2014

Métis Training to Employment

Client Labour Market Self-Sufficiency Study

This document provides a detailed description of the independent study conducted to assess the extent to which the Métis Training to Employment program is meeting the goal of creating client labour market self-sufficiency. The document reports on the research findings and includes recommendations for improving and/or maintaining program outcomes

Submitted to
The Rupertsland Institute (RLI) and the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research (RCMR)

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Acknowledgements

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1.0 Introduction

The Rupertsland Institute (RLI), established in 2010, was assigned a triple mandate in Métis research, education, and training. As part of its training mandate, the RLI assumed responsibility for the delivery of the Métis Training to Employment (MTE) program. Prior to the existence of the RLI, the MTE program was previously known as the Métis Labour Market Development program and was delivered by the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA). Program operations from the MNA to RLI took place in 2010. The Rupertsland Institute signed the current federal funding agreement on behalf of Metis people and as an affiliate of the MNA.

The Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research (RCMR) was established in 2011 through a partnership between the Métis Nation of Alberta and the University of Alberta. The purpose of the RCMR is to serve as an academic research program specifically designed for Métis concerns.

The MTE program offers an array of employment services, training opportunities and supports to help Métis clients overcome barriers to meaningful employment. The MTE program is federally funded through the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS).

The MTE program goals (as identified in the organizational business plan for 2010-2015) are as follows:

1. **Operational and Administrative Excellence:** To ensure field operations and administrative practices are consistent with professional quality, integrity and results-based accountability.

2. **Client Self-sufficiency:** To ensure clients receive effective counselling, quality employment assessments, relevant information and training supports that lead to sound decision-making, and a high probability for satisfactory employment outcomes in the future labour market.

3. **Strategic Partnerships:** To develop and leverage program operations and strategic ventures with public and private-sector partnerships leading to positive client transitions in the labour market.

4. **Innovation and Strategic Leadership:** To create, market and develop Métis Training to Employment initiatives that demonstrate a fresh, bold approach to Aboriginal programming.

5. **Enhanced Program Performance:** To develop the capacity to measure, evaluate and change program delivery, and to determine community and stakeholder satisfaction with Métis Training to Employment programs and services.

In early 2014, the Rupertsland Institute commissioned an academic research study to examine the extent to which the Métis Training to Employment program is meeting the mandated goal of achieving client self-sufficiency following a labour market intervention. The study was commissioned through the Rupertsland Centre for Metis Research and the University of Alberta.

The timelines for this research project were very short in duration. The majority of research activity took place during March and April 2014. Additional time for analysis and report preparation was allocated in May and June 2014.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

The current research study was designed to help answer the following questions:

Exploratory	**1.** What is labour market self-sufficiency? **2.** How can labour market self-sufficiency be measured?
Short Term Outcomes	**3.** To what extent did clients find employment (within 24 weeks) after completing a labour market intervention?
Long Term Outcomes	**4.** To what extent did the Métis Training to Employment program help clients to achieve long-term labour market self-sufficiency?[1] To what extent did the program help clients along their journey of career and personal development?

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of this research was to independently assess the extent to which the MTE program was meeting the identified program goal related to creating **client labour market self-sufficiency**, and to provide recommendations for improving and/or maintaining program outcomes.

2.3 Research Methods

Our research methods included the following:

1. **Literature review** regarding labour market self-sufficiency within a Métis context;
2. **Secondary review of existing client database information** and short-term program employment outcomes (24 weeks post-intervention); and
3. **Primary data collection** through in-person interviews with MTE clients and staff regarding the definition of self-sufficiency, the perceived impact of the program and recommendations for improvement.

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[1] *Note: The initial question "To what extent did the MTE program help clients to achieve labour market self-sufficiency?" was based on the assumption that self-sufficiency is an outcome (as opposed to an ongoing process) and also something that can be easily measured. We found early in the research process, however, that the concept of self-sufficiency is complex, and the definition of self-sufficiency may vary between individuals. Furthermore, the process of becoming self-sufficient may be just as important as the outcome. Some questions also emerged regarding the elusiveness of self-sufficiency, given the interconnectedness between individuals, families, and society. This complexity emerged as we started to review the literature and conduct interviews, and the question evolved into one about how the program had helped clients along their career and personal development.

2.3.1 Literature Review

Métis labour market self-sufficiency is a very specific and narrowly defined topic. As such, an initial literature search using this term returned only grey literature specific to the MTE program. The approach was subsequently expanded to explore the following interconnected components related to Métis labour market self-sufficiency: 1) perspectives on Aboriginal and Métis employment; 2) self-sufficiency in the context of labour market attachment; and 3) lessons learned from job training programs in other contexts. The review concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for the evaluation of education and training programs aimed at increasing self-sufficiency.

The search for peer-reviewed literature began with a search of databases targeting interdisciplinary literature (Academic Search Complete and JSTOR) and business literature (CBCA Complete and Human Resources Abstracts). A search was also conducted on the Canadian Periodicals Index (CPI.Q). Search terms included the following (searched both as separate terms and in combination): “labour market self-sufficiency”, “economic self-sufficiency”, “adult job training”, “employment success”, “jobs”, “training”, “Métis”, “Indigenous”, “First Nations” and “Aboriginal”. Typically a broad search term (e.g., economic self-sufficiency) would return a large number of hits (>500) and would be refined by adding other search terms (e.g., adult job training + Aboriginal). This approach produced approximately 20 articles relevant to aspects of Métis labour market self-sufficiency. Other relevant articles were culled from the bibliographies of articles found during the database search process.

See Appendix 1 for the complete literature review findings.

2.3.2 Secondary Review of Client Database Information

We conducted a secondary review of data for all clients (N=968) who had received an intervention in the fiscal year April 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009. At this time, the program was operated by the Métis Nation of Alberta and was known as the Labour Market Development Program. In 2010, program operations were transferred to the newly developed entity, Rupertsland Institute, and the program was renamed the Métis Training to Employment program; however the underlying goals of the program remain guided by the contractual obligations of the ASETS funding agreement (currently in place until March 2015). The RLI signed the current ASETS agreement on behalf of Métis people and as an affiliate of the MNA.

For the purpose of the current study, the database was reviewed for two reasons:

1. To describe the range and type of clients served (including gender, age, and geographic location), intervention types, and short-term employment outcomes.

2. To generate a sample of clients to be interviewed, including a mix of clients from all four geographic regions (South, Central, Northwest, and Northeast).

During the initial planning phase for the current project, the possibility of conducting more in-depth analysis of retrospective client data was considered. However, given that the existing client data did not include long-term outcomes (post 24 weeks), the decision was made to focus time and resources on conducting primary data collection with clients over a longer time period (five or more years post-intervention).

2.3.3 Primary Data Collection

Our research methodology was based on a grounded theory approach which begins with the assumption that "interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study." [2]

We have listened to a sample group of the clients themselves, five years after participating in one or more labour market interventions delivered by the Métis Training to Employment program (formerly the Métis Nation of Alberta, Labour Market Development Program). We have also listened to MTE staff – those individuals responsible for designing and delivering the program regarding what it means to be self-sufficient.

2.4 Client Interview Sampling Strategy and Recruitment Methods

2.4.1 Client Sampling Strategy

To generate a sample of clients to be interviewed, the total population of 968 clients were categorized according to intervention type, geographic location, gender, age, and program duration. The total population was further reduced to 269 clients from which to recruit a small, purposefully selected sample of interview participants based on the following inclusion criteria:

- **Primary geographic location** (as reported in the client database) in one of the following five locations: Edmonton, Calgary, High Prairie, Grande Prairie, or Lac La Biche. This criteria was based on practical reasons for conducting in-person interviews with as many previous clients as possible within available travel budget and time allocation.

- **Intervention type** was limited to "individual training sponsorship" (e.g., funding for post-secondary education, typically more than 6 months in duration) or "project based training" (e.g., Class 1 driver training, trades, or other projects that included the attainment of required safety tickets for work in the oil field or other industries, typically, but not always, less than 6 months in duration. These two intervention types accounted for the majority of intervention types (74%) accessed by clients during 2008/09. This criteria was further based on the assumption that clients who had minimal contact with the program (such as one-day resume support) would be very difficult to engage five years later. This is not to suggest that such clients do not have valuable input regarding how the program may or may not have helped them; however, for the purpose of the current study it was decided to explore the two most commonly accessed intervention types.

