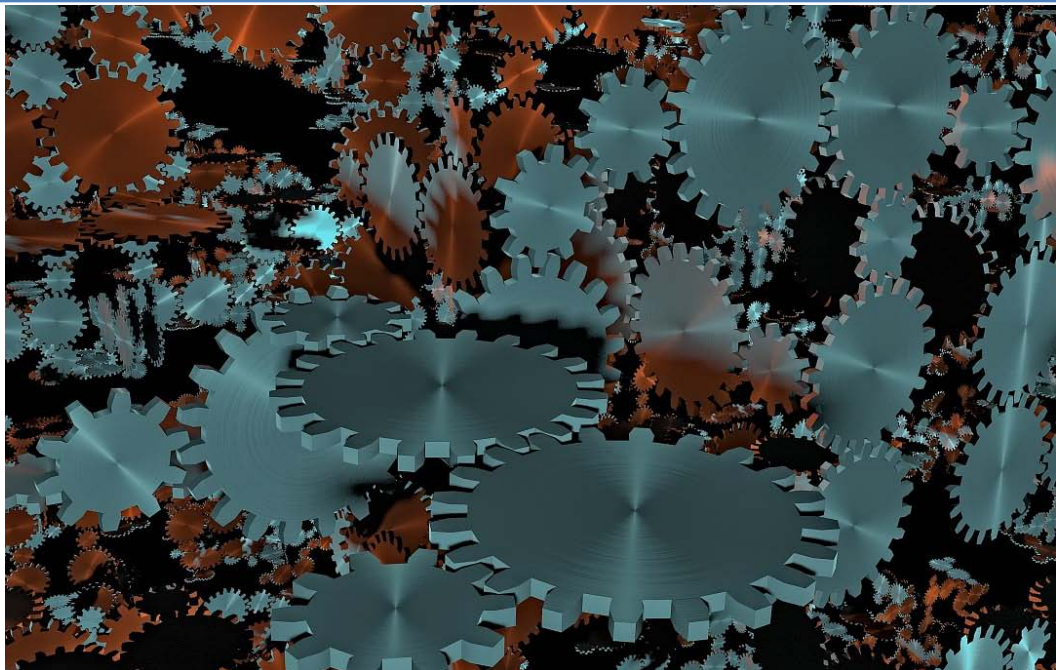




## Final Report: *Inclusion of First Nations Communities in the Lower Vancouver Island Workforce*



**A Report Submitted in Support of the Lower Vancouver Island  
Labour Market Partnership Project**

**August 2021**

**Canada** 



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## A. Executive Summary

This Report provides a summary of the objectives, key activities, lessons learned and recommendations related to the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) project entitled *Inclusion of First Nations Communities in the Lower Vancouver Island Workforce*.

The Project represents a breakthrough in the on-going work to develop positive working relationships between First Nations communities in the Lower Vancouver Island region and local businesses. This has been done through a spirit of learning and reconciliation. First Nations leaders involved in the project have recognized the positive impact that the project has had and the openness of the local business HR community to work with them to address systemic issues related to employment. The project has been viewed by those involved as an excellent example of how businesses can work with First Nations collaboratively to solve employment issues.

The Project was based on recommendations arising from an LMP project facilitated by Harbour Digital Media (HDM) spanning 2019 and 2020. The 2020/21 LMP project (August 2020 - August 2021) provided mechanisms to support sustained dialogue and relationship building among and between members of the lower Vancouver Island business HR community, First Nations communities, and community organizations.

The objectives of this dialogue were to provide:

1. Opportunities to increase the awareness of First Nations culture and traditions by regional businesses as a way of breaking down systemic barriers that inhibit the recruitment, attraction, and retention of First Nations workers;
2. New ways of framing the skill sets of potential First Nations employees by applying prior learning assessment methods and strategies in collaboration with company HR professionals (specifically involving the creation of job profiles and skills inventories); and
3. Communications vehicles (e.g., podcasts, blogs, social media posts) for disseminating the stories associated with the project as a way of building relationships and understanding between the First Nations and business communities.

The Project Steering Committee reviewed and provided feedback to Harbour Digital Media (HDM), the Project facilitator, concerning the project deliverables and milestones. These were:

1. Conducting and documenting ten (10) monthly meetings with regional HR professionals and local First Nations community leaders;
2. Organizing and conducting two (2) regional job fairs;
3. Developing a skills inventory for local First Nations members and sample job profiles associated with local companies and organizations; and

4. Engaging in an on-going communications efforts using a variety of digital communication tools (blogs, podcasts, social media posts, and email newsletters) to encourage on-going dialogue between HR professionals and local First Nations leaders.

Over the course of the Project, HDM received strong support from all of the individuals and communities that were involved in Project activities. Monthly HR meetings were well attended (particularly by the core group of project Steering Committee members). The feedback provided was positive and supported HDM's efforts to continue this type of forum for dialogue into the future. The Project was highly collaborative with First Nations partners providing valuable insights into their culture and stressing the importance of individuals engaging in personal learning. This approach was particularly valuable in light of recent events related to residential schools. Business partners indicated that this advice and the inclusive nature of the Project resulted in personal learning that has translated into action in the workplace.

Elders also provided advice on how businesses should frame and use a territorial acknowledgement and greeting prior to meetings held on their traditional territories. This acknowledgement was used consistently over the course of the project and helped to build trust between the First Nations and business HR leaders. A number of the businesses involved have also adopted territorial acknowledgements as a part of their business practices.

