



## Press Release

**Date: October 30th, 2009  
For Immediate Release**

### **Métis Nation British Columbia, ACCESS, and BC Housing are presented with the 2009 WOW Award for Training Excellence.**

**Toronto, Ontario** – On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 Métis Nation British Columbia, Aboriginal Community Career services Society (ACCESS) and BC Housing were honored at the Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) President's Dinner with a WOW Award for Training Excellence in recognition of the success of its Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures - BC Housing initiative. A six-week job readiness training program based on essential skills building which prepared clients for careers in the employer partners' organization.

CSTD, Canada's professional association who focus on training, learning and performance in the workplace, selected Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures to be one of the recipients of this exciting award based upon their criteria for innovation and creativity, skill building, quality and collaboration as well as continuous work on behalf of learners to prepare them for the work place.

Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures is a 30-day program designed to develop workplace essential skills. Available to any Aboriginal person entitled to work in Canada, the goal of the program is sustainable life-long professional and personal success for participants through, the development of the skills needed to thrive in a knowledge-based society and the resilience needed to adapt to life and workplace changes.

Employer partnerships cement classroom learning as participants have an opportunity to build essential skills in an authentic workplace environment through: job-related training; using established processes and documentation; and experiencing a workplace culture. While they are not obligated to hire a set number of participants, employer partners interview and provide feedback to each participant in the program as part of their learning process.

This successful partnership between the ESAF agencies and BC Housing – an employer that has had two successful employment intakes for site service positions (building managers, groundskeepers and janitors) in social housing developments across BC's Lower Mainland. BC Housing branded their internal program "BESST" (an acronym for Building Excellent Site Service Training).

For its Aboriginal client population, ESAF needed to find quality employers who would provide a safe and supportive workplace for participants. ESAF targeted employers with authentic experience for participants and foreseeable opportunities for long-term employment.



The Program consisted of;

- Targeted essential skills development based on individual/job appropriate skills
- Personal coaching support; self awareness training including Personality Dimensions; personal management (time, stress, change, balance);
- Communicating for Results
- Job Readiness Boot Camp including nutrition training and daily exercise regime
- Focus on employer-identified critical success factors on the job such as WHMIS training, learning acronyms, and practicing reporting skills through use of pocket notes
- Individual action plans to prepare for working on a team (from procuring safety boots to communications protocols in a unionized environment)
- A focus on results and quality assurance.

In the development of its “People Strategy”, BC Housing identified site service positions as “business critical”. Historically, BC Housing had filled positions from a short-term call list or janitorial companies but found it difficult to properly manage contract workers in an environment that demands high work quality standards and serves an increasingly vulnerable client base. Contract workers presented operational challenges on site, as staff members were unable to rely on the availability, skills inventory and personal suitability.

The program resulted in gainful employment for most of the program participants and provided BC Housing with a model to secure and grow talent for front line workers in a challenging work environment.

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