Promoting Aboriginal youth employment, work engagement, and career advancement

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Partnerships for Prosperity
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Conference
Sharing Knowledge-Building Relationships: Aboriginal Experience in the Cross-cultural Workplace

- Goal: Share experiences and knowledge about how Aboriginal youth experience work
  - What aspects of Aboriginal culture and identity present challenges for youth in the workplace?
  - How can Industrial/Organizational Psychology help understand issues facing Aboriginal youth at work?
  - How do existing I/O Psychology models need to be adjusted to help understand this population?
Conference Summary

- 2 days at Vancouver Island University’s Cowichan Campus
- 5 sponsors
- 5 keynote speakers
- 85 participants
- 4 themed sharing circles
  - Diversity of stories: Our experiences at work
  - Achieving balance
  - Visions of an Aboriginal-Canadian workplace
  - What have we learned? Where should we go from here?
Keynote Speakers, Summary

- **Douglas S. White**, Director, Centre for Pre-Confederation Treaties & Reconciliation, Vancouver Island University
  - Issues facing Aboriginal Canadians in the workplace

- **Wanda Wuttunee**, Professor, Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba
  - Identity and Cultural Alignment

- **John Chenoweth**, Dean, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
  - Finding QWEMQWƏMT - Balance and Regeneration

- **Ken Tourand**, President of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
  - Dispelling the Myths: Lessons Learned in the Cultural-Cultural Workplace

- **Kelly Lendsay**, President and CEO, Aboriginal Human Resource Council
  - Workplace Inclusion Leadership
Sharing Circles Summary

- Perceived cultural differences create barriers in the workplace.
- Low trust in employers and organizations.
- Pride in history & culture creates spiritual foundation and identity.
- Resilience as a cultural and individual trait.
Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015

The Aboriginal population is both younger and growing more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal population, representing a wealth of future labour resources.

2011 Education Statistics

- 62% of the Aboriginal population age 15 years and older had completed high school, compared to 80.6% of the non-Aboriginal population.
- 27.9% of the overall Aboriginal population held a college or trade certificate, compared to 29.1% for the non-Aboriginal population.
- University completion rate for the Aboriginal population was 10.2% compared to 25.8% for the non-Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal women had a higher university completion rate (12.7%) than their male counterparts (7.6%).
“For me, a young Indian girl who came from the reservation.....This immense difference between my childhood, my culture, and my profession, has often been hard to reconcile. It is as if I am living in two parallel worlds that exist side by side but only rarely intersect....Surgeons and others I work with rarely see the woman who goes to a medicine man for advice during her pregnancy” (p. 228)

As executive director of the Native American Prep School...”I flew across the country from New York to L.A., had meetings at private clubs and on yachts where no one looked like me, and asked people to donate money to Indian education, because Indians are the people of the future. And then I would go home and cleanse myself and vomit, because that is what you do if you are Creek and believe in our traditional ways and find yourself living in a world that is increasingly strange.” (p. 40)

“I was conscious of my identity and understood what it was to be traditional. I always thought that if I could combine my cultural heritage with Eurocentric standards of success, I could succeed.” (p. 155)

“Of all the services offered by Dartmouth’s Native American Program, perhaps the most vital is the provision of a safe environment in which to wrestle with larger identity issues.”
Cultural Safety

- Overlaps with psychological safety: A workplace climate that exists when employees feel valued and safe to voice their opinions.
- Cultural Safety: A workplace climate that exists when employees feel their culture is valued and it is safe to express their cultural identity.
What is Cultural Safety?

- Aboriginal Healthcare
  - Nurses must provide care within the cultural values and norms of the patient (Brascoupe & Waters, 2009; Smye et al., 2002)
  - Result of a collaborative practice that requires understanding and sharing one’s own cultural identity, mutual respect and learning, equity and trust (Ball, 2007)

“The introduction of the concept of cultural safety to the debate on cross-cultural healthcare was significant because it questioned and challenged the concept of cultural competence. By bringing in the notion of safety, it turned the focus away from the benefits of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, and moved it towards the risks associated with the absence of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity.” (Ball, 2007)
Cultural Safety in the Workplace

- A workplace climate that exists when employees feel their culture is valued and feel safe to express their cultural identity
  - Describes employees’ feelings that their culture is safe and valued
  - A process defined by Aboriginal employees that respects cultural forms of engagement
  - Result of a collaborative process of mutual learning that engenders trust and safe relationships
Mentorship-Cultural Safety-Aboriginal Youth Employment

Objective Outcomes:
- Retention
- Career Advancement

Subjective Outcomes:
- Engagement
- Trust
- Learning
- Job Satisfaction
- Turnover Intentions
Rewarding Work Relationships: Mentorship in I/O Literature

- A relationship through which less experienced protégés receive career and psychosocial support from more experienced mentors
  - Career: Coaching, sponsorship, exposure, visibility
  - Psychosocial: role modeling, counseling, friendship
- Builds self-efficacy through observational learning, identification with mentor, access to knowledge and social networks, opportunities to display talent and skills
- A reciprocal, mutual opportunity for growth and learning
Rewarding Work Relationships: Mentorship in I/O Literature

Mentorship

- Informal: Relationships organic, more long-term
  - Could start in secondary or post-secondary school

- Formal: Relationships assigned by third party, more short term
  - Organization takes responsibility and is accountable for successful mentor relationships
  - Mentor should not be a direct supervisor or in the same division
Rewarding Work Relationships: Mentorship

- How might this look for Aboriginal employees?
- A reciprocal, interactive relationship
How might this look for Aboriginal employees?

- Understanding, supporting, and promoting the integration of Aboriginal culture into the organizational ways of knowing and being
- Perception of the organizational climate shared by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees
Employee Career Outcomes

**Objective Outcomes:**
- Retention
- Career Advancement

**Subjective Outcomes:**
- Engagement
- Trust
- Learning
- Job Satisfaction
- Turnover Intentions

- How might these look for Aboriginal employees?
  - Defined on an individual basis through the mentorship relationship
  - Align employee career goals and organizational goals, which may or may not be related to Aboriginal culture, community, leadership, etc.
Recommendations

- Mentorship initiatives focus on:
  - Building cultural knowledge, examples of success
  - Recognizing and capitalizing on resilience
  - Affirmation of personal and cultural values to interrupt process of stereotype threat

- Organizational Responsibility for mentorship initiatives is key
  - Supervisors hold responsibility and accountability

- Develop Cultural Safety climate collaboratively
  - Formal initiatives organized, implemented, and overseen by a culturally diverse team of managers and employees
Thank you

Questions and Discussion