The Project also included a more formal virtual *Thought Leadership Forum*. This forum provided a unique venue for First Nations and business leaders to identify and discuss issues related to employment of First Nations workers. The forum also allowed business and First Nations leaders an opportunity to develop personal connections that enable the development of strong working relationships. The development of these relationships is fundamental to addressing employment issues faced by First Nations and the local business community.

The forum was structured around three themes. These were *Transforming the Workforce* (Mavis Underwood, Tsawout First Nation, presenter), *First Nations Economic Development: Benefits for the Southern Vancouver Island Region* (Christina Clark, Songhees First Nation, presenter), and *Transforming the Workplace* (Rick Quinn, Terra Remote Sensing, presenter).

Comments from the presenters, panelists and the 41 participants stressed the importance of considering skills equivalencies when hiring (i.e., the importance of looking beyond high school diplomas or other certificates for evidence of knowledge and skills) and considering the cultural context of potential First Nations employees (i.e., they are not prone to 'brag' about their skills and knowledge in interview situations).

Three virtual regional job fairs were also conducted over the course of the LMP project. The job fairs were held on October 28, 2020 and April 29 and May 19, 2021. Each job fair had a different focus and approach. The first job fair was an opportunity for First Nations employment leaders to meet and discuss employment issues with HR representatives from companies in the Lower Vancouver Island region. The second job fair was focused on providing a group of First Nations students who are seeking work with an opportunity to consider careers in technology. The third job fair included opportunities for First Nations students to meet with local company HR

representatives to find out about their companies and to ask questions about employment seeking strategies.

HDM also produced two resource documents during the course of the project for use by both First Nations and business HR professionals. These resources were a *Skills Inventory* and a *Job Profile* document. The *Skills Inventory* includes the following dimensions: Knowledge, Experience, Competencies, and Personal Attributes. The *Skills Inventory* provides sample skills of indigenous workers and resumes from three job applicants. The *Job Profile* document provides profiles of LMP partner companies, links to video vignettes that include a personal introduction to regional businesses, and sample job profiles.

A number of important lessons were learned over the course of the Project. These were:

1. Importance of Mechanisms for Sustained Relationship Building - As has been found in other LMP projects involving First Nations leaders and communities, building relationships and trust is essential to working collaboratively.
2. Importance of Personal Learning and Reflection - A number of the Steering Committee members and participants used the experience gained from the regular HR meetings, the thought leadership forum and job fairs to expand their own personal understanding of First Nations cultures and ways of working and knowing.
3. Challenges Concerning Measuring Success - The project has been successful on a number of levels. It has built trust and relationships between HR professionals and First Nations leaders that have lead to attempts to hire First Nations members and modify some of the internal hiring processes that companies use so that they are more inclusive.
4. Importance of Building Bridges to Employment - The job fair activities stressed the importance of having an individual or individuals of indigenous heritage who can act as a bridge between First Nations communities and local businesses and organizations that are seeking to hire workers.

Based on the lessons learned through this Project, HDM as project lead recommends a number of possible actions be undertaken to sustain and build on the momentum that has been created though this Project. These actions could include:

1. Engaging in collaborative action planning by establishing a First Nations and business working group to develop a plan that supports the application of lessons learned through this LMP project. The working group should consider including actions in this plan that will address Project recommendations related to the co-creation of employment processes and the development of employment bridges.
2. There should also be a collaborative effort to overcome the barriers to employment identified through this LMP project. Actions the working group should consider include: establishing a First Nations and business work experience program and developing employment processes that engage indigenous youth and other First Nations community members.

## B. Background

Previous Labour Market Partnership (LMP) projects managed and facilitated by Harbour Digital Media clearly found that business and First Nations communities value on-going dialogue as a way of building understanding and trust and helping to address systemic barriers to employment faced by local First Nations members.

The current LMP project (*Inclusion of First Nations Communities in the Lower Vancouver Island Workforce*) was launched in August 2020 and concluded at the end of August 2021. It built on the recommendations outlined in two previous LMP projects and provided opportunities for local HR professionals and First Nations leaders to collaborate and share ideas on an on-going basis. The activities included in the project were intended to arrive at solutions that will begin to address the systemic barriers to employment faced by First Nations community members.

The project included regular virtual monthly meetings involving HR professionals and local First Nations leaders, virtual job fairs, a virtual business/First Nations forum, the development of *Skills Inventory* and *Job Profile* documents, and regular communication through email newsletters, blogs, podcasts and social media platforms (including video). All of these activities were done in a collaborative and inclusive manner and contributed to the development of a solid working relationships between First Nations leaders and employment counselors and HR leaders from the local business community. The level of trust that has been built between these communities at a time when reconciliation is top of mind is one of the most significant outcomes of the project.

This Report provides a summary of the project, its objectives and key project activities, lessons learned and a set of recommendations for future action. All of the activities undertaken during the project were based on input received from project partners. The lessons learned and the recommendations are based on the findings from this Project as well as discussions with Project Steering Committee members and Project partners from lower Vancouver Island First Nations and business communities.

