the Province is investing in a new multi-year pilot project with BUILD with a cohort of previously incarcerated people.

Development of Workplace Culture

An important part of successful employment is the development of a positive workplace culture. For the most part, positive working attitudes were evident in the employees we interviewed: “Being outside, with the boys, we can all joke with each other, and get a lot done,” one said. “I am proud of the work we have done and how far we have come over the past year and a half.” Building team spirit was also evident: “I like the fact that I am part of a group that is respectful. We don’t judge anybody. BUILD is basically like a family. I wish I was part of something like BUILD two or three years ago, when I was struggling to get into construction.” Another participant noted: “Here you know it’s a lifestyle, you feel respected here.”

Employees push each other and show disapproval for others who they feel do not pull their weight: “They hire new employees and they are not strict enough. They let people hang around in the trailers. Maybe they should be more strict.” Another said, “It would be nice if people took it more seriously.” Cooperation and team building were highly valued among participants. The development of these skills will be important in their future employment:

You’re rooting for each other, looking out for each other so if you stay home and sit there and people will be texting you and if you don’t show up, the crew feels that you’re a man down, you feel that you’re letting down your crew.

Challenges with Private Business Workplaces

Social enterprise workers who had done previous work for private businesses, either before being at the social enterprise, or on contract for the social enterprise, shared stories of precarious work environments:

We were first in line with another company and we were doing the best we can. We were the only girl painters, we worked with carpentry, flooring, and painting. It was so unorganized we were so frustrated. And they kept messing up our walls and after were done, so we were always arguing with the guys that they thought they could over power us because we were girls and we are tiny. So yeah then they let us go.

Yeah nobody showed us either, yeah just paint. They didn't want to teach us. They didn't care either right. They just said finish a wall right. All they would come back in and f up the work we

did. And we would have to go back four times [to] finish one part and then keep going back. I kept going over there and trying to do stuff we learned, and they said we don't do that. They told us the way they wanted it, so we had to do it different ways. Who do we ask right? Some companies are difficult I guess.

I was working with a private company [on a contract] from BUILD, I did two months working with him, I showed up one Monday morning and he ended my contract. I was there every day on time, I was there every morning like overtime and all of a sudden he fired me. I guess he was looking for a Level 3 carpenter and hired a Level 1 to replace him. So I really had to try and learn all these skills and he didn't have time to physically train me so he wanted the work done. So it was just one of those things that you didn't work out so you're gone.

Future Pathways for Participants

Many expressed optimism for the future. “Looking forward to working somewhere else, with another construction company. I think I’ll be ready to move on once I get my apprenticeship. It will be interesting working with guys that know what they are doing,” one said. Some looked forward to be able to train others: “I would like to keep working here as long as possible. I am still the new guy here. I would like to be the big boy, teach other kids how to do stuff.” Others noted:

In three years, I would like to see myself working with maybe a little bit more increase in wage, so I can get off income assistance, because I still get income assistance because I don’t make enough yet. So three years I would like to see myself off income assistance and applying for a house with Habitat.

I could go to a commercial job like Bockstael or working for the City.

We like doing what we are doing here right. That’s why we come down and do the work. But if we could learn, like or more training, with different stuff, electrical, finished carpentry, plumbing, foundation.

City work. More work.

Maybe the program that can help you obtain a red seal, or some kind of topic area. Good to be an apprentice.

Definitely funding with apprenticeship. In an apprenticeship we go to school plus you go to work and you learn the different trades, and you go and teach the other employees what you have to learn at school, teach what you have learnt.

I want to make a home renovation company. I want to hire my family and hire all the guys that don’t know how to patch and flooring and stuff like that and hope they can get a job, and people that can’t get a job, I want to help people that can’t find work.

