

HIGHLIGHTS OF INITIATIVES

Attract, develop and retain a workforce in the public service that reflects British Columbia:

- » Apply diversity filter in new hires, building on existing practice of looking for language and cultural sensitivity skills for both Protocol and Policy staff.

Embed the principles of diversity in the practices, policies and services of government:

- » Promote aboriginal cultures through the choices of official Protocol gifts presented by the Premier or her representatives on behalf of the Government of British Columbia to international visitors.
- » Continue to arrange for Aboriginal representation and diverse faith representatives at official functions of government to reflect the diversity of the province.
- » Support the participation of B.C. elected representative at the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie that profiles the contribution of Francophone immigration to the economic, social and cultural development of Canadian society, and its role in the country's economic growth.

Remove barriers in our interactions with citizens and within the public service:

- » Work to increase cultural sensitivity among ministers, senior officials and across government in their interaction with the Consular Corps and foreign officials by organizing, delivering and participating in cultural sensitivity sessions.
- » Raise the recognition of national days of other countries (especially those represented by consulates in Vancouver) by facilitating increased presence of government representatives.
- » Increase access to government resources in language other than English by partnering with ministries responsible for health, education and justice.

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

MANDATE

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) is the B.C. Government's lead for pursuing reconciliation with the Aboriginal peoples¹ of British Columbia.

A key component of reconciliation involves creating relationships that are mutually beneficial through collaboration and commitment. This includes working together to create a strong economy and a secure tomorrow so that all British Columbians, including Aboriginal peoples, are able to pursue their goals.

- » **Goal 1:** Immediate opportunities for improved Aboriginal participation in the economy and increased certainty for development.
- » **Goal 2:** Respectfully reconcile provincial interests with First Nations' Aboriginal and treaty rights.



EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT TO MULTICULTURALISM

Embracing diversity as part of the ministry's corporate culture is integral to its ability to meet citizens' needs and expectations. The ministry's current focus is on building awareness and accountability for all by focusing on communication, conversation and ongoing dialogue. The ministry is developing a toolkit with practical aids to build employee understanding and awareness; planning to showcase diversity and inclusiveness on our employee learning and development site; and launching an inclusion tool to evaluate policies, programs and services to ensure we meet the diverse needs of the citizens we serve.

MARR's vision and mission statements and values support the goals of reconciliation with Aboriginal people in British Columbia. Even the concepts of inclusion and diversity are captured in the meaning of the word "Aboriginal". From a provincial perspective, "Aboriginal people" living in B.C. refers to First Nations (status and non-status) who are connected to a B.C. land base or who come from other provinces in Canada. It also includes Métis people from B.C and other places in Canada, and Inuit whose communities are located in northern Canada and have moved to B.C. The 1982 Constitution Act's definition of Aboriginal Peoples includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. "First Nations" is the generally preferred term for Indian peoples of Canada.

MECHANISMS AND PROCESSES ESTABLISHED FOR INVOLVING EMPLOYEES AT ALL LEVELS TO PROMOTE MULTICULTURALISM

The ministry is currently updating its orientation for new employees to ensure they have the tools and resources available to work knowledgeably, respectfully and effectively with Aboriginal people, organizations and communities. The orientation will make readily available the key learning tools and resources for understanding cultural and historical facts and events and that are a necessary foundation for all ministry employees working in a multicultural environment.

The ministry encourages all hiring managers and employees to include the Aboriginal Relations Behavioural Competencies in their worker and to apply them to job descriptions and to conversations that support improving overall work performance.



Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister John Rustad paddled into False Creek, along with members of several B.C. First Nations and other dignitaries, as part of the All Nations Canoe Gathering. The Canoe Gathering marked the beginning of Reconciliation Week in B.C., and coincided with the sixth national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

EMBRACING MULTICULTURALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation is composed mostly of people of European descent, with a small number of Aboriginal people, people of colour and visible minorities. In the ministry, Aboriginal employees come from a wide range of backgrounds including having been adopted by non-Aboriginal parents and growing up off-reserve in urban areas.

