

Urban Circle Training Centre

Jurisdiction: Manitoba

Contact: Cheryl Lavallee

Level: Adult Learning

Theme: Curriculum/Materials, Transitions and Linkages

Description of Practice:

Urban Circle Training Centre is a 52 week urban based project which provides delivery of pre-employment and job preparation skills, academic upgrading, and adult skills training for Health Care/Health Unit Clerk and Family Support Worker to unemployed Aboriginal persons who face multiple barriers to employment. Additional programs in 2004-05 included the Teacher Assistant Pilot Project and the Empowerment Through the Arts programs. Urban Circle utilizes the holistic model to assist their clients to overcome barriers to employment. All activities are tailored to the specific needs of their clients and delivered in a context that is culturally relevant to the client's experience. From the outset of the program, Urban Circle has built a strong Aboriginal cultural component into the curriculum which has proven to be the heart of the program. Through the Sharing Circle and the Healing Circle, as well as the sharing of life stories, which is done by both staff and students as part of the life skills curriculum, a very healthy group dynamic is established which encourages growth and empowerment.

The program delivery site is located at 519 Selkirk Avenue in Winnipeg. It is approximately 13,000 square feet which includes 4 large classrooms with skylights, a large reception area, a large circular ceremonial space in the centre of the building connecting the sky to Mother Earth below, student and staff lounges, student lockers and large washrooms, an Elder's room, study room, resource/board room and an elevator for full accessibility. This central location is accessible to students' homes and the services they need such as day care, schools, health centres, etc.

Background:

Urban Circle has assessed statistical information from a variety of sources (Social Planning Council, Stats Canada, Government Studies, academic papers) which outline graphically what Urban Circle already knows from over 15 years of service delivery: Aboriginal women and men face multiple barriers to meaningful employment which include financial, academic, social and institutional barriers. 34.62% of participants are single parents of children under the age of 12. A large majority of students face challenges of poverty, abuse, family violence, youth gangs, anxiety, depression, racism, and addictions. In addition, participants face resistance from family members to change and fear of breaking with family patterns. 19.23% of participants had completed Grade 8 or 9, 73.07% of participants had completed Grade 10 or 11 but only 5.77% had attained Grade 12 or equivalent. 86.54% of participants were on Social Assistance and 5.77% were on Employment Insurance. The remainder were working in low-paying part time jobs.

Development:

Originally under the auspices of the Dr. Jesse Saulteaux Resource Centre, Urban Circle became incorporated separately in 1996 (Provincial number 347163). Urban Circle Training Centre is incorporated as a community-based, non-profit organization governed by an independent Board of Directors who are elected at the Annual General Membership Meeting

for a term of 3-5 years. Included in their governance structure are three Employer Advisory Committees made up of a cross section of Urban Circle's employer partners. These advisors keep Urban Circle informed about changing job-market demands, provide job placement and employment opportunities for graduates, and identify opportunities for cross-cultural education within the work place.

Evidence:

Over the past fourteen years, Urban Circle has gained a solid reputation for the successful delivery of pre-employment training for Aboriginal women and men on social assistance or employment insurance. In recent years, Urban Circle has offered five programs per year for a total of 114 students annually. Based on the outcomes of previous years, Urban Circle expects over 85% of students to complete the programs and 80% to achieve Mature Grade 12.

Urban Circle has developed partnerships with a wide variety of educational institutions, funders, community-based organizations, as well as with over 150 businesses, corporations, and agencies. Educational institutions include Red River College, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg Education Centre, Seven Oaks School Division, Aboriginal Education Directorate, and Adult Learning Centres. Urban Circle has developed numerous funding partnerships over the years including Manitoba Advanced Education and Training, Neighbourhoods Alive!, Adult Learning and Literacy, Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (C.A.H.R.D.), Employment & Income Assistance, and various bands, tribal councils and other AHRDA holders. In the past, partnerships included Winnipeg Core Area Initiative to Human Resource Development-Canada, Winnipeg Development Agreement and Single Window Initiative. Urban Circle has developed an ongoing system of network and referral with over 250 community based agencies and organizations including Nor'West Co-op Health Centre, Mount Carmel Clinic, Health Action Centre, Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, North End Women's Resource Centre, Native Women's Transition Centre, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, CEDA, Just Housing, R. B. Russell School, Tec Voc School, Sisler High School, Children of the Earth High School, and many others to numerous to mention.

Adaptability:

One of the strongest components of the Urban Circle Training Centre is their holistic model. It has provided the foundational identity for all the participants in the core programming. Urban Circle's strength lies in their ability to implement their vision for their own Aboriginal people. All of the board members, management and staff work together to achieve this vision. The participants then catch this vision and run with it. It is a united effort.

Further information:

Contacts: Cheryl Lavalley/Sandee Harder – Employment & Training Partnerships
230 - 800 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3G 0N4
Email: clavalley@gov.mb.ca
sharder@gov.mb.ca