- **Employment outcome at 24 weeks** was recorded as "employed", "self-employed", or "returned to school", given that over 90% of clients had reported such an outcome at the short-term follow-up phase. To include clients that were not employed would have resulted in insufficient numbers of such clients to give an accurate portrayal of their experiences (i.e., 10% of our targeted 34 interviews would have resulted in only three individuals that were unemployed five years ago). This is certainly a gap in the current

[2] Source: Strauss and Corbin, Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview (in Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin & Lincoln), p. 273–285.

research, and warrants further exploration in future study. The inclusion rationale was further based on the decision to assess the extent to which short-term outcomes were sustained over the long-term.

Of these 269 clients, we had initially hoped to interview up to **34 clients** representing a proportionate mix of categories including gender, age, geographic location, intervention type and duration. The decision to interview such a small number of clients was based on the rationale that in-depth, qualitative information would be more useful than a larger scale quantitative study at this preliminary phase of the research. Furthermore, given that the initial timeframe allotted to this study was quite short, it was reasoned that the results of the current study (literature review, secondary review of data, and qualitative interviews with a small sample of previous clients) would help to more clearly articulate the direction of future research and ultimately help to develop a tool to measure long-term client self-sufficiency. We wished to gain insight from a broad cross-section of former clients through individual, in-person interviews wherever possible. A broader scale quantitative research study, conducted over a longer time period, would certainly have merit, although was beyond the scope of the current project.

See Appendix 2 for an illustration of the total population and number of interview participants within each region.

2.4.2 Client Recruitment Methods

Program staff from each of the four regions were engaged to help with the client recruitment strategy. Staff were provided with a spreadsheet containing a list of client identification numbers from which to recruit interview participants. The client identification numbers were categorized by region, duration of intervention, gender and age. Program staff were asked to contact participants within each category until the designated number of clients had agreed to participate in the interviews. The spreadsheet included a link to the KETO client database so that staff members could look up each client’s respective name and telephone number.

The recruitment strategy was labour intensive and required substantial commitment from the regional staff members engaged to make the initial phone calls.

The rationale for using this recruitment strategy was to protect clients’ right to confidentiality and privacy, and the right to choose whether or not to participate in the research. We believed that an external telephone survey approach would not yield reliable or useful data, as clients would be unlikely to provide accurate reflections of their career and personal development to a stranger over the telephone. By engaging regional staff to help with recruitment, clients had the opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision about their participation.

During the initial phone call, program staff explained the purpose of the research and asked clients for their consent to share their name and contact information with the research team. (See Appendix 3 for the Client Recruitment Script, Appendix 4 for the Client Consent Form, and Appendix 5 for the Client Interview Guide.)

Staff continued to make phone calls until a sufficient number of clients consented to participate within the available timeframe. Of those clients who provided consent (n=33), names and contact information were forwarded to the research team for the purpose of scheduling and conducting the interviews. Clients were offered a $25 gift card as an honorarium for agreeing to participate in the interviews.

Of the 33 clients who provided initial consent to participate in the interviews, 11 were subsequently unavailable during the data collection period (e.g., unable to contact/did not return messages after three attempts, changed mind about participating, or did not show up for scheduled appointment). This raises significant implications about the challenges of recruiting clients for long-term follow-up, a challenge echoed in the research literature regarding other training and employment programs, particularly among marginalized populations and multi-barriered clients. A key limitation of our findings, as a result, is that we were most successful in engaging clients who had some degree of stability in their lives (e.g., contact information was still valid after five years), had obtained short-term success (employed or returned to school after a labour market intervention), and were able and willing to schedule and follow-through with a qualitative interview regarding their experiences with the program. Notwithstanding these limitations, there is also strength and value in the experiences among those participants who were willing to share their stories.

In total, 22 interviews were completed with clients across all four geographic regions (see Table 1). At the beginning of one interview, it was determined that one client did not meet the study inclusion criteria (i.e., the client had only accessed resume support and did not receive a funded intervention). To honour the client's commitment to participate in the interview, the interview was completed and the honorarium provided; however, the data was subsequently removed from the analysis. The qualitative analysis of findings presented in this report is based on the feedback from **21 clients.**

Wherever possible, interviews were completed in-person. Some clients, however, expressed a preference for a telephone interview and these requests were accommodated. Interview participants represented a mix of gender (11 males, 10 females) and intervention types (11 long-term and 10 short-term interventions). Long-term interventions were six months or more in duration; short-term interventions were less than six months in duration. The majority of participants were in the **20 to 34 year age category** (14 participants between 20-34 years; 7 participants 35 years and over).

Table 1. Client Interviews by Region

Client Interviews	In-person interviews	Telephone interviews	Total number of participants
South (Calgary & Area)	1	2	3
Central (Edmonton & Area)	6	3	9
Northwest (Grande Prairie & Area)	3	2	5
Northeast (Lac La Biche & Area)	3	2	5
Total	**13**	**9**	**22**

2.5 Staff Focus Group Sampling and Recruitment Methods

Staff from seven regional offices (Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lac La Biche, Bonnyville, High Prairie, and Grande Prairie) were invited to participate in focus group discussions and/or individual interviews regarding the impact of the Métis Training to Employment program.

Staff were asked to reflect on the meaning of self-sufficiency and the extent to which the program resulted in self-sufficiency for their clients, as well as recommended improvements to support program delivery and associated outcomes. (See Appendices 6 and 7 for the staff consent form and guiding interview questions.)

In total, 21 staff representatives participated in one of the following data collection methods: focus group, individual interview, and individual e-mail response (see Table 2).

Participating staff members reported the following job titles: Employment Counsellor (10), Client Resource Assistant (4), Management (4), Client Support Advisor (1), Employment Services Advisor (1) and Clerical/Administrative (1). Duration of employment with the MTE program (including, if applicable, the Labour Market Development Program) ranged from two months to 17 years. The majority of staff had been employed with the organization between 2 to 5 years. Staff retention was highest in one region, where most staff had been employed with the organization between 5 to 13 years.

Table 2. Staff Participation by Region

Staff Focus Groups and/or Interviews	Total number of participants	Number of sessions
South (Calgary & Area)	7	2
Central (Edmonton & Area)	7	2
Northwest (Grande Prairie & Area)	2	2
Northeast (Lac La Biche & Area)	5	1
Total	**21**	**7**

2.6 Data Analysis

2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were generated from existing quantitative data regarding client employment outcomes 24 weeks following a labour market intervention. The results are categorized by gender, age category, intervention type and short-term employment outcome. The database does not contain outcomes later than 24 weeks and thus it is not possible to explore long-term self-sufficiency using the existing data.

2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Interviews and focus groups conducted with clients and staff members were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. For audio that was difficult or impractical to fully transcribe (e.g., interviews that were conducted in public locations), the researchers listened to the tapes, prepared abbreviated transcripts, and summarized key themes. Each transcript was reviewed by two members of the research team, and all responses were sorted into emergent categories and themes. Given the short timeframe available for the research study, it was not possible to conduct a comprehensive grounded theory analysis; however, the approach to data analysis was based on key principles of grounded theory methodology. This involved listening to the voices and perspectives of the clients themselves, comparing and contrasting feedback and other sources of information (including the literature review findings), and systematically coding and categorizing responses. We sought to verify interpretations during each interview by verbally summarizing what we had heard, and asking for clarification when necessary.

2.7 Ethics Review

This study was approved by the University of Alberta ethics board for research involving human subjects.

3.0 Exploratory Findings

3.1 Understanding of Labour Market Self-Sufficiency

The exploratory component of this research began with two key questions: what does the concept of labour market self-sufficiency mean to clients and staff? How has it been defined in the research literature? The answers to these questions were complex. Sample quotes from participants are included throughout this section of the report

Some clients and staff members expressed uncertainty regarding the question when asked to define what labour market self-sufficiency meant to them. Some participants asked the interviewer to clarify what was meant by self-sufficiency. Participants[3] were assured that there were no right or wrong answers; we weren't looking for one definition but rather to develop a conceptual understanding of the concept of self-sufficiency within the context of labour markets.