Each person or cultural group is encouraged to be aware of the diversity of backgrounds that all employees share and show pride and interest in all cultures. MARR 101s are examples of learning opportunities where employees are encouraged to learn about diverse Aboriginal cultures and the importance of supporting cultural diversity. It is no surprise that employees from diverse cultural backgrounds also notice many commonalities.

In partnership with the Public Service Agency, MARR was a co-developer of the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program and has proudly hosted Aboriginal Youth Interns since program inception. MARR has provided job skills training and mentorship to help grow the capacity of Aboriginal youth. Each intern has brought his or her world views to the workplace and has demonstrated how the ministry's vision may better align with youth priorities and needs.

The First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), a First Nations-run Crown corporation, has been offering services and programs to support First Nations language, arts and culture revitalization in B.C. since 1990. In 2013/14, FPCC worked in partnership with the Royal B.C. Museum to create "Our Living Languages". A highly interactive exhibition, Our Living Languages (OLL) showcases the First Nations languages of B.C. and the people who are working hard to revitalize them. As part of his placement, one of the ministry's Aboriginal Youth Interns contributed to the development of the OLL.

New partnerships to support multiculturalism

MARR is particularly excited about Chief Chester Moore (Simoogit Hlayim Wil) of Gingolx (one of the three Nisga'a Village Governments) who received the Order of British Columbia.

Chief Chester Moore (Simoogit Hlayim Wil) of Gingolx (one of the three Nisga'a Village Governments) recently received the Order of British Columbia in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the province.

Through his dedication to the preservation of traditional Nisga'a arts in carving, cultural feasts, and dance groups, he is a true example of the positive difference one person can make in a community and is an inspiration to all British Columbians.

Through his many years of active participation in composing music, teaching cultural dance, and creating traditional art, he has supported with enthusiasm, the cultural survival of the Nisga'a. By advising and providing research for the development of the Gingolx website, he has continued to promote the sharing of Nisga'a culture through electronic and multimedia technology so that British Columbians can further appreciate the multicultural fabric we are all part of.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INITIATIVES

OFF RESERVE HOUSING

British Columbia is committed to the Transformative Change Accord, which includes a specific goal of closing the gap in affordable, safe housing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In May 2008, B.C. signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the First Nations Leadership Council and the Federal Government, pledging to work together to improve housing conditions on and off-reserve for B.C.'s First Nations people. A tripartite technical committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the MOU.

In support of the MOU, the Technical Committee undertook housing projects which were led by MARR. The projects focussed on utilizing existing provincial training and employment programs to augment new federally funded on-reserve housing units and renovations of existing units.

In June 2012, senior officials approved building on and expanding the community-based housing projects in the First Nation communities of Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw, Moricetown, Nuxalk and Tla-o-qui-aht.

In 2012/13, MARR along with the Moricetown Band and Office of the Wet'suwet'en collaboratively developed and co-hosted an off-reserve Aboriginal housing workshop.

Fifty-eight people attended from four Wet'suwet'en communities, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Wet'suwet'en members, housing-related community organizations, businesses / corporations, and government. Key outcomes included the first Wet'suwet'en Aboriginal Off-Reserve Housing Strategy for community members living off-reserve. MARR also developed a needs assessment in partnership with First Nations and a range of training initiatives in partnership with First Nation communities, building the capacity of band staff and members.

OFF RESERVE ACTION PLAN

In B.C., 78% of all Aboriginal people live off-reserve. The Oct. 3, 2011 Speech from the Throne acknowledged the importance of the off-reserve Aboriginal population in B.C. and noted that: "With increased movement of Aboriginal people into urban centres comes the opportunity to strengthen and align our efforts with urban Aboriginal communities. The government will work with Aboriginal partners, the federal government and local governments to develop an off-reserve Aboriginal action plan to achieve better education and job training, healthier family life, and strengthened cultures and traditions."

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation is tasked with coordinating the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP). To achieve this, MARR convened a Provincial Coordination Team (PCT) responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of ORAAP. The PCT includes representatives from the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Métis Nation B.C., Union of BC Municipalities, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, MARR, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

As noted in the October 2011 Throne Speech, B.C. is committed to developing an Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP) to improve socioeconomic outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people in B.C. To fulfill this commitment, to date MARR has:

- » Built a funding partnership with the federal government through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to support ORAAP initiatives.

