

Reports of Practice

Aboriginal Business Capacity Building Programs in the Central Interior of British Columbia: A Collaborative Project Between the University and Communities

Titi Kunkel, Blanca Schorcht, and Randall Brazzoni
University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)

Acknowledgements

The project was funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada and the funds managed through the Northern Development Initiative Trust. We wish to express our sincere thanks to Dennis Macknak, director of UNBC Regional Operations and Continuing Studies; Paul Michel, director of UNBC First Nations Centre; and Dean McKinley, economic development manager at Northern Development Initiative Trust. Their support and involvement was very valuable. In addition, 20 First Nations bands, four tribal councils, and various band businesses and not-for-profit organizations contributed to the success of the project. Finally, our sincere thanks go to all the students who participated in the project.

ABSTRACT

Aboriginal communities in Canada are typically marginalized, have very low employment participation rates, and have limited economic infrastructure. The downturn in global economies further marginalized these communities. The University of Northern British Columbia's (UNBC) Continuing Studies department piloted an Aboriginal and Small Business Leadership Certificate program in the central interior of British Columbia (BC) between November 2008 and May 2009. The aim of the program was to address some of the issues faced by Aboriginal communities affected by the mountain pine beetle infestation in central BC. The success of the pilot project led UNBC Continuing Studies to collaborate with some communities in the central interior of BC

RÉSUMÉ

Les communautés autochtones du Canada sont typiquement marginalisées, ont des taux très peu élevés de participation, et possèdent une infrastructure économique limitée. Le ralentissement économique mondial a davantage marginalisé ces communautés. Le département des études permanentes de l'Université du nord de la Colombie-Britannique a mis sur pied un projet pilote, un programme de certificat de leadership pour autochtones et petites entreprises dans la région centrale intérieure de la Colombie-Britannique entre novembre 2008 et mai 2009. Ce programme avait pour but d'adresser certains enjeux auxquels faisaient face les communautés autochtones affectées par l'infestation par la dendroctone du pin ponderosa dans la région

to access funds through the federal government's Community Adjustment Funds initiative in order to develop and deliver a business capacity building project. The project consisted of a certificate program with enhanced Aboriginal content and an internship program to provide workplace experience for students. This paper reports on the practice of community engagement and learning as a result of this project.

centrale de la Colombie-Britannique. Le succès du projet pilote a amené le département des études permanentes de l'Université du nord de la Colombie-Britannique à collaborer avec certaines communautés de la région centrale-intérieure de la Colombie-Britannique et à accéder à des fonds via l'initiative du Fonds d'adaptation des collectivités du gouvernement fédéral pour développer et livrer un projet de développement des capacités en affaires. Ce projet est composé d'un programme de certificat avec un contenu autochtone plus riche et un programme de stage pour fournir aux étudiants une expérience en milieu de travail. Cette publication fait rapport sur la pratique de l'engagement et de l'apprentissage communautaire résultant de ce projet.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Northern British Columbia's (UNBC) Continuing Studies department piloted an Aboriginal and Small Business Leadership Certificate (ASBLC) program within three communities. These communities, Vanderhoof, Quesnel, and Williams Lake, needed to diversify their economies because of the downturn in the forestry industry caused by the mountain pine beetle epidemic. The program was developed and delivered in conjunction with the university's School of Business in the fall and winter semesters of 2008–2009. Following the success of this program, UNBC's Continuing Studies department collaborated with Aboriginal communities in the Cariboo Chilcotin area to access funds from the federal government's Community Adjustment Funds (CAF) initiative. The federal government's economic stimulus initiative provided support for projects that created jobs and maintained employment in and around communities experiencing significant job losses (Western Economic Diversification, 2010). The university provided 37% of the project funding while Western Economic Diversification (WED) provided the remaining 63%. The funding received was used to develop and deliver business capacity building as part of the government's stimulus package.