The long-term employment outcomes for participants are still uncertain. Some, like MGR, said that it is too early to give definitive assessment on how well employees do once they move on. BUILD had changed its structure in 2014 to specialize in early training, partly as a result of funding changes. Of eighty-four trainees in 2014, over half (forty-eight) exited to employment, while sixteen went on to further education. Of those that went on to employment, it is likely that many continued on within the social



BUILD trainees and instructors

enterprise sector, as NECRC, MGR, and ICR all take on BUILD graduates. Under its new model, BUILD acts as a feeder enterprise, training workers who come from Employment and In-

come Assistance (EIA), or sometimes from the criminal justice system, through programs like the Winding River Program at Headingly Correctional Centre.

Social Enterprises and the Province of Manitoba

Social enterprises are becoming a key part of a job strategy for helping individuals with barriers to employment develop job and life skills to find a place in the labour market. Manitoba has been at the vanguard in the use of employment-oriented social enterprises and is home to the Social Enterprise Strategy (Province of Manitoba 2015). As Shaun Loney (2012: 16) explains:

In what will undoubtedly be a challenge to both the existing left and the existing right, the new paradigm will be more entrepreneurial with many new companies doing business with their customers face to face and on a small-scale basis. These businesses will meet a financial bottom line but be based on also meeting environmental and/or poverty reduction objectives.

Government support has been critical to fostering an environment where social enterprise can flourish and achieve a triple bottom line. The initial wave of support for many of the newer social enterprises in Manitoba came through the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement (2004 to 2010), a tri-partite agreement among the Canadian, Manitoban, and Winnipeg governments for community development projects. Over the

five years of the program, \$75 million flowed to community organizations, including some of the initial funding that helped start many of the social enterprises that are important components of the Manitoba economy today. For example, in 2006, a \$93,000 pilot project to upgrade the insulation and weatherization in up to 360 housing units in the Centennial neighbourhood was anticipated to “create up to nine jobs for inner-city residents and include life skills and technical training” (Province of Manitoba 2006). The grant was a foundation for establishing BUILD, which has gone on to employ and train over three hundred inner-city residents over the past nine years.

Manitoba also has promoted social enterprise through favourable purchasing and taxation policies. For example, the Neighbourhoods Alive Tax Credit offers a 45 percent tax credit to social enterprises that use their revenues to support charitable activities. In 2012, the provincial government went further creating an Affordable Energy Fund “to support activities that will improve energy efficiency and conservation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions or have the potential to do so. The fund may also be used to support social enterprises and com-

munity organizations in assisting people or neighbourhoods to participate in such activities” (Province of Manitoba 2012). Manitoba Housing and Community Development’s commitment to work with social enterprises forms part of a government-wide strategy, which has been successful in using social enterprise for training and inner-city community development. Manitoba Housing and Community Development partners with social enterprises that offer employment and training opportunities to individuals with barriers to employment. In 2015/16, Manitoba Housing is allocating \$5 million per year of its capital and renovations budget to work done by social enterprises; this is scheduled to increase to \$7.5 million in 2016/17 and \$10.5 million in 2017/18 (Manitoba Housing and Community Development 2015).

The 2015 Social Enterprise Strategy has put social enterprises at the centre of the Province’s community economic development strategy. In January 2016 Manitoba announced a Social Enterprise Loan Fund to help social enterprises access capital with flexible loan financing and loan guarantees. Also recently announced is the Social Impact Procurement Policy to help ensure that existing government purchasing is used to benefit training and employment programs, including social enterprises to offer opportunities for those with barriers to the job market.

The Manitoba Government is amplifying existing training dollars by adding procurement and loans to support the social enterprise sector to produce economic and social benefit. This approach has been called for by advocates for social enterprise, who point to it as a new model for generating positive social benefits outside the traditional government-funding model.

There are opportunities for increased procurement for social enterprises in the area of energy retrofits. Currently social enterprises access contracts to do energy retrofits, improvements or maintenance on provincial public housing. There are still many units of private and non-

profit-owned housing that has not yet been retrofitted. This would benefit both the tenants with improved comfort and quality, and save resources (electricity, natural gas and water). Currently there are no minimum energy efficiency standards for housing providers (non-profit or private) and energy retrofits in Manitoba’s older housing stock is voluntary. Retrofitting this housing presents an opportunity for both conservation of energy and water, and also for on-going costs of bills. A leader in the social enterprise sector explained to the researchers that this could be achieved by a “carrot and stick” approach, whereby a period of time is given to housing providers to adhere to new standards along with an attractive financing options and other solutions offered through Hydro. This would help with “split incentives” whereby housing providers own the property but do not pay the utility bills.

