

# **REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL RECRUITMENT STRATEGY**

## **Questions and Answers**

**Q. Why did CSC set such high benchmarks for hiring Aboriginal people if those numbers were above the Labour Market Availability?**

A. CSC committed to hiring Aboriginal people at a rate above the Labour Market Availability in order to enhance its efforts to have a workforce that reflects the offender population. Having a diversified workforce is a requirement for all government departments in providing services and interventions to Canadians. Given that Aboriginal offenders are over-represented in federal correctional facilities, employing and retaining Aboriginal people in the correctional field is imperative.

However, in order to standardize our objectives with those of the Public Service of Canada, benchmarks were modified in early 2003 to reflect the Labour Market Availability.

**Q. Why did CSC set the benchmark for Aboriginal people employed at healing lodges at 50%? Isn't that discriminating against non-Aboriginal people?**

A. Healing lodges are institutions that are run either by an Aboriginal community by way of a specific agreement or in close collaboration between CSC and an Aboriginal community or organization. CSC established a 50% benchmark for Aboriginal people employed at healing lodges based on an agreement between CSC and the Aboriginal community.

In order to be accepted at a healing lodge, offenders must demonstrate an interest in Aboriginal culture and be committed to the various healing approaches. Staff at healing lodges take a mentoring and positive role-modelling approach toward the offenders and participate in traditional cultural and spiritual ceremonies, such as fasting and the sweat lodge.

**Q. This report was completed in 2002. Why is CSC only releasing it now?**

A. Although the report was not officially published as such, the findings were considered and action was taken to address the issues raised by the review team.

**Q. Will any other reviews take place to determine the progress made by CSC to increase the employment and retention of Aboriginal staff?**

A. The Aboriginal Recruitment Strategy was integrated into CSC's Employment Equity Program in September 2003. It is no longer a standalone initiative. Any subsequent review that addresses CSC's workforce diversity will be undertaken as part of the Employment Equity Program.

**Q. Will the recommendations of the review be implemented?**

A. The review provided valuable information that will be considered as part of CSC's Employment Equity Program.

**Q. The review says that information from PeopleSoft was unreliable. Why is that?**

A. The information entered in PeopleSoft includes the number of employees who have self-identified. Since this is a voluntary exercise, the data entered may not reflect the accurate representation of Aboriginal people.

**Q. If the January 2002 CSC Employment Equity Survey demonstrated that managers only had a vague awareness of specific employment equity goals, what has been done to raise their awareness and ensure accountability?**

A. Since 2002, Employment Equity reports are prepared on a quarterly basis and presented to the Executive Committee. These reports are also distributed and discussed regularly at various management forums.

In addition, several courses offered at the Correctional Management Learning Centre contain an Employment Equity or Diversity component. For instance, the course "Staffing for Managers" presents managers with information on Employment Equity, the representation of EE members and various staffing strategies to address under-representation.

Accountability is also ensured through the Management Accountability Framework.

**Q. How much money did CSC receive for this strategy?**

A. CSC received \$218,000 in 2001-2002 from Treasury Board to kick start the initiative and hire one national and five regional Aboriginal Recruitment Officers.

**Q. CSC received funds from Treasury Board and yet didn't establish a National Aboriginal Career Management Team to implement the strategy. How were the funds spent?**

A. All funds received contributed to increasing the representation of Aboriginal people in CSC's workforce. Monies were used for a number of outreach activities targeting Aboriginal communities and organizations and covered the salaries of CSC staff involved in the recruitment of Aboriginal people.

**Q. Why did CSC develop a pre-recruitment training program for potential correctional officers that only applied to Aboriginal people? Isn't that discrimination against everyone else?**

A. The *Employment Equity Act* authorizes government departments to increase representation of under-represented groups in order to ensure a workforce that reflects the diversity of Canada. CSC implemented the pre-recruitment training program in an effort to eliminate systemic recruitment barriers that existed for Aboriginal candidates and enhance their ability to succeed at each phase of recruitment. They were only hired if they were deemed to fully meet the requirements for the position.

**Q. Is this pre-recruitment training program still offered to Aboriginal people?**

A. Yes, the training program is still offered in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We are also looking to establish a program in Alberta.

**Q. Why are these strategies so important? What ever happened to giving the job to the most qualified candidate regardless of race or ethnicity?**

A. The federal public service is committed to ensuring that its workforce reflects the diversity of Canada. Staffing practices are governed by the *Employment Equity Act*, the *Public Service Employment Act* (as adopted by Parliament) and the Government of Canada initiative called Embracing Change, which came into effect in June 2000 and deals with increasing representation of all EE groups.

The law and the Embracing Change initiative do not promote preferential treatment. The fundamental principle behind both is merit. Only candidates with the proper qualifications can be considered for a job. It is about eliminating systemic barriers, fostering a favourable corporate culture and assuming direct responsibility for the achievement of building a representative and inclusive federal public service.

It is imperative that the public service better reflect the rich diversity of Canada if it is to provide Canadians with services, programs and policies that meet and address their needs, concerns and interests.

**Q. What is the current rate of employment by Aboriginal people within CSC?**

A. In December 2004, representation was at 6.6%. For the past two years, CSC comes in 2<sup>nd</sup> overall in the Public Service for representation of Aboriginal peoples in its workforce (*N.B.* - The 1<sup>st</sup> is Indian and Northern Affairs Canada).

The representation rate of Aboriginal people in the CX group has grown from 6.0% in March 2001 to 9.3% in September 2004. In the Prairies Region, the representation rate for this occupational group has gone from 14.8% in March 2001 to 22.5% in September 2004.

Similar progress has been made in the WP occupational group, where representation has gone from 4.3% in March 2001 to 6.5% in September 2004.

**Q. The report states that some Aboriginal correctional officers have reported difficulty being accepted at a facility and that their colleagues said they were hired only because they were Aboriginal. What does CSC have in place to counter racial discrimination and harassment?**

A. CSC does not tolerate harassment or discrimination. It aims to provide both staff and offenders with an environment that is respectful.

All CSC staff must participate in an anti-harassment training workshop designed to promote an awareness of and sensitivity to human rights issues. This training also provides a better understanding of their role in the prevention, identification and resolution of harassment complaints.

In addition, all regions have an Employment Equity coordinator and there are now Diversity Committees in all regions. In the Prairie Region, they have an EE committee in each institution.

**Q. The report finds that full-time indeterminate jobs were promised and these promises were not kept. How can CSC not know how many positions it has available?**

A. Unfortunately, when additional recruitment efforts began, CSC could not anticipate hiring freezes that came into effect and the resulting cancellation of planned Correctional Training Programs.

As a result, recruitment teams now work more closely with Human Resources at the national and regional levels to better coordinate outreach activities with vacancies and staffing requirements.