The project in this report consisted of a Business Development Assistants Certificate (BDAC) program with enhanced Aboriginal content and an internship program to provide workplace experience for students. The project targeted Aboriginal peoples, low income earners, and unemployed people in the central interior of BC. The certificate program consisted of ten courses with a total of fifteen transferable university credits. Through collaboration with tribal councils, band offices, First Nations band businesses, and not-for profit service organizations, the internship program provided workplace experience for students within office settings. The BDAC program started in November 2009; the Internship program in January 2010. Both programs concluded in December 2010.

The project developed and delivered university courses to non-academic students using a flexible delivery format, and built networking opportunities with local business development agencies. This paper is a report of practice of community engagement and learning that resulted from the project. It highlights some of the lessons learned in building business capacity for people living in remote communities with limited economic infrastructure.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Aboriginal people remain on the margins of Euro-Canadian social and economic systems (British Columbia Statistics (BC Stats), 2008; Hedican, 2008). The 2006 census showed significant inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, especially in areas such as education, labour force participation, unemployment rates, and employment income (BC Stats, 2008). With a population of 196,075, Aboriginal people accounted for 4.8% of British Columbia's total population in the year 2006 (BC Stats, 2008). Sixty percent of the Aboriginal population lived in urban communities while 14% lived in rural British Columbia (BC) and an additional 26% lived on First Nations reserves¹ (BC Stats, 2008).

Despite development efforts, there continues to be a wide socio-economic gap between First Nations communities and other BC communities. In 2008, Aboriginal people remained significantly behind the rest of the population in educational achievements (BC Stats, 2008). Forty-three percent of on-reserve First Nations people aged 25 to 64 had not completed their high school education compared to 12% of non-Aboriginal people (BC Stats, 2008). Reserve communities typically have higher incidences of poverty, inadequate social and economic infrastructures, and a higher than average unemployment rate (RCAP, 1996). People living in rural and remote locations also face bleaker prospects for getting jobs (BC Stats, 2008).

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UNBC has been working with Aboriginal communities in BC since its inception in 1990. With a service area that includes 16 tribal councils, 78 First Nations bands, 4 Métis organizations, and 10 Friendship Centres, Aboriginal education is central to the mission and mandate of the university (UNBC, *n.d.*). Over 10% of UNBC academic students, in the 2008–2009 academic year, declared themselves as Aboriginal (UNBC, 2010a). UNBC delivers both community-based and academic programs in Northern BC and has regional campuses in Terrace, Quesnel, and Fort St. John. Over 30% of regional academic students are Aboriginal (UNBC, 2010b). Through its First Nations Centre, the university develops and delivers support programs for Aboriginal students (UNBC, *n.d.*).

UNBC Continuing Studies developed and delivered the ASBLC program between November 2008 and May 2009 to help mitigate the impact of the mountain pine beetle on the economies of communities in central BC. The courses in the ASBLC program consisted of five lower-level undergraduate courses and focused on business and economic development. From the successes and challenges of this pilot program, UNBC Continuing Studies learned that there were significant literacy gaps between students from remote reserve communities and those who lived in urban settings (Kunkel, 2009). Students who lived on remote reserves had little or no access to computers and were mostly computer illiterate. Some of these students had difficulty securing transportation to attend classes and were adversely affected by bad weather or road conditions. Due to social circumstances on reserves, some students were unable to complete schoolwork at home. Consequently, a provision of 52 hours of classroom time was made for all 39 credit hour courses. This enabled students to complete assignments and relevant course work while in class. At the end of the project, some students continued their studies, some continued in their workplaces, and those who were unemployed at the beginning of the program prepared new business plans for self employment. Through this pilot project, UNBC staff and facilitators

had the opportunity to work more closely with some marginalized communities surrounding the Williams Lake, Quesnel, and Vanderhoof areas and to understand some of the needs of these communities.