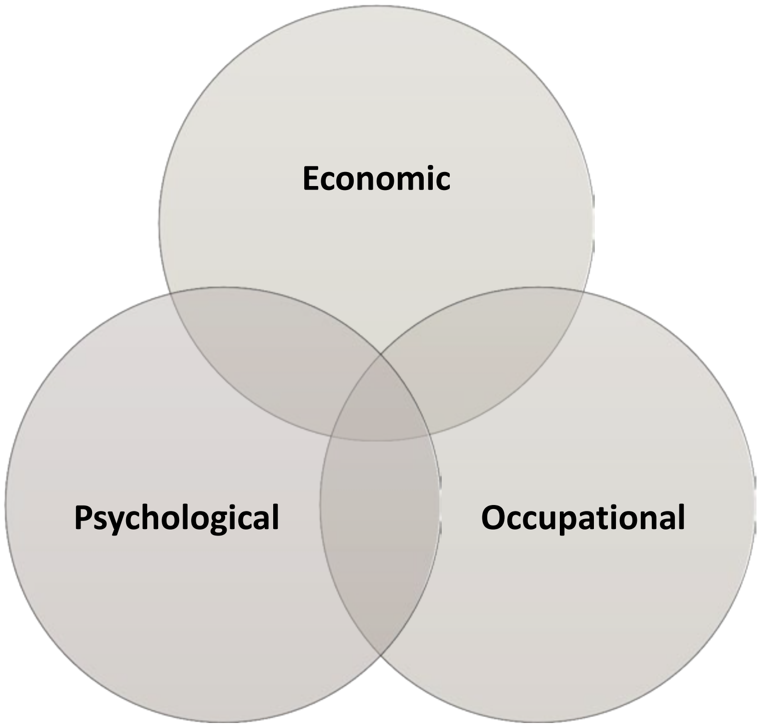
Upon initial reflection, the definition of self-sufficiency within the labour market context was considered fairly straightforward. For example, as one client commented, "self-sufficiency means you're self-sufficient". However, throughout the interview process, a broad range of responses and examples were provided. We learned that self-sufficiency means different things to different people. For some participants, being self-sufficient meant earning enough income to cover basic living expenses without relying on government or other community supports. Others noted that self-sufficiency meant being able to change jobs if necessary and to have the skills, education, and confidence to make this change independently. Other participants emphasized the importance of quality of life and work-life balance. Staff members further cautioned that there is no single definition of self-sufficiency. The factors that make one client feel self-sufficient (e.g., earning a good income) might not meet the needs of all clients. Even the definition of what was considered a "good income" was elusive.

> *"Self-sufficiency's a hard thing to determine. There's so many variables." (Staff)*
>
> *"It varies by person, and your own monthly expenses, and if you have children, if you have huge mortgages." (Staff)*
>
> *"I can say that twelve dollars, unless you're living at home with your parents, is not self-sufficient. Especially when you have sixteen year olds who can make that at the grocery store." (Staff)*

Overall, participants described **economic** and **occupational** aspects of self-sufficiency (income, stable employment), as well as various **psychological** aspects (self-determination, choice, reciprocity, quality of life). Self-sufficiency was often viewed as **an interrelated combination** of more than one aspect, with economic, occupational, and psychological implications. See Figure 1 for an illustrative example of the interrelated aspects of labour market self-sufficiency.

[3] Note: The term "participants" refers collectively to clients and staff members who participated in the research interviews and/or focus groups. In cases where feedback differed by group, it is specified in the text. To protect the privacy of individual clients and staff members, all data has been reported anonymously.

Figure 1. Interrelated Aspects of Labour Market Self-Sufficiency



Economic aspects of self-sufficiency noted by clients included the ability to generate enough income to pay bills, save money, and avoid debt without the help or support of government programs such as social assistance.

> *"Not having to live paycheque to paycheque." (Staff)*
>
> *"Not just only making ends meet, but being able to provide for a future…I don't think everybody has to have enough money to have the fastest car and the biggest house. Some of our clients do though, especially the ones we train in the trades." (Staff)*
>
> *"To me as an individual it means that I am able to fend for myself, I guess, that I'm not requiring resources from the community or government… (Although) I do receive a child tax credit, so… I like to think that I am self-sufficient, although I do receive the child tax credit, like most parents with children… I'm not accessing other resources. To me it means that I'm not accessing social assistance. I have a full-time job." (Client)*
>
> *"Self-sufficiency means that…I have a job that pays me well enough that I don't have to rely on any government programs. That to me is the crux of self-sufficiency. It means taking care of yourself and your family and earn enough money to do that." (Client)*

Occupational aspects of self-sufficiency included the ability to find full-time, stable, meaningful employment. More than just being employed, self-sufficiency meant the ability to change jobs if necessary, and to secure opportunities for future career growth and development. Staff members also commented on independence from program support (i.e., the ability of clients to make career changes without returning for additional assistance).

> *"(Self-sufficiency means)…you are on a path where you can either continue what you are doing for a long period of time or branch out into say another area of your job." (Client)*
>
> *"Not needing to come back to us for training." (Staff)*
>
> *"My definition of client self-sufficiency is they don't need us anymore. They're not coming back to our doors. Well they might come to say hi, they always do. But they're able to do their own resume, they're able to find their own employment. If they want to change careers, they're able to do that. Basically, self-sufficiency is they don't need our services anymore." (Staff)*

Psychological aspects of self-sufficiency included self-determination, independence, choice, reciprocity, and quality of life.

> *"I think part of it is having a job that you enjoy but more than that it's having a balance in your life between your job and your recreational and family life…I think too much in this day and age people live to work, when we should work to live. Your job should be important and you should enjoy it but it isn't all of who you are. The most important part of who you are is your family. What you enjoy doing." (Client)*
>
> *"Most important for me is my family. Pretty much. It's not the money. The money is always going to be there. Family is not always going to be there. I might not always be there. My kids might not always be there and they are going to get older and they are going to move on and I am barely going to see them. Yes don't get me wrong I like to make money so that I can buy them things. Have their food and everything, but coaching them and watching them succeed and stuff like that, that's something that money can't buy. The way I look at it." (Client)*
>
> *"Being a contributing member of society." (Client)*
>
> *"Being independent and not having to rely on others to help support me…I want to be able to take of myself…When I'm school…my parents are willing to help me, and I still live at home and that sort of thing. But once I'm done school, I want to be able to support myself, and just having independence that I can take care of my own life, and not have to rely on someone else to do that for me." (Client)*

Staff members also noted the tension between training based on personal interest versus training based on future labour market prospects and high demand industries.

> *"It's kind of hard to get a 'stat' out of that, but at the same time, the people who did come in and want to take that program seem pretty motivated to finish school (and) find employment…they actually love what they're doing, rather than…go into (something else) 'cause you were saying it's of high demand and I'm gonna get $50 an hour when I'm done.' And yeah, they might finish school and get a job but…are they self-sufficient in other ways, you know...are they happy in their job? (Will they) continue working in that field for an extended amount of time or …burn out after a year?" (Staff)*

“If you can’t cover your basic needs, you can have all the job satisfaction you want, but it doesn’t help you out. There needs to be a balance between job satisfaction and income.” (Staff)

Key findings from the research literature were consistent with what we heard during the client and staff interviews. Of particular note is the distinction between two competing paradigms that often co-exist within the context of providing training to employment programs: **economic and psychological self-sufficiency**. (In this context, occupational self-sufficiency overlaps with both economic and psychological components.) The economic approach assumes that self-sufficiency means “economic independence and financial achievement for individuals” (Hong, P., 2013, p. 357). The concept of psychological self-sufficiency (comprised of features such as self-worth, perceived capabilities, self-motivation, and goal orientation) is considered a critical precursor to successful economic self-sufficiency (Hong, 2013). Whereas economic self-sufficiency may be a desired long-term outcome, the relationship to psychological self-sufficiency must not be overlooked, particularly for clients with multiple barriers. Psychological self-sufficiency may be an important pre-cursor to economic self-sufficiency, rather than the two being understood as different options.

