



## Factsheet #1: Connections with Culture & Traditional Values in the Aboriginal Non-profit Workforce

**Overall Project Context:** The “*anpBC Strategy*” is an Indigenous approach designed to strengthen, support, and uplift the countless number of dedicated people who work and volunteer within Aboriginal Non-profit (ANP) organizations. The *anpBC Strategy* is the result of hundreds of stories shared by dedicated ANP employees and volunteers across the province from 2012 to 2013. It offers a suite of resources and recommendations aimed at sustaining and nurturing our Aboriginal workforce in four areas: strengthening connections with culture and traditional values; mentorship and professional development; employee pensions and benefits; and workplace wellness and balance.

Aboriginal non-profit organizations are one of the ways we enrich our traditional and cultural support networks historically supplied by our families and community. Supported by a strong workforce, ANPs can continue to offer services to our communities that support, heal, and strengthen our people now and for generations to come.

### Culture and Traditional Values in the Workplace

Embedding culture and traditional values in workplace practices within ANP organizations makes good sense. Strong and relevant human resource and workplace practices help to empower and uplift the dedicated people who choose to make their careers in the non-profit sector. Recent 2012/13 research with more than 200 people who work and volunteer for ANP organizations across BC showed that culture is alive and well within the sector. Of 147 volunteers and employees surveyed, 93% agreed that they feel more satisfied in a workplace that incorporates culture and traditional values. 88% of respondents agreed that they were more likely to work for and remain employees of an organization that fosters traditional culture and values.

### The Importance of a Culturally Anchored Workforce

A culturally anchored workforce helps staff and volunteers to better cope with the challenges associated with working for non-profits, enabling them to be in the best position to assist people in need of help. And more importantly, for the Aboriginal workforce, culture plays an essential role in promoting healing and addressing deep and lasting impacts of residential schools and colonization. 2012/13 research showed that Aboriginal workplaces often place a great value on traditional protocol; the natural world; and respecting individual ways of practicing culture. Integrating culture into an organization is influenced by many things including the level of cultural competency of the staff and leaders and whether Elders or cultural mentors are present.

*Embedding culture in all aspects of human resource practice is essential to our ability to do our work with communities*

## Strengthening Culture and Tradition in Your Workplace

Culture and traditional values are at the heart of the Aboriginal non-profit sector's identity. The anpBC strategy offers the following recommendations towards strengthening culture and traditional values in the workplace:

**Build cultural practice into your agency's policies and strategic vision.** This can help to establish clear objectives and a genuine commitment from leaders, no matter who is in charge. Consider using the cultural self-assessment guide as developed by the anpBC strategy as a way to assist in making culture a more explicit part of the workplace ([www.aboriginalnonprofits.com](http://www.aboriginalnonprofits.com)).

**Look for ways to increase cultural practices and displays into the workplace** to help improve employee morale, client satisfaction, and to share traditions and teachings and help increase pride in Aboriginal identity.

**Showcase the role that culture plays in your workplace when you** offer professional development or training, and recruit new employees or volunteers.

**Support the role that Elders can play in your workplace** such as providing opportunities for Elders to serve as teachers and mentors and to help promote a culture of respect within the agency.

## Strengthening Culture and Tradition in the Broad ANP Sector

Based on research and engagement with the ANP community in BC, the following recommendations are suggested for the entire sector:

**Establish ANP sector resources such as HR specialists and cultural liaisons or mentors** to assist in cultural policy development and implementing culture in the workplace.

**Support more Aboriginal-led research and evaluation** of the impacts of implementing work-based Aboriginal cultural practices and programming.

**Develop organizational resources for ANPs across BC to support cultural development** (e.g. Cultural Self-assessment Tool), as well as offer provincial education and training.

**Engage with government and other funders in promoting culturally aligned models** of service delivery that incorporate traditional values and Indigenous approaches.

**Hold gatherings with ANP organizations to share promising and wise practices** of culture in the workplace, and foster communities of practice across BC.

**Create culture-based recruitment practices and initiatives** which consider the importance of culture for Aboriginal employees in the non-profit sector, including youth.

**Create a permanent Elders Cultural Advisory Council for the ANP sector** and establish actions to enhance the role of Elders in ANPs across British Columbia. Consideration can also be given to include Youth representative on the Elders Cultural Advisory Council.

**Explore funding models and options that consider long term, sustainable funding** for ANP organizations including culturally-based workforce development

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For more information on the anpBC Strategy, or to learn more about the other themes within the strategy (mentorship and professional development; employee pensions and benefits; workplace wellness and balance), please visit [www.aboriginalnonprofits.com](http://www.aboriginalnonprofits.com)