In August, 2009, UNBC Continuing Studies developed the business capacity building project, consisting of the BDAC and internship programs to help communities recover more quickly from the global economic recession. This project was developed to meet the needs of communities surrounding the Quesnel, Williams Lake, and Vanderhoof areas. Through the ASBLC program, UNBC Continuing Studies learned how Aboriginal communities were restricted in funding allocation for post-secondary education. Not all students who applied for tuition and textbook funding received it due to program timing, insufficient funds, and other community criteria. This had a significant impact on enrollment. The ASBLC program also highlighted the need for unconventional methods in course delivery and the importance of mentors for the students. These lessons learned were incorporated into the planning, development, and delivery of the subsequent project.

The BDAC program had 73 registrants, of whom 61 were from Aboriginal communities. The program was designed to provide people with immediate skills for employment, using an intense delivery format so that the credit hours per course could be completed more quickly. Through the internship program, workplace experience was provided for students within ten First Nations band offices and businesses, four tribal councils, and four non-profit community-based organizations. These organizations collaborated with UNBC and supported the program by identifying projects for work experience and making in-kind contributions such as project supervision, office space, computers with software and internet access, and the necessary stationery supplies. The program participants were enrolled as non-academic students and did not participate in semester-based courses due to the timeframe of the project. Twenty-seven students completed the certificate program of whom 19 were from Aboriginal communities. Of the 31 students who participated in the internship program, 20 completed their placements.

The BDAC program consisted of business and other support courses, including learning strategies, word processing, using spreadsheets, presentation skills, business communications, and proposal writing. Classes were scheduled Friday evenings and weekends and delivered simultaneously at the three locations. Each course was delivered over three consecutive weekends with a two- to three-week break before the next. The university's student support services and programs offered through the First Nations Centre were only available at the Prince George campus. As a result, additional support services were put in place for the BDAC program at all three locations to help with learning skills such as note taking, writing, editing, and grammar.

A total of 15 instructors and one program coordinator were involved in the development and delivery of the program. The program coordinator was responsible for recruiting the students and organizations who participated in the program, providing student and faculty support, and liaising with the community, in addition to serving as coordinator for the ASBLC program. This coordinator was a PhD student at the university and had participated in ongoing community development and research work with First Nations communities in the central interior of BC, through which she had established contacts and working relationships within some of these communities. This was essential in recruiting Aboriginal students and organizations for the program. The success of the project can be attributed to the knowledge and prior working relationship the program coordinator had with the First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations in the program areas.

Four of the instructors involved in the program delivery were UNBC faculty members and others were part time instructors who also work in industries such as finance and banking, Aboriginal public administration, and educational services. Instructors were selected based on

their expertise, location, and availability. Two of the program instructors were of Aboriginal ancestry and were from the local communities. These instructors also work with local tribal councils and have existing work and social relationships with some of the students. Two other instructors were of African descent. These instructors were known to some of the students prior to the program for their ongoing work within First Nations communities.

From the pilot project, UNBC Continuing Studies noted that significant literacy gaps exist in Aboriginal student populations from reserve communities surrounding the Williams Lake, Quesnel, and Vanderhoof areas. To overcome some of these literacy challenges and to help students succeed in the BDAC program, three of the instructors developed a module called Student Instructional Support, which proved to be very valuable for all students irrespective of where they resided. Through this module, regular study groups, tutorial classes, and tutoring were organized for students for the duration of the program, helping bridge some of the literacy and technology gaps, and providing support for some students as they coped with the intense delivery format of the course.

The delivery of one course at a time with an intense format immersed the students in the subject area. The students were expected to attend and to participate in every class, and this was reflected in the evaluation method through participation marks for each course. While most of the recommended textbooks for the BDAC program were the same as the UNBC credit equivalent courses, these books did not have examples of Aboriginal businesses in Canada and did not address issues directly related to First Nations people. Instructors were skillful at including Aboriginal Business examples from around the country and maintaining the standard of instruction pedagogy with unchanged academic outcomes. Instructors teaching the same courses worked together, prior to the classes, to develop course material including the course outline, presentation materials, and in-class exercises where appropriate. Some instructors delivered more than one course to the same group of students for continuity. This was a very positive experience for the instructors as they were able to watch the the students apply this new knowledge .