3.2 Approach to Measuring Self Sufficiency

The approach to measuring self-sufficiency depends on the paradigm within which self-sufficiency is predominantly understood (i.e., economic or psychological). Economic measures of self-sufficiency may include workforce participation and employment rates (number of clients currently in the paid workforce, number currently employed versus unemployed), employment income, and other factors related to employment (full-time versus part-time, availability of benefits, job security, etc.). Psychological measures of self-sufficiency may include personality factor questionnaires (e.g., Tango and Kolodinsky, 2004) and other measures of human capital development and participant empowerment (Woodward, 2014; Hong, 2013). In the literature review it was noted that the dominant program approach has been to use economic measures of success, and that psychological measures of self-sufficiency are more nuanced and often difficult to measure.

Our review of the research literature revealed the following challenges in measuring outcomes related to client self-sufficiency: 1) lack of clarity in program intent; 2) disconnect between service delivery, external variables and mandated outcomes; 3) challenges of long-term follow-up with marginalized populations; and 4) critical analyses of the overall concept of labour market self-sufficiency, particularly as it relates to Indigenous populations.

Lack of clarity in program intent was identified in the literature review as a key challenge in measuring outcomes for similar training programs. For example, is a program designed to result in immediate work outcomes or to more holistically develop human capital, education and skills that may not result in immediate employment? If a job training program is provided within an economic self-sufficiency framework (possibly using a “work-first” approach), the number of clients finding jobs within a specific time period might be considered a good measure of program success. However, if a program is delivered within a psychological framework (intended to develop human capital before employment), measures might assess how the process of change in individuals contributes to program completion and job retention outcomes (Hong, 2013; Weigensberg, 2012).

Disconnect between service delivery, external variables and mandated outcomes: One of the underlying reasons for measuring outcomes is to demonstrate accountability to funding agencies. However, a significant challenge is posed by different stakeholders valuing different benchmarks of program success. For program funders, common benchmarks of success include program participants getting jobs; reduction in welfare payments to program participants; increasing participant income from earnings (Loomis et al., 2003) and similar measures demonstrating the effectiveness of programs. While this may be a typical evaluation approach, it discounts the fact that many of the outcomes lay well outside of direct program control, including participant characteristics, external supports such as childcare and housing that enable participation in the labour force, the state of the labour market, and whether demand for labour exceeds existing supply. The Métis Training to Employment program is designed to help address a range of such barriers to long-term, sustainable employment, although the program is mandated to report employment outcomes within 24 weeks. The program strives to support clients to become self-sufficient in four key employability dimensions (including job search skills, job maintenance, career decision making, and skills enhancement), and includes support and/or referrals to other agencies to address barriers such as housing and childcare.

There is tension between mandated program outcomes that focus on economic self-sufficiency, and program delivery that encompasses a broader range of supports. For example, "it becomes problematic when services are rendered based upon (the organization's) mission to address psychological conceptualizations of self-sufficiency but program performance is evaluated based on economic self-sufficiency outcomes" (Hong, 2013, pp. 358-359). This results in a situation in which local agencies are "…doomed if they follow their mission to empower the most vulnerable and disconnected workers to become motivated and work ready without an immediate work outcome. They also are doomed if they allow themselves to become employer dependent and celebrate their short-term success by placing people in employment only to find a large turnover problem among them." (Hong 2013, p. 357)

Several authors questioned whether self-sufficiency was even a realistic goal for many program participants (e.g., Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Woodward, 2014) and note that for many participants moving from unemployment to employment does not equate with moving out of poverty. For example, one study of 17 participants in an Alberta welfare-to-work program found that at the end of 1 year, only 9 of the participants had employment and of those, only 4 had secured full-time employment. Furthermore, the majority of participants did not surpass the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). The authors note these employment rates mirror data from the Alberta government regarding the provincial Skills to Work program, and also note that after the income subsidy ended, 80% of participants were living below the LICOs (Breitkreuz & Williamson, 2012).

Challenge related to long-term follow-up with marginalized populations: Due to the often marginalized nature of training program participants, many studies do not include data on those who "opted-out" or otherwise failed to complete training (Woodward, 2014).

Critical analysis of the overall concept of labour market self-sufficiency: The literature review included academic publications from researchers who questioned the very premise of self-sufficiency as an outcome and offered critical analyses of Aboriginal labour market programs. For example, Taylor and Friedel (2011) describe the relational shifts over time between the federal government and First Nations and Métis people "…from fur trade colonialism, to welfare colonialism, to neoliberal partnerships" (p. 815) and maintain that while employment focused partnerships "purport to move First Nation and Métis communities away from welfare dependency and toward self-sufficiency through greater participation in paid employment" the underlying tone of this project is assimilationist in nature.

Similarly, an earlier study focused on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the US (Pickering, 2000) presents a compelling argument that formal training and employment programs are fundamentally assimilationist in nature. Pickering argues that, while "work" in a capitalist paradigm is equated with labour force attachment, there are other ways to understand work in the context of community and social relations. Livermore and Neustrom (2003) note that discourse around welfare reform focuses primarily on a client's responsibility to work, "while the specific responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the state in the welfare-to-work era eludes most inquiry" (p. 88).

Pickering (2000) challenges two key tenets of the self-sufficiency discourse: first, that jobs are available in the region and that welfare dependency is a result of underdeveloped human capital and second, that unemployment can be equated to a lack of economic activity.

Pickering reframes the problem from one of a failure of individuals to secure jobs in the formal wage labour economy to that of a failure to develop an economy that provides an adequate number of jobs for residents. She describes the "dynamic mix of subsistence production, home-based enterprise, and socially based exchanges of goods and services" (p. 149) that co-exist with welfare and paid work in the community. Welfare-to-work policies, with their emphasis on individual earners and their responsibility to participate in the market economy "appears to be the latest in a line of recurring policies promoting cultural assimilation as the hidden solution to poverty" (p. 149).

In their 2010 study of job seeking behaviours of First Nations participants in a substance abuse treatment program, Foley et al. found that "…for many individuals living on a reservation, the need to maintain support networks such as family, home and community were greater than the need to secure employment" (p. 182). This statement speaks to the challenges in providing training to employment for some Aboriginal populations, and the conflicts inherent in fostering a market economy approach to 'self-sufficiency'.

Research findings from a case study of an Alberta welfare-to-work program highlight this challenge. Breitkreuz & Williamson (2012) argue that self-sufficiency dichotomizes dependence and independence and suggest instead "…reorienting policy toward interdependence, rather than the labour market attachment of welfare recipients" (p. 683).

The Rupertsland Institute is well aware of the assimilationist argument and has initiated several initiatives to help address the needs of the Métis community within the restrictions of the federal funding agreement. Examples of changes initiated by the RLI have included, for example, increased intervention length (extended from 52 weeks to two years per client); inclusion of final year of post-secondary programs (previously an ineligible intervention type); and the inclusion of an endowment investment in the Métis agreement template (which created funding opportunities for the first three years of a post-secondary program).

3.3 Selecting an Appropriate Measure of Self-Sufficiency

The exploratory findings illustrate the complexities inherent in measuring labour market self-sufficiency.

There is no simple answer. There is no single tool that can be used to adequately capture the economic, occupational, and psychological aspects of labour market self-sufficiency. A comprehensive assessment would need to include a compilation of both process and outcome-related measurement tools, including a range of questions related to the interconnected aspects of self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider variables such as the state of the economy, availability of jobs in the area, family interconnectedness, cultural values, non-wage earning activities, and the historical and ongoing relationship between the federal government and Indigenous people. This issue is further addressed in the summary and recommendations section of this report, in which a recommended set of key questions for follow-up with a larger sample of clients is proposed.

4.0 Short-term outcomes

4.1 Employment outcome at 24 weeks post-intervention

With respect to short-term outcomes, the following question was posed: To what extent did clients find employment within 24 weeks after completing a labour market intervention? To answer this question, we accessed secondary program data regarding short-term employment outcomes. Data are available regarding a broad range of client demographic information, intervention information (e.g., type, duration), and short-term employment outcomes measured within 24 weeks following an intervention.

For the purpose of the current study, basic demographic characteristics (gender, region, age) and employment outcomes were extracted from the database and imported into a spreadsheet for analysis. We reviewed employment outcome data for 968 clients with an intervention between April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009.