## C. Project Overview

The LMP Project provided mechanisms to support sustained dialogue and relationship building among and between members of the lower Vancouver Island business HR community, First Nations communities, and community organizations. This dialogue was intended to provide:

1. Opportunities to increase the awareness of First Nations culture and traditions by regional businesses as a way of breaking down systemic barriers that inhibit the recruitment, attraction, and retention of First Nations workers;
2. New ways of framing the skill sets of potential First Nations employees by applying prior learning assessment methods and strategies in collaboration with company HR professionals (specifically involving the creation of job profiles and skills inventories); and
3. Communications vehicles (e.g., podcasts, blogs, social media posts) for disseminating the stories associated with the project as a way of building relationships and understanding between the First Nations and business communities.

## 1. LMP Project Steering Committee

The project was supported by the active participation of a project steering committee consisting of the following members:

- Lynn Brown - Schneider Electric
- Ruth Eden – Engaged HR also representing Destination Greater Victoria
- Shelly Carlson - Questar Tangent
- Christina Clark – Songhees First Nation
- Mavis Underwood and Lillian Underwood – Tsawout First Nation
- Nadia Salmaniw and Herman Henry - Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Catheryn Kendall – Terra Remote Sensing
- Carrie Broadhead and Brianna Belzile – The Ralmax Group of Companies
- Jackie Connelly and Cynthia Chambers – BC Transit
- Basi Onyia - Epicure and Bambora
- Nadine Dillabaugh - Municipality of Central Saanich
- Michelle Philpott - Engaged HR also representing M'akola Housing
- Carlyne Taylor - Vancouver Island Representative at Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR) BC & Yukon
- John Juricic - Harbour Digital Media
- Barry Carbol – Schmidt & Carbol Consulting

HDM is particularly thankful for the contributions of these and other individuals who participated in meetings and events and have helped to make this Project a success.

## 2. LMP Project Deliverables

The LMP Project deliverables and milestones as outlined in the contract involved the following activities :

- Conducting and documenting ten (10) monthly meetings with regional HR professionals and local First Nations community leaders. These meetings were intended to foster the development of working relationships and cultural awareness in an effort to address employment in First Nations communities and skill shortages experienced by local businesses and organizations;
- Organizing and conducting two (2) regional job fairs. These job fairs were intended to provide members of local First Nations with the opportunity to consider job and career opportunities, develop relationships with HR professionals from lower Vancouver Island companies and organizations, and help First Nation members build confidence in their job seeking abilities;
- Developing a *Skills Inventory* for local First Nations members and sample job profiles associated with local companies and organizations. The *Skills Inventory* was intended to be a description of the skills sets possessed by local First Nations members. The job profiles were intended to describe a sample of the kinds of jobs on offer by local businesses and organizations; and

- Engaging in an on-going communications efforts using a variety of digital communication tools (blogs, podcasts, social media posts, and email newsletters) to encourage on-going dialogue between HR professionals and local First Nations leaders.

## D. Key Project Activities

This section of the Final Report provides brief descriptions of the key Project activities. Summary reports and additional details concerning Project activities are provided via the web links found in the [Appendix](#) at the end of this Report.

### 1. Monthly HR Meetings

Over the course of the Project, HDM conducted 10 meetings involving HR representatives from local companies and organizations and First Nations members and leaders. Given the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 health crisis, all of the meetings were held using the ZOOM virtual meeting platform.

Each of the meetings began with a territorial greeting that was developed in consultation with Mavis Underwood, an elder with the Tsawout First Nation, Christina Clarke, CEO Songhees Economic Development Corporation and Adam Olsen, MLA Saanich North and the Islands.

The greeting used for these meetings was:

*Welcome and good morning to our monthly Human Resource and training focused meeting between regional Industry representatives and First Nations communities.*

*Before we enjoy meeting and listening to each other, I would like to acknowledge that the digital environment in which we have these conversations is incorporated in and amongst the traditional territories of the Lkwungen (Esquimalt, and Songhees), Pacheedaht, Scia'new, T'Sou-ke and W̱ SÁNEŪ(Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tseycum) peoples.*

*We have a responsibility to work towards truth and reconciliation and are open to suggestions and dialogue with local First Nations communities to learn how our Industry sector and community can better support and facilitate economic and cultural reconciliation.*

This greeting was also used for other events that were conducted over the course of the Project and its development was reviewed and discussed in numerous blog and podcast postings (See [Territorial Acknowledgement](#)). Business leaders and HR professionals were appreciative of the approach and are in the process of adopting the greeting for use in their workplaces.

A number of the monthly HR meetings in the fall of 2020 and early 2021 were used to gain input into the format and organization for the virtual job fairs. Meeting participants including First Nations partners and business HR leaders were asked to provide input and feedback regarding the



*Skills Inventory* and *Job Profile* resources. This resulted in the collaborative development of two documents that will serve as useful background resources for both First Nations and businesses as they work toward modifying existing pre-employment and employment practices to make them more inclusive.

A number of the monthly meetings were used to introduce participants to the work of various organizations (e.g., the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, M'akola Housing Society, the CELASET employment program, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, big house construction by the Tsawout First Nation, and the Tsow-Tun Le Lum Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Centre) or topics that would be of interest to both First Nations and business/industry/organization participants. The topics discussed included:

- the hiring process and how it impacts indigenous job applicants;
- employment processes and how these should be altered to become more inclusive;
- personal challenges facing First Nations individuals seeking work; and
- the impact of residential schools on First Nations individuals and the importance of understanding the process of healing and inclusion that is on-going in First Nations communities.