RE-SKILLING OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

UNBC's Continuing Studies department engaged with the participating Aboriginal communities and organizations at the project planning stage, following ethical guidelines used by various researchers who work with Indigenous communities (Fraser, 2009; Hoffman, 2005; NHMRC, 2003; and Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). These guidelines were based on values such as respect, relationship, responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, and ownership. Collaborating with communities to access available funding created mutual trust between the university and the participating communities. This was essential in building partnerships for the work placements. Aboriginal communities and organizations made projects available for the intern students, providing workplace experience in business and economic development, finance, office administration, and social development. These projects were assessed by the program coordinator to ensure that they were suitable for students and would provide relevant and meaningful workplace experience. Intern students were placed based on their grades after two months in the BDAC program and after being successfully interviewed for the available work placements. The role of the program coordinator was critical in the success of the internship program. The coordinator provided support for the students in the workplace through regular communication and facilitated the resolution of conflicts as they arose. Four students had business and project management

experience and were able to work on new projects in the workplace unsupervised. Most of the students managed daily office administration with ease, but many students from remote communities had never worked in office environments and required a significant amount of supervision.

The internship program helped some participating Aboriginal communities and organizations create new jobs and maintain some that otherwise were being threatened by the downturn in the global economy. Students were awarded fellowship payments to cover up to 24 hours of work per week. The fellowship stipend was higher than BC's minimum wage and was able to cover the costs of living for most of the students. Over 90% of the intern students were unemployed and were seeking skills for the workplace. The community organizations involved provided opportunities for students to apply their newly gained knowledge and acquire workplace experience.

There are significant challenges in re-skilling people from marginalized Aboriginal communities in BC. These students may struggle with the lack of transportation to get to work at urban centres; of childcare arrangements; of support from spouses and other family members; of ability to manage family, work, and school commitments. Students coming into the workforce from remote communities found weaker computer and literacy skills a further disadvantage because a considerable amount of business writing, such as proposals and business plans, was required. Lack of familiarity with computer software also reduced the choice of work available for some students. Some of these challenges act as barriers for people living in remote communities who want to participate in office-based employment. The BDAC program provided computer and literacy skills for students to help with their transition to office-based work.

As a result of the success of the project, other First Nations are now seeking to have the certificate program delivered within their communities to build capacity in business and economic development. Some communities have initiated research projects with UNBC researchers based on the positive experience of the BDAC program. One tribal council has initiated the development of an economic development program as a collaborative project among its communities, UNBC, and other local universities. Students continue to network with industry-based instructors and several have successfully initiated community-business ventures.

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned from the program have been categorized into five themes based on the course feedback from the instructors, the program coordinator, and the students' end-of-course evaluations. These themes—respect, relationship, relevance, responsibility, and participatory learning—and recommendations for future programs are discussed below.

Respect

Over 95% of the students who attended the BDAC courses were from 20 First Nations communities. These communities have different governance structures and different social, environmental, political, and economic views but share common experiences such as unresolved land claims and experiences with the residential school system² (Kunkel, 2008, 2009). There were also non-Aboriginal students in each class with different world views and social values. It was therefore important to respect the diverse world views represented in each classroom and encourage the expressions of these views to enrich learning. Respecting other learners was the mantra of the BDAC program.

The residential school system created significant barriers for Aboriginal education in BC and left a legacy of abuse, pain, and anguish (Milloy, 1999). Most of the students forty years of

age and older, had attended residential schools, and some of them talked about the abuse they had suffered there. Based on the ASBLC experience, the BDAC program set out to work with the Aboriginal students with the understanding that in-class activities might trigger unresolved traumas. Instructors were made aware of this and liaised with the program coordinator when there were causes for concern.