These clients received services across all four geographic locations (see Table 3). The majority of clients ranged in age between 20-39 years, consistent with other demographic characterizations of the relatively young Métis population (see Table 4). There were slightly more male clients (61%) in the selected timeframe than female clients (39%), although program representatives noted that the gender distribution has been more equally distributed in other years (see Table 5).

Table 3. Clients Served by Geographic Region (2008/09)

Geographic Region	**n**	**%**
South (Calgary & Area)	234	24%
Central (Edmonton & Area)	279	29%
Northwest (Grande Prairie & Area)	251	26%
Northeast (Lac La Biche & Area)	204	21%
Total	**968**	**100%**

Table 4. Client Age Range (2008/09)

Age Range (Years)	**n**	**%**
20-24	96	10%
25-29	284	29%
30-34	161	17%
35-39	110	11%
40-44	95	10%
45-49	87	9%
50-54	76	8%
55-59	37	4%
60-64	7	1%
65+	15	2%
	968	**100%**

Table 5. Client Gender Distribution (2008/09)

Gender	n	%
Female	373	39%
Male	595	61%
Total	**968**	**100%**

Interventions were both short-term and long-term in duration (see Table 6). The most commonly accessed interventions included **individual training sponsorships** (e.g., funding for last two semesters of a university degree or diploma program) and **project-based training** (e.g., unique training projects designed to meet local labour market needs), as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 6. Duration of Interventions (2008/09)

	n	%
Short-term (Less than 6 months)	529	55%
Long-term (6 months or more)	439	45%
	968	**100%**

Table 7. Type of Interventions Accessed (2008/09)

Type of Intervention	n	%
Individual Training Sponsorship	**407**	**42.0%**
Project Based Training	**308**	**31.8%**
Employment Supports	63	6.5%
Job Search Preparation Strategies	43	4.4%
Resume Assistance	34	3.5%
Summer Student Placement Program	27	2.8%
Career Research - Individual	21	2.2%
Community Connections	19	2.0%
Job Finding Club	14	1.4%
Employment Supports - Work Equipment/Attire	13	1.3%
Career Workshop	5	0.5%
Disability Program - Diagnostic Assessments	4	0.4%
Referral To Agency	3	0.3%
Targeted Wage Subsidy	3	0.3%
Youth Internship Program	2	0.2%
Disability Program - Employment Supports	1	0.1%
Referral To Employment	1	0.1%
	968	**100.0%**

Overall, **post-intervention employment outcomes were very high** (see Table 8). Almost 80% of all clients reported that they had found employment within 24 weeks of the intervention, and an additional 11% of clients had returned to school to further their education. Less than 10% of clients were unemployed after 24 weeks.

Table 8. Client Employment Outcomes (2008/09)

	n	**%**
Employed	771	79.6%
Returned to School	107	11.1%
Unemployed but available for work	86	8.9%
Self Employed	4	0.4%
	968	**100.0%**

Thus, the simple answer to this question is that **the majority of clients were employed 24 weeks after completing a labour market intervention**. What is not known, however, is the extent to which these employment outcomes were sustained over time. This leads to the next phase of our research - designed to begin to examine the longer-term impacts of the program - which highlights the complexity of labour market self-sufficiency.

5.0 Long-term outcomes

5.1 Assessing Long-Term Outcomes: Five Years after a Labour Market Intervention

In the planning stages of this research project, the following long-term outcome question was identified: To what extent did the Métis Training to Employment program (formerly known as the Labour Market Development program) help clients to achieve labour market self-sufficiency five years after participating in a funded intervention? This question was based on the assumption that self-sufficiency is an outcome (as opposed to an ongoing process) and also something that can be easily measured. As we have identified elsewhere in this report (e.g., exploratory findings and measurement issues), the concept of self-sufficiency is complex, and the definition of self-sufficiency may vary between individuals. Furthermore, the **process** of becoming self-sufficient may be just as important as the **outcome**.

Thus, the question regarding labour market self-sufficiency as a long-term outcome evolved into a broader question that also addressed the process of becoming self-sufficient. That is, to what extent did the program help clients along their journey of career and personal development? To help answer this question, we asked for feedback regarding how the program had helped clients along their individual career paths. Throughout this process, participants were also asked to consider potential areas for improvement to better meet the needs of clients, and to ultimately increase the likelihood that the support provided by the Métis Training to Employment program would contribute toward the development of long-term labour market self-sufficiency.

The following section includes participant quotations and stories to illustrate how the program has contributed to career and personal development, and where applicable, to the attainment of labour market self-sufficiency.

5.2 Toward Becoming Self-Sufficient

Most clients interviewed reported that they had achieved, or were on the path toward, labour market self-sufficiency. Out of the 21 clients interviewed for this research[4], 13 reported that they had achieved labour market self-sufficiency based on a range of self-reported criteria such as having full-time, stable employment, not relying on social assistance, being able to change jobs if necessary, enjoying satisfactory quality of life and having work-life balance. One individual was no longer in the paid workforce (retired) and the remaining 7 were at various stages along their career and personal development (self-sufficiency categorized as “in progress”).

The path toward becoming self-sufficient was not linear, and the journey toward self-sufficiency varied by individual. Some clients questioned whether it's possible to be completely self-sufficient, given the interdependence between family members (parents, spouses), and the Canadian social support system (such as the Canada Tax credit and other supports).

[4] Note: Numbers are presented for descriptive purposes only and are not considered statistically representative of the overall client population.

Among those clients whose journey was still in progress, most reported that they were well on their way to a stable future. For example, some clients had returned to school to further their education and were accessing financial support from other sources. Because they were accessing financial support for education, they did not consider themselves self-sufficient in the labour market.

The following table includes a summary of client feedback regarding the type of support received from the Labour Market Development program and how it has helped them along the journey toward labour market self-sufficiency.

Table 9. Client Feedback Regarding Labour Market Self-Sufficiency

Initial Training/Support	Journey Toward Labour Market Self-Sufficiency
Safety tickets: Four clients accessed short-term training to obtain safety tickets (e.g., Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System and other credentials) required for work in the oil field. All four clients were located in the Northeast Region, where there is high demand for qualified oil field workers.	*Journey Toward Self-Sufficiency in Progress (1 client)* One client secured immediate employment in the oil field as a result of obtaining the required safety tickets, but resigned within a few months because the on-site camp schedule was not compatible with parenting her young children. She returned home and obtained full-time employment with a cleaning service, another job opportunity which would not have been available to her without the safety ticket credentials. This client reported that having the safety tickets opened doors that would not have otherwise been open; however, she also expressed that her long-term career prospects would be improved by furthering her education. She is currently on medical leave from her place of employment, and plans to return to school in the fall to complete her high school diploma. *Currently Self-Sufficient (2 clients)* One client worked sporadically for a few years after receiving the initial safety tickets. He was appreciative of the support from the program, stating that it would have been financially difficult to obtain the credentials on his own. However, it took quite a while to find full-time employment. He has returned on and off to the Métis Training to Employment program over the years for ongoing support and to update safety tickets as necessary. Within the past two years he has found full-time work in the oil field as both a labourer and an operator, and currently feels very satisfied with his career and personal development. Another client also worked sporadically for a few years after receiving the initial safety tickets. She recalled that most opportunities were short-term and did not offer secure, long-term employment. However, she recently returned to the Métis Training to Employment program to participate in a unique training opportunity designed to prepare clients for employment opportunities with the local union. After participating in this program, she obtained a full-time position as a labourer in the oil field. She described the camp

