



A Summary of the Second & Third Regional Virtual Job Fairs April 29 & May 19, 2021



**A Report Submitted in Support of the Labour Market Partnership Project:
*Inclusion of First Nations Communities in the Lower Vancouver Island Workforce***

Canada



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Background

A common issue identified by both First Nations and business leaders through the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) process has been the need for on-going, consistent communication as a way of developing relationships and building trust. The virtual job fairs included in this LMP project are one of the building blocks that will be used to create meaningful dialogue between First Nations and the Lower Vancouver Island business community. The job fairs support the overall goal of relationship development as a means to address and overcome a number of the systemic barriers to employment that exist for First Nations community members. It is also hoped that the First Nations/Business Job Fairs supported by this LMP project will result in improved communication and understanding between First Nations communities and local businesses concerning the nature of work and available job opportunities.

The job fairs were initially envisioned as a way of bringing employers together with First Nations communities on their traditional territory. This was seen as a welcoming approach and one that these communities see as essential for building the bridges to employment that are necessary for their members. Job fairs provide opportunities to increase the awareness of First Nations culture and traditions by regional businesses and help to break down a number of systemic barriers that inhibit the recruitment, attraction and retention of First Nations workers.

Given the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been possible to gather people together in one location. As a result, Harbour Digital Media (HDM) hosted the first job fair on a virtual platform (ZOOM) on October 28, 2020. The second and third job fairs were also hosted on ZOOM on April 29 and May 19, 2021.

This report provides a summary of the second and third virtual job fairs. Unlike the first job fair which involved HR representatives and First Nations leaders, the second and third job fairs included job seekers from local First Nations communities who are participating in the CELASET program in conversation with local HR representatives.

Objectives for the Second and Third Virtual Job Fairs

The April 29, 2021 virtual job fair was intended to:

- Provide information to help open up technology sector job opportunities for First Nations members;
- Address any confusion and/or intimidation about the technology sector; and
- Help generate confidence in approaching and working in the technology sector.

The May 19th, 2021 virtual job fair was intended to:

- Engage First Nations employment seekers in an informational interview where they could ask HR professional questions about the employment and interview processes; and
- Begin to establish a relationship with local HR professionals that they could draw on for assistance and support as they seek employment.

Participants

- Annie Konopasek, Life Coach and Work Experience Coordinator, CELASET
- Lynn Brown, HR Manager, Schneider Electric
- Basil Onyia, HR Manager, Bambora, Inc.
- Brianna Belzile, HR Manager, Ralmax Group
- Ruth Eden, HR Consultant, Engaged HR (for Destination Victoria)
- John Juricic, Harbour Digital Media (moderator)
- Barry Carbol, Schmidt & Carbol Consulting (recorder and report writer)
- 10 CELASET program participants at the April Job Fair and 13 at the May Job Fair (names are not included to respect the privacy of the individuals involved in the program)

Overview of April/May Virtual Job Fairs

The two job fairs were conducted in two different formats in order to determine how best to engage potential First Nations job seekers. The originally planned March 2021 Virtual Job Fair was restructured as two separate events (both via ZOOM); one on April 29, 2021 and another on May 19, 2021.

April Virtual Job Fair

The April Virtual Job Fair focused on jobs in the lower Vancouver Island Technology sector. The session featured presentations by John Juricic (Harbour Digital Media) and Basil Onyia (Bambora Inc.). The session involved the two presenters and local First Nations employment seeking individuals. During and after the presentation, the First Nations participants were encouraged to ask questions and engage the presenters in a discussion about the skill sets required to work in the local technology sector and the types of jobs that local employers have to offer that take advantage of these skills.

May Virtual Job Fair

The May Virtual Job Fair involved the use of a different strategy to engage First Nations job seekers from the CELASET program. The virtual session used three breakout rooms with no more than five participants and one HR representative. Each HR representative moved from one room to the next after approximately 15 - 20 minutes. The focus of each sessions was on having participants ask job questions related to job seeking and interview strategies. Participants were provided with career development advice in a friendly, non-threatening environment.

Outcomes

Different approaches were used for the two virtual job fairs. The April Virtual Job Fair was primarily a presentation with follow-up questions by the participants. It achieved the goal of providing participants with information about the local technology sector as a career option but did not generate a significant amount of interaction with the participants. Based on this experience, HDM, in consultation with HR professionals on the LMP Steering Committee decided to use a model for the May Virtual Job Fair that would allow for more interaction and which would potentially be

more interactive. As a result, participants in the May job fair were observed to be more engaged and asked questions that would help them in their job seeking endeavors and future career development. Participants, when asked at the end of the session, indicated that meeting the three HR representatives and the discussions that they engaged in were very helpful. HR representatives were impressed with a number of the participants and appreciated the questions that they raised.