As part of respecting other learners, some instructors encouraged students to share their institutional or community protocols with the class and to discuss regional differences. One instructor reported that acknowledging differences in opinion and protocols was very important. Most instructors found it respectful to share their lesson plans with the students at the beginning of each day. This also alleviated some anxieties for the students.

Students and their families who survived the residential school system continue to have their lives shaped by the experience (Milloy, 1999). Some instructors reported that students who had survived the system had difficulty sharing or offering their thoughts in class discussions or group work. As the instructors built respectful relationships, these students started to participate more in class.

One instructor stated that culturally relevant approaches, such as using art and stories to explain concepts, were most effective when teaching Aboriginal students. Classroom furniture was arranged in circles at some locations to encourage Aboriginal students to participate in discussions. One instructor reported that incorporating understanding of Aboriginal history and students' personal experiences into teaching approaches showed respect for individual learners.

Three instructors noted that many of the older students were easily overwhelmed by technology, while students in their early twenties to mid thirties were constantly distracted by it. This distraction was considered disrespectful by the instructors and other learners. Most instructors had to set rules on using cell phones, internet access, online chatting, and Facebook. During the computer courses, one instructor reported that the younger students progressed more quickly than the older ones but had difficulty staying focused. These students constantly wanted to check their Facebook accounts, to send text messages to their friends using their cell phones, or to chat with the neighbouring students. These actions served to distract others around them. These younger students were therefore encouraged to help others who were having difficulty with technology.

Relationship

The ASBLC project showed that some Aboriginal students were suspicious of other people, some because of their residential school experience and others due to their communities' on-going land claims (Kunkel, 2008, 2009). The ASBLC project also demonstrated that some Aboriginal learners were very quiet in a classroom setting and would only speak when spoken to. These students also did not ask questions in class unless they felt comfortable. Due to the fast pace of each course, it was necessary and very important for instructors to gain trust and to develop respectful relationships with the students from the beginning of the course in order to ensure that no one was left behind. Students' profiles and a report on prior course outcomes were given to instructors before the course. This helped with lesson planning.

Some of the instructors reported sharing their multi-cultural backgrounds, travels, relevant work experiences, and personal stories that students could relate to. Others reported encouraging students to share some relevant personal information, life experiences, and political views. The mutual sharing of experiences and personal stories helped the students feel more comfortable in the classroom and helped build mutual respect and acceptance. Instructors also became cognizant of students who had had bad schooling experiences and were able to encourage them to ask questions or work with them individually as required. In addition, the program coordinator

pointed out that food was an important part of the First Nations culture. Instructors were encouraged to provide coffee, muffins, and donuts for the students, and these were well received at all the venues. Some instructors believed that this gesture improved students' attendance and their in-class participation. At one of the venues, students formally complained about instructors who showed up without coffee and donuts. Some instructors organized "pot luck" lunches at the end of each course. Each student brought in a dish to share with the class to celebrate their achievements. This provided further opportunities for students to express themselves through informal conversations, to seek clarification of concepts learned, and to network with other students.

Instructors provided their students with daily progress reports to keep the learners "in the loop" and to engage them in the learning process. This helped create a trusting relationship. Instructors also assessed the comfort level of their students and adapted their lesson plans to accommodate needs. The positive feedback from instructors provided students encouragement and further motivation.

Relevance

In-class participation was very important in the BDAC program, and instructors reported increased participation if the students found the topic relevant to them. Some instructors highlighted relevant topics at the beginning of each class.

In their course preparations, most instructors adjusted their materials to reflect culture, local and regional issues, demographics, and population. One instructor reported that making spreadsheets relevant to everyday life helped students focus and made it easier for them to grasp concepts. As stated by another instructor, if students connect with something in the course and find relevance, learning takes place.