- » Formed a Provincial Co-ordination Team involving representatives from Aboriginal organizations and all levels of governments to oversee the development and implementation of ORAAP.
- » Signed a Memorandum of Collaboration with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and a Protocol Agreement with the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (B.C.AAFC) which will guide the work of the parties to improve socio-economic outcomes for urban Aboriginal communities.
- » Implemented five ORAAP community-based pilot projects in Vancouver, Surrey, Prince George, Kamloops and Duncan to develop plans that reflect local interests and improve socioeconomic outcomes of urban Aboriginal people.
- » Implemented an Aboriginal social innovation competition to mobilize Aboriginal communities and organizations to generate innovative ideas that will have positive social impacts.

In March 2013, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations, in partnership with the B.C. Public Service, renewed their commitment to implement the tools and initiatives under the Building Capacity in Aboriginal Relations strategy (BCAR). The BCAR web page (the Aboriginal Relations Resource Centre (ARRC)) is the corporate site that offers B.C. public service employees across all ministries, relevant up-to-date information, events, tools and a discussion forum about government's work and relationships with Aboriginal people.

Since the establishment of ARRC, the web pages have become known by public service employees as the "go-to" place to access internal and external information on Aboriginal people and a meeting place for public employees working in Aboriginal relations.

Throughout 2013, the ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation took a lead in the multicultural "Truth and Reconciliation" initiative:

- » The Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Justice Murray Sinclair, came to the ministry to present at a learning session. He informed participants about the history of residential schools and the legacy left from a century long policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families to attend residential schools.
<http://www.trc.ca>
- » The ministry also arranged for Chief Robert Joseph and Karen Joseph from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to come to the ministry to present a learning session about the legacy of residential schools, and led a healing circle for staff.
- » In September 2013, MARR staff traveled to Vancouver to participate and volunteer during “Truth and Reconciliation Week”. Ministry staff helped to organize 5,000 high school-aged people to attend the “Education Day” and others assisted by participating in the canoe journey welcoming and with the Walk for Reconciliation.
- » During the Truth and Reconciliation week, the ARRC site featured a number of bloggers, video clips and news updates about this special event. Corinne Sheppard, negotiator, Negotiations and Regional Operations Division, with the ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, wrote a thoughtful blog about her experience at the Walk for Reconciliation entitled “Rain at the Truth and Reconciliation Walk”.

Rain at the Truth and Reconciliation Walk

An elder said that when it rains really, really hard, it means the spirits are letting go of all of their tears. Which must be why the Vancouver Truth and Reconciliation Walk seemed like such a cleansing experience to me.

I heard that 70,000 people were there, and I am not surprised. There was a sea of umbrellas, a mountain of Gore-Tex, interspersed with

cedar hats, button-heavy regalia, beading, fringe, blankets, banners, placards and rubber boots. Plastered to the pavement, were the wet, feathery remnants of the morning's eagle down ceremony, eventually walked over by everyone.

People waited and listened patiently in the wind, rain and drizzle while event organizers and First Nation leaders spoke eloquently. A lost child was directed to his mother. Keynote speaker Bernice King, daughter of Martin Luther King, gave a passionate speech about respect, reconciliation and living together in harmony. Dancers, drummers and a sunny yellow choir were part of the program, but every so often, drumming and singing burst spontaneously from different parts of the crowd, irrepressible and happy.

The walk began slowly, with people shuffling together, tightly packed beneath an arch decorated with cedar. Despite the serious intent, and the pouring rain, it seemed to me that spirits were light. The First Nation participants were so proud. One young man walked by himself with a big 'Namgis banner on two poles, smiling and laughing at its heavy awkwardness, but still managing to hold it up high. As we walked along the Georgia Street viaduct, we started to see people from the front of the pack walking back towards us on the Dunsmuir side, smiling and waving their flags.

The further we walked, the more smiling and laughing I saw. The rain did not let up. It might drizzle for a bit and umbrellas would lower, then more rain would fall - harder and sideways, propelled by gusts of wind. We passed by mask-wearers and more drummers. People were open and fresh, interacting with each other so naturally. As we walked back under the viaduct to the finish, we came across a graffiti drawing of a young Queen Elizabeth in braids and buckskin, and she looked great. That's my idea of reconciliation. What's your experience?