Participation in the monthly meetings on the part of both company and organization HR representatives and First Nations was consistent with many individuals attending all 10 meetings. Attendance ranged from eight to 12 with an average attendance of 10. These numbers allowed for a constructive dialogue to take place and for participants to build the trust that is necessary to work together in a collaborative, problem-solving manner. Post-project interviews with participants indicated that they found the meetings useful in building relationships and discussing systemic barriers to employment for members of First Nations communities. The meetings and relationships built have helped local HR business leaders reach out to First Nations communities and work with them on issues related to hiring First Nations community members. Steering Committee members and other participants from both the First Nations and business communities have also indicated an interest in continuing these meetings and to work collaboratively to address long-standing employment issues facing local First Nations.

## **2. Thought Leadership Forum**

On February 24, 2021, Harbour Digital Media (HDM) hosted a virtual forum using the ZOOM online platform. This forum was begun with the territorial acknowledgement outlined in the previous section of this Report which served to set a positive and welcoming tone for what was a productive session. The forum provided a unique venue for First Nations and business leaders to identify and discuss issues related to employment of First Nations workers. The forum also allowed business and First Nations leaders an opportunity to develop personal connections that enable the development of strong working relationships. The development of these relationships is fundamental to addressing employment issues faced by both First Nations and the local business community.

The forum was structured around three themes. These were:

- **Transforming the Workforce** - Mavis Underwood – Band Councillor, [Tsawout Nation](#). This presentation outlined how the Tsawout First Nation is working to transform its community. The presentation and discussion dealt with culture as an important building block for inclusion of First Nations workers in local businesses and transforming the local workforce.
- **First Nations Economic Development: Benefits for the Southern Vancouver Island Region** - Christina Clarke – CEO of the Songhees Development Corporation for the [Songhees Nation](#). This session described how First Nations economic development organizations help contribute to workforce development in the region. It also described the business partnership work that the Songhees First Nation is engaged in, factors affecting employment of First Nations workers from its community, and the broader employment and workforce development issues the community is facing.
- **Transforming the Workplace** - Rick Quinn – Director – [Terra Remote Sensing](#). This presentation illustrated how Terra Remote adapted and developed a workforce environment that successfully engaged regional First Nations communities.

#### Presenters, Panelists, and Attendees

Individuals from the local business and First Nations communities were invited to register for the online event. A total of 41 individuals including seven presenters/panelists and two facilitators were involved in the two hour forum event.

#### Discussion

Panel members and presenters engaged in a brief discussion related to skills, hiring and other employment issues faced by the Indigenous community. Comments stressed the importance of considering skills equivalencies when hiring (i.e., the importance of looking beyond high school diplomas or other certificates for evidence of knowledge and skills) and considering the cultural context of potential First Nations employees (i.e., according to First Nations presenters and panelists, Indigenous people do not like to 'brag' about their skills and knowledge in interview situations).

#### Follow-up

HDM received a number of follow-up emails expressing positive reactions to the *Thought Leadership Forum*. The following emails are representative of those received by HDM.

**From:** Barb Desjardins  
**Sent:** February 25, 2021 8:33 AM  
**To:** John Juricic <[john@harbourdigitalmedia.com](mailto:john@harbourdigitalmedia.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Feb 24th Forum follow-up

Great event John!

Sent from my iPhone

**Barbara Desjardins**  
Mayor, Township of Esquimalt  
Lekwungen Territory

**From:** Jennifer Michell  
**Sent:** February 25, 2021 8:14 AM  
**To:** John Juricic <[john@harbourdigitalmedia.com](mailto:john@harbourdigitalmedia.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Feb 24th Forum follow-up

*Thank you John for putting these together and bringing these important engagements to the forefront of our business community!!*

*That was a great session to partake in and I'll be doing my best to keep attending in the future!! Very thought provoking.*

*Thanks again,*

**Jennifer Michell** | Organizational Development Manager



### 3. Regional Job Fairs

The job fairs included in this LMP project 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 was not possible to gather people together in one location. As a result, Harbour Digital Media (HDM) hosted the job fairs on the ZOOM virtual platform. Although two job fairs were initially planned a total of three job fairs were held on October 28, 2020 and April 29 and May 19, 2021.

Reports for each of the job fairs have been distributed to participants and posted online via the links provided in the [Appendix](#) to this Report.

#### Outcomes from the October Virtual Job Fair

The first virtual job fair was successful in continuing the development of working relationships between local First Nations leaders responsible for career and employment development and Lower Vancouver Island company HR managers and leaders. The job fair also resulted in a number of follow-up actions by staff at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and company HR managers related to employment opportunities in the region and outreach to the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society.

The following email is an example of the type of job-related collaboration that emerged as a result of the fall Job Fair. The collaboration highlighted is between the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Terra Remote Sensing, a Saanich peninsula company.

**From:** Catheryn Kendall  
**Sent:** November 19, 2020 4:47 PM  
**To:** John Juricic  
**Subject:** RE: Oct 28th online meeting - follow up

Hi John

It was a good meeting to start some discussions and I'm glad I can start attending these again. I'm more than happy to share my contacts with Nadia and Herman and in fact I would love to talk to them to see if they have anyone suitable for a Marine opening I have. I'm also hiring co-ops for January so maybe they have some folks who are in geography or computer science that might be a fit.