Responsibility

The residential school system caused a disruption in First Nations people transferring parenting skills from one generation to another, leading to a generation of young adults not taking responsibility for their actions (Milloy, 1999). Teaching the younger students to take responsibility for their learning was very important in the BDAC program. The course format was such that missing a day could mean missing several credit hours in a semester. Some instructors reported that attendance was problematic, especially among younger students who then required supplementary work to complete the course. Common reasons given for non-attendance were lack of transportation from their reserves, depression, lack of family support, and interruptions in or problems with childcare. Personal conversations with community members sometimes revealed that some students had missed class because they had been out socializing the previous night.

Due to budget constraints, each of the BDAC courses was only run once at any location. Students unable to complete the work during the allocated time were required to do "directed study" work with the instructor. Despite the support provided, some students did not complete all the core coursework and, consequently, could not continue with the certificate program.

Participatory learning

The term "participatory learning" describes the student-centred approach where emphasis is placed more on group work than on lectures. A number of instructors used group work to help students build relationships with each other and to encourage participation in class discussions. One instructor reported that collaborative learning through group work provided insight into the best teaching and learning approaches for the student population. This instructor also observed that the students learned better through interactive group work than through lectures.

The First Nations students in the program who spoke their native language were often less fluent in English and some of the younger students had limited English vocabulary. Consequently, instructors spent time teaching terminology to ensure all the students were able to follow in-class discussions, or encouraged discussions and interactions through group work to ensure that students who struggled with English as a language were not left behind. This increased the level of participation.

The program coordinator met with all of the students at every course and communicated with them for the program duration via email and telephone. Students were encouraged to express any difficulties they were facing to the coordinator so these could be addressed if possible. Some students took advantage of this offer, while others chose to drop out of the program instead. The coordinator reported that the Aboriginal students needed mentors to actively support them in program completion, confidence and self-esteem building, and transitioning to further education or the workforce.

Recommendations for Future Programs

First Nations people from remote communities want to participate in capacity building programs but face significant social barriers that limit their participation. To increase participation in future programs, it is recommended that some barriers such as lack of transportation, adequate childcare, computer and literacy gaps, and funding to cover both tuition and textbooks, be addressed at the program planning stage. Also at the planning stage, it is recommended that institutions work collaboratively with communities to understand their needs so programs can be designed appropriately.

Relationship building is very important for Aboriginal learners. They need instructors who can be mentors, who know their history, and understand their challenges. Hence face-to-face course delivery is recommended even for First Nations people in living remote communities.

To ensure the success of program delivery, it is recommended that the five themes, relationship, respect, relevance, responsibility, and participatory learning, be incorporated into lesson plans as appropriate. The application of these themes could vary for different communities. It is recommended that institutions work closely with communities to understand how the themes can be adapted for their learners.

CONCLUSION

Through the BDAC and Aboriginal Business pilot programs, UNBC Continuing Studies learned firsthand the challenges in providing education and training to marginalized communities. The BDAC program highlighted the importance of Aboriginal values such as relationship, respect, relevance, responsibility, and participatory learning in the classroom as key ingredients for academic success. Through the Student Instructional Support module provided and the feedback from instructors, the program also highlighted the need to close the technology and literacy gaps that exist in Aboriginal communities.

In conclusion, the BDAC program was able to initiate adult learners into an academic program that did not require long-term commitments. Some students continued their education as a result of their positive experience in the program, while others continued in the workforce. The BDAC program provided students from marginalized communities with the opportunity to earn transferable university credits and business administration skills for the workplace. The program also afforded some of the students opportunities to acquire workplace experi-

ence through the intern program and to help Aboriginal and community-based non-profit organizations create or maintain employment.

Through the BDAC project, new business ventures were initiated and new research relationships were established, and some communities are now working on business and economic development capacity-building programs for their members. The BDAC project built on the successes of existing UNBC programs and on existing and new partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations, and it is providing a legacy of longer-term economic benefits for some marginalized communities.