Initial Training/Support	Journey Toward Labour Market Self-Sufficiency
	schedule (two weeks on, two weeks off) as a good fit with her current lifestyle, and credited the support of the program with helping her to obtain a stable union position including benefits and a good salary. *No Longer in the Workforce (1 client)* One client obtained full-time employment after training, but resigned shortly thereafter to return home to help her daughter who could not find suitable childcare for her young children. This client is currently retired.
Class 1 Driver Training or Pilot's License Training: Four clients received training to receive their Class 1 or Pilot's License. All four clients were from the Northwest region where there is high demand for qualified truck drivers.	*Journey Toward Self-Sufficiency in Progress (1 client)* One client obtained stable employment as a truck driver, made possible through obtaining the Class 1 driver's license; however, recent physical injury may limit the extent to which he can continue in this field. Without a high school diploma, he indicated that his future career opportunities are uncertain. *Currently Self-Sufficient (3 clients)* Three clients reported that they had achieved various aspects of self-sufficiency (e.g., economic, occupational, psychological). For one client, finding a well-paying job to provide for his family was considered more important than pursuing longer-term career goals that did not seem attainable. This client expressed regret that he was unable to finish the training for a commercial pilot's license; however, he completed a private license and was able to build on previous training to obtain his Class 1 driver's license which he felt would provide him with stable employment opportunities. He has sustained employment as a truck driver and is able to support his family, although has not fulfilled his dream of becoming a commercial pilot. One client reported that the Class 1 training had led to other opportunities that would not have been possible without this initial designation (e.g., career change into fire-fighting, requires Class 1). Another client reported a great deal of work-life balance and satisfaction with his chosen career as a truck driver.
Trades (e.g., sprinkler fitting, carpentry): Two clients received funding to support training in a high demand trade. Both of these clients were from the Central region.	*Journey Toward Self-Sufficiency in Progress (1 client)* One client who completed a short-term carpentry program was able to secure well-paid employment immediately after completing the program. However, various life circumstances resulted in a need for retraining, including challenges related to addiction, incarceration and injuries that made it difficult to continue in a field that required physical labour. This client

Initial Training/Support	Journey Toward Labour Market Self-Sufficiency
	returned to the Métis Training to Employment program to request additional funding to further his education in the social services field, and reported that he is well on his way to a stable future. Although he is still in school and accessing various sources of financial support for ongoing post-secondary education (i.e., technically not yet self-sufficient in the labour market) he was confident about his future employment prospects. Furthermore, he had found a career path that was meaningful to him and his family. *Currently Self-Sufficient (1 client)* One client who was sponsored for initial training in the trades subsequently went on to attain the highest levels of certification including Red Seal and Journeyman tickets. He reported that that he had achieved labour market self-sufficiency, and was appreciative of the initial support from the Labour Market Development program when he needed it most (young, just out of high school). He had recently changed direction within the trades (choosing a new trade), and reported that the new work was even more lucrative and less physically demanding, which fared better for long-term health and work-life balance. This client reported a strong social support network, beginning with an encouraging employment counselor in high school, family members in the trades, and a strong personal work ethic and motivation to succeed in his chosen career.
Diploma and/or certificate programs: Five clients received funding support to complete diploma or certificate programs in various fields including accounting, medical esthetics, hairstyling, hospitality management, and special event management. These clients were from the Central (3) and South (2) regions.	*Journey Toward Self-Sufficiency in Progress (2 clients)* After completing a diploma program, one client worked for four years in her intended field. However, she began to find the industry financially challenging, and decided to return to school to complete a post-secondary degree. Given that she was still a student, she was not yet "self-sufficient in the labour market". However, she reported confidence in her decision and hopefulness that the additional education would ultimately result in long-term labour market self-sufficiency. One client found employment in her intended field after completing a nine-month certificate program, although she subsequently decided to pursue other employment options along her journey of personal and career development and is still exploring her long-term goals. Although she has not maintained full-time work in her intended field over the past five years, she reported that the training provided her with skills she can "fall back on" in between other jobs.

Initial Training/Support	Journey Toward Labour Market Self-Sufficiency
	Currently Self-Sufficient (3 clients) One client attributed her current success to the short-term training project where she earned an accounting certificate. She reported that without this certificate, she would not be where she is today: working full-time and providing for her family. One client reported that she found employment in her intended field immediately after graduating from a medical esthetician certificate program, although was also working a second job to earn additional income. Despite working two jobs, this client reported that she was self-sufficient (not relying on government support) and could "make it" on one income if necessary. Another client reported full-time employment for two years following completion of a short-term certificate. Although he has now changed jobs and the overall direction of his career, the initial opportunity was perceived as a stepping stone in his personal and career development. He has maintained full-time employment and is satisfied with his career progression.
Post-secondary education or youth internship: Five clients received funding to support post-secondary education (typically the last year of a program in social sciences, business, health, or education). One client received financial support to participate in an international youth internship project. These clients were from a mix of regions including Central (4), South (1), and Northwest (1).	*Journey Toward Self-Sufficiency in Progress (2 clients)* One client had just returned from travelling and was in the process of establishing his own business. He reported that he was 50% satisfied with his career development, and would feel completely satisfied once the business was established. One client, after completing education in the performing arts, found work in various short-term jobs over the past five years. He eventually decided he wanted more financial stability and chose to pursue a different career path altogether. He had recently returned to school for further education. *Currently Self-Sufficient (4 clients)* Four clients who received funding for the last year of a post-secondary program (in social science, business, health, or education) reported that they had achieved labour market self-sufficiency. All four reported that they had obtained full-time jobs, three of which were in a field related to their educational focus. One client had moved into a completely different field, yet credited her education as a contributing factor in her personal and career development.

5.3 Key Program Supports

Participants reported a range of key program supports – including financial support – that helped them to obtain the necessary skills, training, and credentials to succeed in the labour market. These included economic and occupational support, as well as the interpersonal support provided by program staff throughout the process (emotional and psychological support). The levels of support parallel the various elements of economic, occupational, and psychological self-sufficiency.

A consistent message reported across all four regions was that the program offers much more than financial support. For example, as one staff member commented:

> *"We aren't just a loaning agency, we also have the follow-up support for our clients." (Staff)*

This message was echoed by many clients, who reported genuine appreciation for the support provided to them from program staff.

Program supports were designed to help overcome a variety of barriers to employment. Staff described a number of challenges faced by clients including lack of education, insufficient skill development, inadequate housing, travel barriers, insufficient income or debt, inadequate child care, substance abuse, and mental health issues. Example of key supports are provided in more detail below.

5.3.1 Financial Support (Economic)

The program provides financial support for training and educational programs (including tuition and income support where applicable) ranging from short-term interventions to obtain safety tickets to long-term interventions to complete post-secondary education.

> *"The funding helped a lot. Because I have student loans, I still have them, it's something that is always going to follow me. (The funding amount) isn't a whole lot but it helps." (Client)*

5.3.2 Interpersonal Support (Emotional, Psychological)

Each client is individually assessed to determine eligibility for funding. Do they meet the program criteria? Are they ready, willing, and able to undertake training that will lead to employment?

Staff emphasized the importance of personalized support and assistance, recognizing the unique needs and circumstances of each client. "We work with the client wherever they are" in their life and career development. Staff provided individual support and assistance with a variety of tasks, including filling out funding applications and other forms (e.g., "even how to get their Métis card, their membership.") The program also provides individual career planning, computer and internet access for job searches, and resume support among its available services.

The social and emotional support provided by staff was considered a key element of the program. Staff emphasized the importance of building relationships with clients, advocating on their behalf, and having a genuine desire to help their clients succeed. For example:

"Knowing that's genuine, and we want to help them." (Staff)

"We tell them: don't quit, phone us. Let us help you." (Staff)

Staff also provide referrals to address other issues and/or potential barriers to employment (e.g., housing, childcare, addictions counselling) and ongoing support to help clients succeed once enrolled in a program (tutors, checking in regarding attendance and grades).

Each region has the flexibility to address local community needs and develop specific projects to meet these needs (e.g., Medical Office Assistant, Payroll Administrator, Trade Winds to Success, Driver Education Training, etc.).

The physical presence of MTE offices was considered a key program support, through the combination of the infrastructure (e.g., having a physical location from which to access services) and personnel (e.g., staff support). For example:

"It becomes a safe place to go to, because they know that it's friendly, and you're not judged…The offices are getting the reputation that it's a good place to go to, a safe place to go to, a friendly place to go to. We're helpful."(Staff)

"There was a combination of the general funding and that human contact, constantly talking with me when I needed it, I mean I could call (the employment counselor) at any time and pick his brain on something or…if I had an issue or I thought I wasn't going down the right path, he'd be there to let me know that I was, or potentially give me other options…I can say this…everybody at Rupertsland cares for the people that they work with." (Client)

"It's been a great thing for me…I'm so thankful to the (staff) that work there for referring this program, or mentioning it to me, because now I have, pretty much I have a future now. I'll be working for the rest of my life and I'm excited. It's good money. It was the motivation…and them being so helpful, guiding me to where I am today." (Client)

5.3.3 Occupational Support (Skill Development, Training, and Credentials)

The program helped clients to obtain necessary credentials to obtain employment in their chosen field.