Thank you and have a great night  
Catheryn

Catheryn Kendall  
Human Resources Manager  
Terra Remote Sensing Inc. 1962 Mills Rd. Sidney, BC, Canada, V8L 5Y3  
[www.terraremove.com](http://www.terraremove.com)

Follow up from the October Job Fair was also very positive. The following emails are illustrative of the encouraging feedback received.

**From:** *Employment Counsellor Trainee*  
**Sent:** *October 29, 2020 9:51 AM*  
**To:** *John Juricic*  
**Subject:** *Re: Follow Up*

*Good morning John,*

*Thank you for organizing the zoom meeting yesterday. It went well, and it was so nice to meet and see what the different companies are doing on the Peninsula. It was so nice to see VNfC and Dorothy Paul with CSETS on the call. It would be great for you to set up a follow up meeting and let Dorothy share what she does with CSETS. Have a great day.*

*Shăw nîthân (show KNEE-thunn) - thank you,*

*Lillian Underwood  
Southern Tutchone  
B.A /certified executive coach/Kairos Blanket Exercise facilitator  
Employment/Training & Support Services Manager  
Tsawout First Nation*

**From:** Nadia Salmaniw  
**Sent:** October 29, 2020 9:00 AM  
**To:** John Juricic  
**Subject:** RE: Follow Up

Good morning John,

How'aa/thank you so much for your kind message and for hosting such a positive event yesterday.

We were happy to see so many faces around the virtual table and look forward to the time when we can gather in person once more.

Look forward to hearing again from you soon.

With warmth and much gratitude,

Nadia

*Nadia Salmaniw - S'ahn N'ahn Guu'as, BA  
Director of  
Career, Employment, Education Resources Dept.  
Victoria Native Friendship Centre*

The November and December monthly virtual HR meetings also built on the success of the first job fair. These meetings, chaired by HDM, helped expand the network of individuals interested in supporting employment opportunities for First Nations workers. Companies connecting directly with First Nations community leaders was one of the most positive outcomes of the first virtual job fair.

Another positive outcome was the development of a series of video vignettes featuring HR managers from local companies speaking about employment opportunities that their companies have to offer. These vignettes were included in the job profiles developed by HDM as a part of this LMP project. To view these vignettes go to: [Corporate HR Video Profiles](#).

#### Overview of the 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.

#### Overview of the 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

questions related to job seeking and interview strategies. Participants were provided with career development advice in a friendly, non-threatening environment.

### Outcomes from the April and May 2021 Job Fairs

As noted above, 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. 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 was shared with CELASET program leaders and participants. HR representatives indicated that they would make themselves available to individuals in the group who have additional questions or are looking to explore career options. Here is one example of the positive feedback received concerning the May Job Fair. This is typical of the kind of comments that were received by HDM after the event.

**From:** Ruth Eden  
**Sent:** May 19, 2021 1:04 PM  
**To:** John Juricic <john@harbourdigitalmedia.com>  
**Subject:** Great Session - Info for Annie

Hi John,

Just wanted to quickly say that that went really well – I found the students were very engaged and really warmed up as the session went on, well spoken, good questions, inquisitive etc. All good.

DGV is currently looking for an Accounts Receivable/Accounts Payable person, so Annie asked me to send through the information for her, but I'm not sure what her email address is. Here is the information:

**Ruth Eden - Manager Professional Services Engaged HR - representing Tourism Sector.** Engaged HR is an HR consulting firm that supports small to medium sized businesses with all things HR. Ruth Eden is the HR Manager at Destination Greater Victoria (DGV), the official not-for-profit destination marketing organization working in partnership with more than 950 business members and municipalities in Greater Victoria. DGV's vision is to be internationally recognized as a leader in sustainable tourism development, ensuring Greater Victoria remains one of the top destinations in the world.

**Current opportunities at DGV:** The Finance Team is looking for someone to do accounts payable and accounts receivable. This position is responsible for processing invoices, collections, bookkeeping, and financial reporting. This position is a 12-month maternity leave coverage and we are looking for someone who approaches their work with a positive attitude and willingness to learn. Someone who is

organized, has good computer skills, is able to prioritize and meet deadlines would excel in this role.

I am happy to speak with anyone who may be interested in learning more about this opportunity or if they would like to apply.

Ruth Eden, B.Comm, CPHR  
(she/her)  
Manager of Professional Services  
Engaged HR Inc.  
[www.engagedhr.com](http://www.engagedhr.com)

#### 4. Skills Inventory

As a part of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) project *Inclusion of First Nations Communities in the Lower Vancouver Island Workforce* Harbour Digital Media (HDM) committed to work with First Nations communities and the lower Vancouver Island business community on the development of a sample of First Nations skills. The intent of this part of the project was to provide examples of the skills of potential First Nations workers.

Through various discussions and meetings over the course of the current LMP project, First Nations leaders have indicated to HDM, business, and community partners that their members have skills that aren't typically reflected in traditional job descriptions. According to First Nations leaders, their members often do not have the formal credentials that jobs available in the local community call for. Again, according to First Nations leaders, some individuals from First Nations communities are reluctant to put themselves forward for consideration or don't see themselves fitting with the culture of local businesses and companies. As a result of discussions with First Nations partners it became clear that it is important to illustrate the skills that First Nations community members have but in ways that are more culturally appropriate. At the same time it was also important to encourage dialogue between First Nations communities and the local business community that results in businesses describing their companies and available types of work in less traditional ways.