ENDNOTES

1. Statistics Canada does not classify Reserves as urban or rural (BC Stats, 2008)
2. The Residential School System was Canada's mid-nineteenth century assimilation strategy for Aboriginal peoples (Milloy, 1999)

REFERENCES

- British Columbia Statistics (BC Stats). (2008). *Aboriginal peoples labour force survey: Labour market characteristics of off-reserve Aboriginal population*. Retrieved from www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/DATA/lss/abor/abo_lfs_2007.pdf
- Fraser, T. N. (2009). *Māori-Tūhoe epistemology: Stages of sustaining tribal identity through Tūhoe performing arts*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Hedican, E. J. (2008). *Applied anthropology in Canada: Understanding Aboriginal issues* (2nd ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hoffman, R. (2005). *Rekindling the fire: The Impact of Raymond Harris's work with the Plains Cree*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Trent University, Peterborough, ON.
- Kunkel, T. I. (2008). *Creating sustainable economic development for two BC First Nations communities: A rights-based approach* (master's thesis). University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia.
- Kunkel, T. I. (2009). *A report on UNBC Continuing Studies program: Aboriginal and small business leadership certificate program*. Canada: Western Economic Diversification Canada.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the Residential School system, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba press.
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). (2003). *Values and ethics: Guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research*. Commonwealth of Australia.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). (1996). *The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples*. Library of Parliament. Canada. Retrieved from http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071115053257/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.htm.

- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies, research and indigenous peoples*. London, UK: Zed Books. University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). (2010a). *About UNBC: Facts and Statistics 2010; Our students*. Retrieved from <http://www.unbc.ca/about/guide/students.htm>.
- UNB-. (2010b). *About UNBC: Facts and Statistics 2010; In the regions*. Retrieved from <http://www.unbc.ca/about/guide/regions.html>.
- UNB-. (n.d.) *Action (Answering the challenge through innovation, opportunities and networks): A strategic plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.unbc.ca/assets/reports/action.pdf>.
- Western Economic Diversification (WED). (2010). *Community Adjustment Fund*. Retrieved from <http://www.wd.gc.ca/eng/11269.asp>.

BIOGRAPHIES

Titi Kunkel holds a master of business administration (MBA), a master's degree in natural resources and environmental studies, and is completing her PhD. She works closely with Aboriginal communities in the Cariboo Chilcotin region and was the coordinator for both projects described in this report of practice.

Titi Kunkel possède une maîtrise en administration des affaires (MBA) ainsi qu'une maîtrise en étude des ressources naturelles et de l'environnement, et suit des cours pour compléter son doctorat. Elle travaille en étroite collaboration avec les communautés autochtones de la région Cariboo-Chilcotin et a travaillé comme coordonnatrice des deux projets décrits dans ce rapport de pratique.

Blanca Schorcht is associate professor of English at UNBC, and regional chair for the South-Central region. Her areas of specialization are First Nations literatures, oral and written traditions, and autoethnography. She works closely with First Nations communities in the region, and was instrumental in the planning of the two projects.

Blanca Schorcht est professeure agrégée d'anglais à l'Université du nord de la Colombie-Britannique et présidente régionale de la région du Centre-Sud. Elle spécialise en littérature des Premières nations, dans les traditions orales et écrites et en autoethnographie. Elle travaille en collaboration étroite avec les communautés de Premières nations de la région, et fut instrumentale dans la planification des deux projets.

Randall Brazzoni was the manager of Continuing Studies at the UNBC at the time of this project. He was instrumental in developing and delivering academic credit courses through UNBC Continuing Studies.

Randall Brazzoni était gestionnaire du département de l'éducation permanente à l'Université du nord de la Colombie-Britannique pendant ce projet. Il fut instrumental dans le développement et la livraison des cours accrédités via le département de l'éducation permanente de l'UNBC.