HIGHLIGHTS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INITIATIVES

The Community Development Branch works with First Nation communities across B.C. on community-driven capacity building projects/ initiatives. Youth-related challenges are often high on a community's list of priorities and in response to this shared priority, the branch offers:

- » To work directly with First Nations, at their invitation, to promote youth engagement and leadership development.
- » To work across government to enhance government capacity to work more effectively with Aboriginal youth, i.e. cross government youth engagement network.
- » To work with youth workers and service providers.

Aboriginal Youth Workers Forums

Skill building and networking events for service providers to youth in FN communities and Aboriginal organizations.

The participant pool is very diverse, bringing together all ages (youth workers may be anywhere from 17 to 80+ years of age) and members of Métis organizations, First Nations on-reserve and off-reserve/ urban people, and non-Aboriginal people working in the sector. As such, we have defined an Aboriginal youth worker as:

youth worker, n.: Pronunciation:

/ju:θ 'wɜ:rkər; 'wɜ:kə(r)/

A selfless person that gives 110% to their work every day. Youth workers are dedicated to empowering strength and fostering leadership in young people. They work tirelessly, sometimes without recognition, to create meaningful, respectful and trusting relationships with their youth. A youth worker strives to support youth to live successful, happy and healthy lives.

The first forum was hosted on Vancouver Island in November 2011. Since then, four more forums (three-day events) have been hosted in various regions across the province. To date, more than 200 youth workers and service providers have attended. Active networks exist via social media and help to keep regional groups of youth workers in contact with each other by sharing resources, offering mentorship and coaching, and aligning work.

Following the most recent forum in Prince Rupert in March of this year, a B.C. Aboriginal Youth Workers YouTube channel was established to connect youth workers and the public to video resources. Eight instructional vignettes were created to highlight the workshops and activities highlighted during the forum. To date, three videos have been released, with the other five being released over the next few months. Please visit the channel at: <http://goo.gl/7BeO5g>

You can view the video from the regional Aboriginal Youth Workers Forums at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRZdDFXWZM8



Youth workers from different nations coming together in circle during the Prince George Aboriginal Youth Workers Forum, 2013.

Dawn Lindsay-Burns, MARR Community Developer, shares a particularly touching experience at one of the regional Aboriginal Youth Workers Forums

He knelt down in the center of the sharing circle, sobbing and holding his head. Overcome with emotion and desperation, he used his opportunity for sharing to weep and beg the other youth workers in the circle for help. The story he shared was his own — a dark, but truthful depiction of a young Aboriginal boy moving through puberty and trying to navigate the world. Struggling to find his way and sort out his identity, he found himself feeling lost, slipping through the cracks that exist in our communities and contemplating his life on several occasions. This was too much for a young man to handle on his own. He felt alone. Sitting in his loneliness, he also fought feelings of neglect, discrimination and exclusion by his own community.

He shared a story of a failed suicide attempt in his late teenage years. Soon after, he became connected to a youth worker from a local organization.

A year of effort: closeness, mentorship and friendship from this youth worker resulted in the young man's personal transformation. Having someone who was willing to stand beside him, walk with him, teach him, and help him find his way, helped to propel him into seeing himself differently; he would now reflect on his potential – he now saw a future. Inspired by the generosity he received, he dedicated his future to gaining the skills that would support him to help other young men who were suffering in the same ways that he had. He is now a well-regarded youth worker and advocate to youth, sitting among peers in the sharing circle.

He now wiped the tears from his eyes and rose. Standing firmly on two feet and speaking directly to each member of the sharing circle. He confidentially committed himself to working tirelessly alongside each member to make life better for the youth that they each serve. He knew firsthand that there were too many young people facing similar challenges and walking their path alone. He challenged the circle to meet him. The members of the circle, all local youth workers, rose. Standing with him, each member approached him and offered a nurturing embrace, accepting his challenge and extending a commitment to work collectively.



Graphic recording by Corrina Keeling – highlights the work taken place at the Prince Rupert Aboriginal Youth Workers Forum, 2014.