“Through government transfers and funding mechanisms Manitoba government essentially pays the operating costs for 15,000 non-profit and supported housing units. If only half of these received water retrofits only (benefits even higher with energy retrofits) and assuming no rate increases, the savings to government would be \$22.5 million over 10 years PLUS job creation”.

Ultimately, on-going government support is needed to support trainees and employees with multiple barriers gain skills to move from dependency on the welfare state to inter-dependency, giving back to the community and becoming tax payers. Government support is required to help the sector to continue to flourish and innovate. The benefits will be returned to the public purse in the form of improved labour force participation, reducing dependencies on social assistance as people move from welfare to work and become tax-payers, reducing costs of incarceration, and energy and water conservation savings.

Manitoba is leading the way in the area of social enterprise for people with barriers to em-

ployment (Fernandez 2016). Social enterprises provide training, employment opportunities, and accomplish energy retrofits using available avenues such as the PAYS program through Manitoba Hydro. The social enterprises de-

scribed in this paper create the foundation for more training and employment opportunities to support adult learners with barriers to employment, while at the same time addressing skilled-labour shortages.

Challenges Facing the Social Enterprise Sector

One of the greatest challenges for the social enterprise sector, as with many non-profit organizations, is scale. While social enterprises have an advantage of being given preference for some contracts with Manitoba Housing and Community Development, they are often left out of the private market as they are too small to compete for larger contracts. One aspect of the problem is the inability to secure bonding, partly due to their lack of capital and non-profit structure.

One gap in the social enterprise sector is the lack of diverse opportunities for training in high-wage occupations outside of construction. The focus on renovations is seen as limiting access for women, older workers, and people with disabilities. Some social enterprises have taken on workers from these groups, and they likely do better than average in the for-profit construction sector at promoting diversity, but more needs to be done to expand these opportunities.

Critical to the success of the social enterprise model is a network of agencies that take

on different aspects of training. Educational institutes, other training programs, and connected social enterprises create a continuum of programming. Brandon has a different offering. BEEP offers higher levels of training through its partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association and the building of Solutions to End Poverty Permanently (STEPP) housing. However, they do not have social enterprise employment entities like MGR or ICR. The social enterprise system is not as developed in Brandon as it is in Winnipeg, so there are fewer options for graduates.

In any case, it is clear that a single training program will not be sufficient to overcome the complex barriers faced by diverse people. The time-delineated funding models of programs do not always meet the needs of Aboriginal and inner-city workers struggling with barriers to employment. LMIs are needed to help connect trainees to paid employment opportunities and aid in employment retention.

Conclusions

Meeting the needs of workers with barriers to employment is one of the most critical community development challenges in Manitoba. Manitoba's large Aboriginal population faces long-term, often intergenerational barriers to employment. The costs of the contribution of this pool of labour to the economy, and on the workers who are left behind, are immense. Workers face barriers including discrimination, lack of job skills and education, criminal histories, and insufficient acculturation to the labour process. Getting a foothold in the labour market for these workers is often problematic.

We thank the participants in the study for sharing their perspectives and experiences. The themes emerging from the qualitative research depict that social enterprises provide trainees and employees with needed skills in a holistic fashion, from life skills, to budgeting, to accessing identification and driver's licensing, to workplace health and safety knowledge, to construction skills, and employment search skills. Participants spoke eloquently about the positive workplace culture and team environment created in social enterprises. Some participants who had worked in private businesses found the work-

place culture different and challenging. When discussing their futures, a segment of participants wished for the opportunity to apprentice in the trade of their choosing.