The *Skills Inventory* developed for this LMP Project was informed by discussions with First Nations and business community partners and includes the following dimensions:

- Knowledge
- Experience
- Competencies
- Personal Attributes

Using this framework, HDM conducted interviews with First Nations leaders to gain insights into how to describe First Nations skills. The following insights were provided by First Nations leaders and in many cases are verbatim quotes taken from interviews.

- It is important for employers to work with First Nations communities to co-create employment processes. This will help employers to understand what applying for a job and

providing personal information about skills looks like from the perspective of a First Nations person;

- There is a need to develop processes that enable prospective workers to share their stories. The skills, abilities, and experiences of First Nations people are often embedded in these personal stories;
- A storyboard/visual approach may be one way to capture these stories. Moving away from traditional job interview panels to situations that enable interviewees to 'tell their story' may capture First Nations skills more effectively;
- First Nations people may need the support of an employment counselor/mentor/job coach in order to navigate traditional employment processes. This approach has been found to be successful and has been recommended by both First Nations and business partners involved in this project as a way to successfully 'on-board' First Nations workers;
- Businesses need to commit to the development of more inclusive job descriptions that remove stereotypes and experience barriers;
- Businesses should think about using virtual tours of job sites for potential employees as a way of helping these individuals understand company expectations and how the skills they have are linked to jobs that employers have to offer;
- Jobs should be described in 'layman' terms (rather than technical terms). This will make them more welcoming to a First Nations audience;
- Beyond more accurately describing the skills of First Nations workers and developing more inclusive employment processes, it is important to work toward overcoming other barriers to work including transportation access.

As a part of the process of developing the *Skills Inventory*, HDM approached First Nations leaders and asked them to provide sample resumes. The names and other personal details associated with the resumes were removed to ensure that privacy and anonymity were respected. Here is a sample email exchange involving the inclusion of resumes in the *Skills Inventory* resource.

**From:** Christina Clarke  
**Sent:** April 12, 2021 9:54 AM  
**To:** John Juricic  
**Subject:** RE: Follow Up

Hi John

Here is a sample of resumes for cannabis retail job posting.

Sincerely

Christina

**From:** John Juricic  
**Sent:** April 9, 2021 8:26 PM  
**To:** Christina Clarke  
**Subject:** Follow Up



Hi Christina...it's great to chat with you this afternoon...some follow-up:

- huge appreciation for collecting & sending some resumes...very helpful
- I will support the Indigenous Prosperity Centre however I can...
- I look forward to helping Songhees Employment staff with job related activities...please update me with your efforts, thank you...
- here is the link to the Tsow-Tun Le Lum Wellness Wednesday You Tube site I was referencing - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBofyDw8LPNCShgqj30WTA/featured> - please take a peek...

Thanks for the conversation today...take care & have a good weekend.

John Juricic

The complete *Skills Inventory* document provides sample skills of indigenous workers and resumes from three job applicants. The *Skills Inventory* can be found through the link provided in the [Appendix](#) to this Report.

## 5. Job Profiles

An important part of this LMP Project was the development of a *Job Profile* document that provides profiles of LMP partner companies and sample job profiles.

### Company Profiles

Company profiles provide potential job seekers with a window into what a company is all about – what kind of business it is in, what types of work is involved, and the work culture of the company. Traditionally, company profiles are provided in a written form or can be found through a company website. For this LMP project, given the nature of the First Nations audience that business partners are trying to reach it was decided to produce company profiles in the form of video vignettes. This more personal video format provides a visual and auditory medium to capture company and job related information in a way that potential First Nations job seekers may prefer.

Each video vignette features a company HR representative and includes the following information:

- Introduction
- Brief company overview
- What the company is looking for in its new employees
- Examples of entry level jobs and associated work tasks
- A description of the work culture and company benefits
- Contact information

These vignettes feature Terra Remote Sensing, Epicure, Engaged HR (representing Destination Victoria), and Benson Industries, and Ralmax.

The video vignettes are found at: [Corporate HR Video Profiles](#).

## Job Profiles

A job profile is an important tool for any business or organization since it is an important source of information that will help businesses in defining the relationship of each job position and the overall function of the different departments of the organization.

Typically, a job profile will contain the following information:

- Job's key responsibilities
- Experience needed to do the job
- Skills necessary to perform the job
- Education and credentials required for the position
- The physical demands of the job and the work environment in which the position will function
- The personality requirements associated with the job
- Reporting assignment, level, department or function
- Pay range information, usually a low and a high range
- Employment benefits

Samples of job profiles from the Ralmax Group of Companies and Schneider Electric were shared with local First Nations employment counselors as a part of this LMP project. It is important to note that each company expressed interest in modifying its job descriptions, postings, and recruitment processes as a result of the discussions that have taken place with First Nations members, leaders, and employment counselors during this LMP project.

As noted earlier, one very positive example involved work between the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Terra Remote. The following email describes the work that these organizations undertook to collaborate on a way to introduce potential First Nations workers to Terra Remote.

**From:** Nadia Salmaniw  
**Sent:** March 22, 2021 5:38 PM  
**To:** John Juricic <john@harbourdigitalmedia.com>; bcarbol@telus.net; 'Catheryn Kendall'  
**Subject:** Re: Informational Interview

Hi there John,

How'aa/thank you so much for your kind follow up.