"A lot of trucking companies won't hire people, or train them I should say. You have to go and get the course and the certificates. Companies don't like to train people, it usually goes that way around here. Unless you are family or something. There's a lot of truck driving jobs out there, especially around here it's all trucking oil." (Client)

"Having that certificate allowed me to have the experience to grow and have a higher level of a job… It made a big difference at that point in my life. Before I had the certificate I was just a secretary, I was just a receptionist, and I did have bookkeeping experience but even though I had that an employer would have never hired me without that accounting certificate. It allowed me to expand my career opportunities like ten-fold." (Client)

"I don't think I would've had any chance, being with this company for this long a time, because like I said, when the company doesn't pay for the tickets, you know, that's how I've got my foot in there, and I've made sure that I don't screw up. (Were the tickets overly expensive?) Yes, I couldn't afford them, at that time…They were there when you need them." (Client)

"The funding helped a lot. It helped me get my class 1. I got a career out of that which also helped me with becoming a fire fighter. Because I needed at least a Class 3 for that. So yes, it has helped a lot. I never have to worry about anything. My bills are always paid. I'm not living at home with mom. We own two houses now." (Client)

Furthermore, the occupational research requirement was considered valuable in many (but not necessary all) circumstances. Clients are required to complete an extensive occupational research profile before being approved for funding, and must demonstrate that they are entering a field that will lead to labour market self-sufficiency. Staff offer support and direction in this exercise, which is considered key toward ensuring a good fit between client needs, aspirations, quality of life, and long-term career goals.

"I like the way that you have to do research on jobs before you fill out the application and stuff. See what the wages are, who is hiring, long term goals. I benefited from that." (Client)

"It's good that they make you do the research (about future employment prospects). I wouldn't change that." (Client)

Other reported services designed to reduce barriers to employment included a disability program, targeted wage subsidy, and itinerant services to remote communities.

Program staff emphasized that the Métis Training to Employment program focuses on helping clients to prepare for long-term sustainable employment as opposed to short-term job opportunities.

5.4 Identified Challenges and Recommended Improvements

Clients and staff were asked to provide feedback regarding challenges and recommended program improvements. The following key issues emerged: **appreciation for support/reluctance to "criticize"**; **policy/funding limitations** and **organizational/operational issues**. The latter two issues are integrally related, as funding limitations (including the total amount of funding available) influences organizational decisions (such as staff compensation packages). Each are described in more detail in the following section.

5.4.1 Appreciation for Support/Reluctance to "Criticize"

Many clients were initially reluctant to recommend program improvements, citing lack of recall ("that was so long ago") and overall appreciation for the support received. Similarly, staff expressed some concern that their comments might be interpreted as criticism. Participants were reassured that the question was posed in the spirit of continuous improvement, toward achieving the best possible outcomes for the Métis community.

Both clients and staff further emphasized the need to continue to offer funding for Métis clients, and expressed concern that research results might be used to cut funding in specific program areas. Participants reinforced the need for training, education, and employment, and the need to address barriers such as addictions. For example:

> *"We need more of this for Métis people." (Client)*

Some clients also suggested that there should be more opportunities for alumni participation (e.g., opportunity to give back as mentors, guest speakers, community advocates, etc.). These clients expressed appreciation for the support received and an interest in giving back to the organization.

5.4.2 Policy/Funding Limitations

Policy and funding limitations were identified as potential areas for improvement, although it was noted that these decisions were often beyond the control of the Métis Training to Employment program. The program operates under an accountability structure that requires outcomes. The Rupertsland Institute has made efforts to ensure that education and proper training are central to labour market interventions, but feedback from front-line staff suggests there is some misunderstanding regarding what is most important (i.e., emphasis on the numbers versus a more holistic approach to address barriers to employment which necessitates a long-term approach.) The RLI has expressed ongoing commitment toward addressing barriers and providing a holistic approach to Métis labour market development programming. Nonetheless, some misperceptions and concerns regarding policy and funding limitations remained.

Client suggestions related to policy and funding limitations tended to focus on their individual experience, or a family member's experience, and perceived inconsistencies regarding eligibility for funding. Staff suggestions were more global in nature, reflecting their collective experience of trying to advocate for clients within existing policy and funding constraints. However, one common issue reported by both staff and clients related to perceived inconsistency, in some cases, regarding how funding decisions were made within the organization.

In particular, the emphasis on "the stat" (i.e., demonstrating a 24 week post-intervention employment outcome) was identified as a concern. The program is obligated to provide training that results in immediate employment. This accountability structure ignores the benefits of ongoing education and career development opportunities that may require a longer time frame to achieve. The mandated employment outcomes further emphasizes training in high demand industries and ignores individual passions and the choice to pursue a dream career.

> *"I think they're too focused on the stats. Cause really, as long as you get any kind of stat, it doesn't matter if they're in the field that they're going into, if you have an engineer and he works at McDonald's, we get that stat." (Staff)*

> *"To obtain an employment outcome doesn't necessarily mean that they were totally self-sufficient." (Staff)*

> *"The general vibe that I get, from my level, is they are more concerned about the Stat, and the people are more inconsequential, and I would say when (we) are getting that vibe from Head Office, I would say our clients do as well." (Staff)*

> *"I know it's the more in demand programs too…but I don't see why they're limited." (Client)*

Staff noted that lack of high school education is a barrier for many clients. Being able to provide support for high school upgrading would be a valuable service to help improve clients' long-term career prospects. However, funding for education is typically considered a provincial responsibility, whereas the Métis Training to Employment program relies primarily on federal funding sources. As cited in a recent discussion paper "Synthesizing Knowledge about Métis Education, Employment and Training", the authors note that the current investment from the Alberta provincial government for Métis education is "zero dollars" (Poitras Pratt et al, p. 12).

Overall findings from the literature review clearly indicated that high school completion is increasingly a minimum requirement even for entry-level positions, given the need for basic literacy and numeracy required to use the equipment at work sites.

Furthermore, staff noted that while it is possible to obtain employment in some industries without a high school diploma, challenges often arise. For example:

> *"This is not uncommon. Let's say with the trades, they need to have their grade 10 to finish their first year apprenticeship. So you get a lot of people go through first year apprenticeship, the problem is if they don't have that base education to go forward, that's where people start failing. They can do the work, but they cannot pass that theoretical portion of it." (Staff)*

> *"That's one of the biggest problems they have there. Obviously they need the tradespeople. They're putting a lot of money into the pre-trades and first year apprenticeships, but they start losing them at (the second year). You need skilled workers, you don't just need workers." (Staff)*

5.4.3 Organizational/Operational Issues

Several organizational and operational issues emerged as potential areas for improvement. Several of these issues related primarily to staff concerns including low wages, high turnover, communication challenges, and lack of staff appreciation. One issue reported by both staff and clients related to the perceived lack of consistency and transparency, in some cases, underlying the decision-making process.

Low staff wages were cited as a concern by staff in all four regions. It was noted that the challenges associated with staff compensation and staff retention are common in non-profit organizations and not unique to the Métis Training to Employment program. Furthermore, while wages were considered low, staff were appreciative of other elements of the compensation package including benefits and vacation time. However, staff expressed that salary increases would help to improve their own financial security and economic self-sufficiency.

> *"(Without my spouse), I couldn't afford my rent on my own." (Staff)*
>
> *"I wouldn't say we're working poor, but we're pretty close. Let's say we didn't have (a spouse), our second source of income…With my salary, if I was living here on my own, and I had to pay rent and have a vehicle, I would have a hard time making ends meet…I'd be making macaroni and cheese every day." (Staff)*
>
> *"It would be nice if it was routine, regular increments, with inflation consideration." (Staff)*

High front-line staff turnover, particularly in the urban regions, was noted as a challenge.