The pride that comes from working hard and having a good job, and the benefits that result from it shines through in the words of the workers in this study. Participants told us they look forward to brighter futures for themselves and their families. These workers carry forward the virtuous cycle created by their involvement in social enterprise to their families and as leaders in the community.

This study is a point-in-time qualitative depiction of a sample of participants. Overall, the results are very positive. Going forward, longitudinal research and a system to follow graduates should be established.

Manitoba has a successful and ground-breaking social enterprise sector that has helped to integrate some of these workers. It is nonetheless still dependant on government support. The support of Manitoba Housing and Community Development, other crown corporations, and government in providing contracts to keep these social enterprises vibrant is essential to meeting their community development goals.

Supporting the Development of the Social Enterprise Sector

Based on this research, the following are emerging areas for action to expand and deepen the impact of social enterprises and scale up operations:

1. Social enterprises, working together, have built a network of enterprises and training organizations. Government support and the commitment of Manitoba Housing and Community Development and Manitoba Hydro PAYS program have been critical to building this network. This support is required to continue sustaining and building the social enterprise sector in Manitoba. Some trainees in six month programs require more time for completion and to create a plan to transition to work or further training. Options to extend funding to ensure these participants successfully transition to work or further training would create flexibility for those who require it. Additionally, workers indicated they wished more opportunities to apprentice.
2. Social enterprises have expertise in energy retrofits of housing. Opportunities for procurement can be found with housing providers who have not yet retrofitted housing for energy efficiency. The province has plans to establish a demand-side management (DSM) energy agency separate from Manitoba Hydro. This entity could be given the mandate to do DSM with “hard to reach customers” such as renters and create more procurement opportunities for social enterprises.
3. Social enterprises reach a portion of those interested in training and entry into the labour market. Developing a Labour Market Intermediary (LMI) that works with both social enterprises and other entities to bridge the transition from training to the private sector is key to supporting the long-term success of workers. Options to explore LMIs for all social enterprise trainees, workers and interested prospective workers should be explored.
4. Social enterprises offer life skills, cultural activities, and social supports to build capacity, social capital and enable workers to thrive. Current funding is extremely limited for these activities. Options are needed for public funding for

programming outside of fee-for-service revenue social enterprises generate from sales. The public benefit to this investment is that workers who receive supports build connection to the workforce and move from dependency on government programs to inter-dependency as tax-payers.

5. There is potential to scale up the social enterprise sector by expanding procurement opportunities with other provincial departments, provincial crowns, government agencies, the City of Winnipeg, the health care sector, school divisions and government agencies. This would diversify the contracts available, built into procurement policies for these entities with the goal of ongoing contracts. The social enterprise sector is interested in expansion and requires support and partnerships with the afore-mentioned entities to do so.
6. The network of social enterprises is mainly concentrated in Winnipeg. Brandon requires local social enterprise employment opportunities for BEEP graduates; options to develop this could be explored through business planning and researching potential procurement opportunities in Brandon and across the province.
7. The majority of social enterprise workers are male, yet women, older workers, and people with disabilities also face multiple barriers to employment. Social enterprise opportunities for women, older people, and people with disabilities should be developed.

8. Social enterprises have been effective in supporting workers to obtain identification (birth certificate and Social Insurance Number), credit union or bank accounts, and driver's licenses. These are key to accessing employment, benefits and services however due to experiences of colonization, family history required to obtain a birth certificate may hard to locate or simply people leading complex lives that prevent access. To address this systemic barrier and reach more people facing barriers, improving access to identification and driver's licenses in all systems is important. For example, creating accessible access points to access in EIA, the correctional system, Child and Family Services, the school system etc.
9. In order to measure impact, trainees and workers are tracked upon entering and completing social enterprise training. The social impact of participation in social enterprises should be measured longitudinally, along with qualitative research on the experiences of the trainees. Social enterprises do some tracking however are quite busy operating their businesses. In order to track the impact of social enterprises on current and past trainees and workers, a standard tracking instrument could be developed with input from social enterprises. The new LMI could have a role here, or another entity that has the capacity to collect information and centrally document the impact of social enterprises.