Contact information from the HR representatives has been shared with the CELASET program leaders and participants. HR representatives have indicated that they would make themselves available to individuals in the group who have additional questions or are looking to explore career options.

Suggestions for Future Virtual Job Fairs

HR representative provided the following suggestions for future virtual job fairs:

- Assign topics to each of the three HR representatives so that participants do not receive a repeat of advice;
- Provide more than 15 - 20 minutes for each of the breakout sessions (conversations were just moving along and then it was time to switch sessions); and
- Tighten up the transition between breakout sessions.

They also commented on what worked well and provided the following remarks:

- Overall the session went well;
- The group size was about right;
- Having a list of names in advance was useful (used visual cues to recall names of participants); and
- Important to focus on having a clear conversation with participants.

Appendix 1: May 19th Session: Format and Guidelines

NOTE: This appendix provides the format and guidelines for the May 19th session as provided to the HR representatives *prior* to the session.

Background

The May 19th virtual Job Fair is intended to provide CELASET program participants with the opportunity to interact with three local HR professionals concerning career development advice and jobs with several industry sectors. It is anticipated that 15 students from the CELASET program along with their employment coach and liaison from Camosun College will be participating in the virtual Job Fair session.

The following outline is provided to guide HR professionals as they prepare for the job fair sessions they will lead. Since this job fair is intended to be more of a conversation, it is not necessary for session leaders to produce a PowerPoint deck. They may wish to use some visuals if they think that will improve the impact of what they will be saying.

Format

Two hours have been allocated for the session (10:00 am - noon, May 19, 2021) which will be hosted by HDM on the ZOOM platform.

The format for the session will consist of the following:

1. Introductions
 - General introduction of the session by John Juricic including the traditional territorial acknowledgement and welcome
 - Introductions by each of the HR professionals (additional suggestions provided below in the Guidelines for the Session)
 - Ice breaker activity (see suggestions provided below in the Guidelines for the Session)
2. Breakout Room Discussions
 - Participants will be broken out into **three groups of five** and assigned to a breakout room. Chantu (CELASET program coordinator) will provide a list of program participants prior to the session and will arrange these in the three groups of five. She will also provide a phonetic pronunciation for the participants' names.
 - Breakout sessions will last **about 20 min each**
 - HR professionals will then rotate to the next breakout room as outlined in the following table

Room	HR Professional	Timeslot
1	Lynn	#1
2	Brianna	
3	Ruth	
1	Ruth	#2

Room	HR Professional	Timeslot
2	Lynn	
3	Brianna	
1	Brianna	#3
2	Ruth	
3	Lynn	

3. Reconvene
 - The entire group is reconvened after approximately an hour
4. Summary and Wrap-up
 - Each HR professional is asked to provide their impressions/thoughts about the sessions that they lead
 - CELASET program participants are asked for their impressions/thoughts as well and any final comments that they might wish to make

Guidelines for the Session

1. Introductions
 - Each HR professional will be called on by John to introduce themselves. Introduce yourself by telling the audience about who you are, the kind of activities you like to engage in, your family life, your first job and the skills you gained. Use any personal stories that might help to break the ice with the audience. A few comments about the company/organization you work for could also be included but try to focus your introduction at a personal level. **(3 min max)**
 - Ice Breaker Activity: John to ask one of the HR professionals to lead the ice breaker activity by asking questions such as the following:
 - If you have had a job, what did the job involve?
 - For jobs that you enjoyed, what was it that you liked?
 - What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?
 - What kind of directions would you like your career take?
 - Ice breaker should take no more than **(15 min)**
2. Breakout Room Discussions **(about 60 min)**
 - HR professionals to talk about what it takes to be a successful job seeker and other career development topics of their choosing.
 - HR professionals should also speak briefly about the type of work that their company/organization (or sector) is engaged in and why it is important to its customers (i.e. the value that it provides to customers and the broader community).
 - They could also speak to what it is like to work for their company (i.e. the company's culture, values).

3. Reconvene (***about 2 min***)

- John will bring all of the participants back together into the main discussion area for the summary and wrap-up. To do this he will give the HR breakout session leaders a heads up concerning the time remaining before he moves everyone back into the main session.

4. Summary and Wrap-up (***about 10 min***)

- John will invite the three HR professionals to provide their impressions/thoughts about the sessions that they lead
- CELASET program participants will then be asked for their impressions/thoughts as well and any final comments that they might wish to make
- John to provide closing remarks and thanks to the three presenters and the CELASET participants

Appendix 2: April 29th Session PowerPoint

The following PowerPoint presentation was used during the April 29th Job Fair.