I think the next step is for Catheryn and I to meet ...we wanted to connect 1:1 to brainstorm and co-create the poster for this event, and I think this would be best to carry out ourselves for simplicities sake. :)

After we have met, then I think we could all meet for a Zoom to discuss next steps.

How do you see yourself and Barry, helping/supporting this event?

Just want to be clear re: roles for this initiative.

Basically, Catheryn and I hope to co-create a poster...that uses the right language in "laymen's terms" for the roles that she is wanting to hire for.

With the poster, we then thought we would share it widely with our community, in hopes of attracting a small group of folks that might be a fit.

Then I thought we would gather for a virtual event...where the interested community members could meet Catheryn/the employer and learn more about specific roles/opportunities ...also have time for informal Q&A.

That's all I'm thinking so far....we are only at the poster stage, so not sure how you see yourselves jumping in as of yet.

Please let us know your thoughts.

With warmth and gratitude,

Nadia

Additional details concerning the company and job profiles can be found via the links provided in the [Appendix](#) to this Report.

## 6. Communication Activities

During the course of the LMP project, HDM used a variety of online approaches to keep business and organization project partners and First Nations leaders informed about a range of issues impacting First Nations employment. The communication approaches used resulted in a total of 10 blog postings, 20 social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram), six podcasts, and seven stakeholder engagement updates. The social media postings were provided online and email communication kept project partners informed concerning what was included and where to find the postings. The blog and podcast postings are available via links provided in the [Appendix](#) to this Report.

In addition to the communications activities noted above, HDM went to considerable length to encourage HR and First Nations project partners to work collaboratively on sharing job related information that could benefit First Nations members. The following email thread illustrate how this approach effectively created an on-going supportive environment for both First Nations and business partners and resulted in actions that supported First Nations students and workers.

**From:** Vivian Leik  
**Sent:** May 28, 2021 9:22 AM  
**To:** Ruth Eden  
**Cc:** John Juricic <john@harbourdigitalmedia.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Great Session - Info for Annie

Hi Ruth,

Thanks for your email and forwarding on the job information.

We have an IndigeNews newsletter that goes out to subscribed Indigenous students and we can include

links to job postings.

I think our last edition just went out yet I will see if we could send a short version with graduate/summer job info.

Thank you very much for your interest in diversifying your workforces and in your support of hiring Indigenous people.

Miigwetch,

Vivian

**Vivian Leik, BA, MA**

*Algonquin, Mi'kmaq*

**Indigenous Special Projects Leader**

***Eyē? Sqā'lewen* – The Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections (IECC)**

Camosun College, 3100 Foul Bay Road, Ewing 272, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8P 5J2

[camosun.ca/indigenous](http://camosun.ca/indigenous)

**From:** Ruth Eden

**Sent:** May 27, 2021 5:44 PM

**To:** Vivian Leik

**Cc:** John Juricic <[john@harbourdigitalmedia.com](mailto:john@harbourdigitalmedia.com)>

**Subject:** FW: Great Session - Info for Annie

Hi Vivian, cc John

Further to our discussion today, I have attached the posting for the current position at Destination Greater Victoria. Someone with office experience would be great, they don't need to have direct Accounts Receivable / Accounts Payable experience, we are willing to grow someone through this opportunity. I am more than happy to speak with First Nations individuals who may be interested in hearing more about this opportunity – they can apply directly to me, and not through our Applicant tracking system if that is preferred. Here is the summary I had sent Annie:

**Current opportunities at DGV:** The Finance Team is looking for someone to do accounts payable and accounts receivable. This position is responsible for processing invoices, collections, bookkeeping, and financial reporting. This position is a 12-month maternity leave coverage and we are looking for someone who approaches their work with a positive attitude and willingness to learn. Someone who is organized, has good computer skills, is able to prioritize and meet deadlines would excel in this role.

We anticipate that we will be adding to the team in a year and growing the finance department, so there is potential for this to become a longer term opportunity as the tourism industry recovers. As Brienne so eloquently said in our meeting today, we are really looking to add diversity to our team and bring on First Nations individuals. We have a highly culturally diverse team from around the world, but are specifically focused on building positive working relationships with individuals from First Nations. Our team has all received training from Bob Joseph on working effectively with First Nations Communities, and our VP of Sales is on the board for the Inter-cultural Association of Greater Victoria.

Ruth Eden (she/her)

250.385.7784 ext 204 | 844.332.0918 (TF)

**From:** CELASET Life

**Sent:** May 27, 2021 9:06 AM

**To:** John Juricic <[john@harbourdigitalmedia.com](mailto:john@harbourdigitalmedia.com)>; Ruth Eden

**Subject:** Re: Great Session - Info for Annie

Hi John and Ruth,

Thank you for this information! It has been shared within our CELASET Facebook group and I will assist anyone interested in the posting with resume updating.

Warm regards,

Annie

**Annie Konopasek, Life Coach & Work Experience Coordinator**

## E. Lessons Learned

Exit interviews were conducted by HDM in order to gain insights into the lessons that had been learned over the course of the Project. The following 'lessons learned' reflect the perspectives of the numerous HR professionals and First Nations and business community representatives interviewed, who participated in Project activities, and provided advice to HDM.