Appendix A:

Social Enterprises in Manitoba

The following six Manitoba social enterprises included in this study do contracts for Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation:

Building Urban Initiatives and Local Development (BUILD)

BUILD is a social enterprise and training program that hires Aboriginal, newcomer, and inner-city residents — all people who can face significant and multiple barriers to the labour market. Participants learn hands-on basic trades skills, construction site protocols, and safety, while upgrading math and language skills and engaging in life-skills programming. BUILD also provides skills training in English as an Additional Language, First Aid Certification, math and numeracy, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and money management. Life skill programs and workshops include identification collection, parenting, sweat lodge, BUILD-a-bike workshop, literacy class, and nutrition. Participants are paid a wage while at BUILD and basic food is available (sandwiches and fruit).

In 2013/14, eighty-four trainees successfully completed the six-month training program, forty-eight exited to employment, sixteen ex-

ited to education, and fifteen are continuing in the program (BUILD Annual report 2013/14). In the apprenticeship program, seven people completed Level 1 hours.

BUILD also has a newly developed social enterprise production side that does maintenance and apartment turn-overs in Manitoba Housing and non-profit providers. They also install insulation in low-income households through Manitoba Hydro's Affordable Energy program.

Manitoba Green Retrofit (MGR)

MGR provides meaningful employment to people in Winnipeg who face barriers in the traditional labour markets. Services provided include residential renovations, property maintenance, high efficiency gas furnace upgrades, a temporary worker pool, and the Bug 'N Scrub (bed bug) Service.

At the end of 2015, MGR employed twenty-six full-time employees. With the addition of the temporary worker pool — their newest division — they may have as many as seventy people on payroll over the course of eighteen months. New hires receive an orientation where issues like the employee not having a bank account are

addressed if they arise. The employee then goes off to work at a job site, and is able to use their skills and learn new ones in an on the job setting.

MGR is not a training program. As with any job, there is a learning curve, and any training happens organically through the transfer of knowledge from people who have been with the company longer. We strive to hire BUILD graduates, and others from our partner organizations, in addition to people from the community.

All employees are placed on a three-month probationary period when they're hired, to make sure the job is a good fit for both MGR and the employee. If the employee is successful, they qualify for a comprehensive benefits plan that is cost shared with the company. Employees can stay with MGR for as long as they wish. If employees wish to seek other employment/apprenticeship opportunities, MGR is encouraging. We aim to be there for our employees for as long as they need us to be.

Inner City Renovations (ICR)

ICR's mission is to provide quality employment for inner-city, low-income residents and quality general contracting services in Winnipeg. ICR creates employment and practical training for inner-city residents. ICR has between eight and 16 employees depending on business demand.

Brandon Energy Efficiency Program (BEEP)

BEEP seeks to improve energy and water efficiency of existing homes and also builds energy- and water-efficient affordable housing in Brandon and surrounding communities. The BEEP experience

provides carpentry skill training to individuals with limited work experience to prepare them for the labour force.

There are currently twenty participants (twelve trainees, six Tier IIs, and two Apprentices). Annual payroll supports twenty-five positions and injects \$1 million into the Brandon Community. From June 2007 to October 31, 2014:

- 117 trainees have benefited from BEEP training
- Forty-two participants have gained full-time employment in the labour force
- Eleven participants have pursued further education

New Directions

New Directions receives referrals from probation officers or Child and Family Services for their social enterprise employees. They offer life and pre-employment skills, basic training in construction, painting, and demolition, and some supports for transition to work. In 2016 they have 28 participants. The longest participants can be involved is two years. They offer general positions and junior supervisor positions.

Building Construction Mentorship Program (BCMP), a program of the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC)

BCMP is an employment and training program for North End Winnipeg youth and residents interested in the trade of carpentry and housing construction. It provides hands-on experience through the maintenance and repair of Manitoba Housing properties to 20 workers.

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