1. **Importance of Mechanisms for Sustained Relationship Building** - As has been found in other LMP projects involving First Nations leaders and communities, building relationships and trust is essential to working collaboratively. A critical element of this relationship building is meeting with First Nations leaders and members on their land. As a result of the COVID-19 health crisis this was not possible. HDM and its partners were, however, able to continue to work toward building strong relationships even though all meetings were conducted virtually. All parties learned how to effectively use the virtual meeting platform approach. To move forward, however, will require taking what has been learned and engaging First Nations communities using more direct face-to-face approaches. Having used a virtual approach throughout the project, HDM and its partners are well positioned to apply the technology in appropriate ways in the future.
2. **Importance of Personal Learning and Reflection** - A number of the Steering Committee members and participants used the experience gained from the regular HR meetings, the thought leader forum and job fairs to expand their own personal understanding of First Nations cultures and ways of working and knowing. This personal learning has been transferred by some of the HR professionals into actions that they have taken in their workplaces to make them more inclusive and welcoming. This is a critical step in helping to overcome some of the systemic barriers faced by First Nations members when they are seeking employment in the lower Vancouver Island region.
3. **Challenges Concerning Measuring Success** - Measuring success in projects such as the current LMP project is difficult. It can be said, however, that the project has been successful on a number of levels. It has built trust and relationships between HR professionals and First Nations leaders that have lead to attempts to hire First Nations members and modify some of the internal hiring processes that companies use so that they are more inclusive. As a result it is important to recognize that in the early days of working with First Nations a

number of different success measures should be considered beyond the ultimate metric of the number of workers hired by a company or sector.

4. **Importance of Building Bridges to Employment** - The job fair activities stressed the importance of having an individual or individuals of indigenous heritage who can act as a bridge between First Nations communities and local businesses and organizations that are seeking to hire workers. This 'trusted' individual is able to act as a coach/mentor and advocate for First Nations individuals who may not be prepared to put themselves forward in traditional job interview and hiring processes.

## F. Recommendations

This section of the Report provides recommendations based on discussions with LMP project partners, participants, and the project Steering Committee during and near the conclusion of the project. All of the recommendations in this Report are based on the findings gleaned from the 2020/21 LMP project and its activities in the Lower Vancouver Island region.

Implementation of the recommendations will help to sustain the relationships and trust that have been built through this project and will help address long-standing systemic employment issues and barriers in Lower Vancouver Island First Nations communities.

Based on the lessons learned and the findings associated with the activities of this Project, HDM as project lead recommends the following actions be undertaken to sustain and build on the momentum that has been created.

Lower Vancouver Island First Nations and Business Community Partners should:

1. **Engage in Collaborative Action Planning**

- 1.1. Establish a First Nations and business working group to develop an action plan that supports the application of lessons learned through this LMP project.

The working group should consider including actions to address the following recommendations:

2. **Co-creation of Employment Processes**

- 2.1. First Nations and businesses should work together to co-create employment processes. This will help employers to understand what applying for a job and providing personal information about skills looks like from the perspective of a First Nations person;
- 2.2. Develop processes that enable prospective First Nations workers to share their stories. The skills, abilities, and experiences of First Nations people are often embedded in these personal stories. Consider using a storyboard/visual approach may be one way to capture these stories.
- 2.3. Consider moving away from traditional job interview panels to approaches that enable interviewees to 'tell their story'. This may be one way to capture First Nations skills more effectively;

- 2.4. Gain a commitment from business partners to the development of more inclusive job descriptions that remove stereotypes and experience barriers; and
- 2.5. Describe jobs in 'layman' terms (rather than technical terms). This will make them more welcoming to a First Nations audience.

### **3. *Create Employment Bridges***

- 3.1. Establish a regional employment coaching role to support both businesses and First Nations workers;
- 3.2. Provide training sessions for First Nations job applicants which help them with resume prep and include mock interviews; and
- 3.3. Develop an online toolkit (i.e., a set of resources) to support businesses/organizations in the adaptation of their HR processes so that they are more inclusive.

### **4. *Work to Overcome Barriers to Employment***

- 4.1. Establish partnerships that address current barriers to employment in the areas of transportation and technological literacy.

### **5. *Establish a Work Experience Partnership Program***

- 5.1. Establish a work experience program for indigenous workers with program components based on the circumstances of each participating company (e.g., could involve unions in the process where appropriate; could also include a pre-work experience component and on-boarding stages again, where appropriate).

### **6. *Engage Indigenous Youth and Other First Nations Community Members***

- 6.1. Work with local secondary schools to engage First Nations students to promote a range of career options including careers that emphasize technology skills; and
- 6.2. Conduct virtual tours of job sites for potential employees as a way of helping these individuals understand company expectations and how the skills they have are linked to jobs that employers have to offer.

## G. Appendix

This appendix provides links to reports and communications activities referenced in this Report.

1. Job Fair Reports  
[October 28, 2020 Virtual Job Fair](#)  
[April 29 & May 19, 2021 Virtual Job Fair](#)
2. First Nations and Business Thought Leadership Forum  
[Thought Leadership Forum - February 24, 2021](#)
3. Communications: Blog and Podcast recordings are found at:  
[First Nations Blogs](#)  
For additional First Nations podcasts go to: [First Nations Podcasts](#)
4. Skills Inventory and Job Profiles  
[Skills Inventory - April 2021](#)  
[Job Profiles - April 2021](#)