> *"I've been here (over two years) and I think I can count maybe a dozen people that have left…There's something wrong." (Staff)*

Staff members noted that this did not necessarily apply to all regional offices, for example:

> *"(In one rural region) those are the only two offices where there's not a high turnover." (Staff)*

Related to the issue of staff turnover was the need for ongoing staff training and development. Some staff members expressed the need for improved staff training, particularly for new staff, and an updated policies and procedures manual.

Several aspects related to **organizational communication and influence on decision making** were identified as potential areas for improvement. For example:

> *"A lot of times it seems that we're asked for our opinions, and I mean I think it's just typical of a head-type entity, I'm not saying it's exclusive to Rupertsland, people on the ground are asked for their opinions and what they think would service their clients better, but very rarely do you see any of those changes implemented, and the changes that are implemented are not user-friendly." (Staff)*

> *"In general we'd like to see more between the ground level and head office, so that we know that they're aware of the work we do. There's a real disjointedness there. There's a general feeling that you're just a cog in the wheel and it could be anyone in your position, it makes no difference. Sometimes people need to hear, you know, 'hey (specific location)', rather than just a message to everyone." (Staff)*
>
> *"I think there is a disconnect between the regions and head office, and between the managers and head office. … If you're out in the region, you don't know what head office is doing. So you don't know their day-to-day, what's going on there, what kind of stresses they have, what kind of trouble shooting they have to do, so out in the region it looks like they're just going on their merry way, or they don't care, or whatever the perception is. So there's times, just the pressure that they put themselves into, is just incredible. I think head office needs to streamline part of the processes that they have…some improvement on how they run things." (Staff)*
>
> *"There needs to be staff and team building to keep the staff morale up." (Staff)*

Also related to organizational communication, some staff mentioned recent changes in policies and procedures, including changes related to the criteria used to assess client eligibility, and requested more lead time before future changes. It was mentioned that advance notice would help staff to better inform their clients, and to avoid frustration and disappointment. Examples of recent changes included proof of genealogy, expectations regarding cost sharing, and maximum funding amounts.

Increased **front-line staff appreciation and engagement** was recommended as a key program improvement. It was noted that increased appreciation and engagement would help to offset the financial reality of low staff wages in a non-profit organization, and also help to decrease staff turnover.

Staff provided the following suggestions regarding how the organization might demonstrate appreciation and increase engagement:

- direct thanks/recognition;
- sharing positive results from client satisfaction surveys;
- development of a social fund;
- fitness/gym membership;
- cost of living increments;
- meals/celebrations "where we don't have to come out of pocket"; and
- more influence and participation in organizational decision-making, particularly regarding issues that directly relate to front-line service provision (such as how to interpret eligibility criteria and input into the development of checklists and tools to streamline this process).

Finally, staff members as well as some clients recommended **increased consistency and transparency in decision-making.** Staff noted that increased clarity would help them to better serve their clients. For example, it was noted that in some cases, clients might not meet the criteria of being "ready, willing, and able" to undertake training that would lead to employment (based on the assessment completed at the local office level), and yet may ultimately be approved for funding (based on an appeal process at the head office level). Staff indicated that the rationale for the decision and outcome of the appeal process was not always clearly communicated. In other cases, clients classified as "ready, willing, and able" may be denied funding for reasons that are not always clear to the front-line staff. Improved transparency in the decision-making process would help staff to better understand how to apply the criteria and complete accurate client assessments.

> *"Sometimes clients are deemed not ready, willing, and able, but then they get pushed through to try to fill that spot…Then you're having troubles throughout the whole training." (Staff)*
>
> *"Then other clients, they work so hard and then they're denied." (Staff)*
>
> *"It seems like a black box…It's not really transparent. I think it would be nice if an application was turned down to know exactly why it was turned down, and then implement it for future, because then if you let Client A go through, Client B might come with the exact same situation as Client A." (Staff)*

Some clients reported confusion regarding eligibility requirements, and cited differences in funding allocations between themselves and other individuals who had also applied for funding from the same program. Some clients were also uncertain about their eligibility for repeat funding, such as situations where physical injury prohibited clients from continuing in their initial career path. Increased clarity regarding program eligibility and available funding would help to alleviate some of these concerns.

6.0 Summary and Recommendations

6.1 Defining and Measuring Labour Market Self-Sufficiency

The concept of labour market self-sufficiency is complex. There is no single tool that can be used to adequately capture the economic, occupational, and psychological aspects of labour market self-sufficiency. A comprehensive assessment would need to include a compilation of both process and outcome-related measurement tools, including a range of questions related to the interconnected aspects of self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider variables such as the economy, availability of jobs in the area, family interconnectedness, cultural values, non-wage earning activities, and the historical and ongoing relationship between the federal government and Indigenous people.

The following key areas of inquiry are recommended for follow-up with a larger sample of previous clients (see Table 10).

Table 10. Measuring Labour Market Self-Sufficiency

Category	Potential Areas of Inquiry
Economic self-sufficiency	• What is your current employment status? (employed, returned to school, unemployed but available for work, self-employed, no longer in the workforce, other) • If employed, are you employed full-time or part-time? If part-time, is this by choice? • What is your monthly (or hourly) salary? (to determine if wage is at a living wage or above) • Does your job include benefits? (e.g., pension, sick days, health benefits, vacation time, etc.) • Are you currently receiving external financial support (e.g., government assistance, charitable support, family contribution)?
Occupational self-sufficiency	• If employed, is your employment related to the training you received through the Métis Training to Employment program? (yes, no, somewhat) Please elaborate (if applicable). • How long have you had your current job? Do you expect to continue to be employed in this position in the next 6 months to 1 year? • To what extent are you satisfied with your current job? Do you consider it a good fit with your skills experience? Why or why not? • Where do you see yourself (related to your employment) in the next 10 years? How satisfied are you with your future career development opportunities?
Psychological self-sufficiency	• To what extent is being self-sufficient important to you? • Do you consider yourself to be "self-sufficient"? Why or why not? • To what extent do you feel confident in your ability to succeed in the labour market? • Do you feel hopeful about your job? Do you feel hopeful about your future? • Note: To more fully address psychological self-sufficiency, the program may wish to incorporate measures of empowerment, hopefulness, confidence in ones abilities, goal orientation and other

Category	Potential Areas of Inquiry
	characteristics using existing questionnaire. Examples of some of these are available in the literature reviewed for this project.
Demographic Characteristics and Personal Circumstances	• Note: The researcher may confirm key demographic variables recorded in the database, such as age, gender, marital status, number and age of dependents, and geographic location. • Additional questions to address personal circumstances that may affect labour market self-sufficiency include, for example: Do you have access to suitable childcare? Transportation? Housing? Other supports?
External Variables	• To what extent are jobs available in your geographic region? Within your chosen industry?

6.2 Toward Achieving Self-Sufficiency

Short-term employment outcomes were very high. Based on secondary review of database information, almost 80% of clients had found employment within 24 weeks of a funded intervention, and an additional 11% of clients had returned to school to further their education. However, simply being employed does not necessarily indicate that one has achieved labour market self-sufficiency. As illustrated elsewhere in this report, the concept of labour market self-sufficiency includes much more than economic outcomes. A comprehensive analysis must also address occupational and psychological components, as well as external factors such as the economy and availability of jobs. Feedback from a small sample of clients five years after completing a funded intervention revealed a range of examples regarding the journey toward becoming self-sufficient.

Most clients interviewed reported that they had achieved, or were on the path toward, labour market self-sufficiency. Clients considered themselves to be “self-sufficient” based on a range of self-reported criteria such as having full-time, stable employment, not relying on social assistance, being able to change jobs if necessary, enjoying satisfactory quality of life, and having work-life balance. The path toward becoming self-sufficient was not linear, and the journey toward self-sufficiency varied by individual. Some clients had struggled for a few years, reporting sporadic short-term employment opportunities, and had only recently obtained full-time employment. Other clients reported more stable, ongoing employment over the past five years.

The types of interventions that led to self-reported labour market self-sufficiency included both short-term (less than six months) and long-term interventions (six months or more in duration). Interview participants included a mix of clients who had completed interventions such as safety ticket training, Class 1 driver training, trades, diploma, certificate and post-secondary education programs. There were examples of clients within each category who had either achieved, or were still on the journey toward, labour market self-sufficiency. Unique benefits and challenges were identified within each category.

Among those clients whose journey was still in progress, most reported that they were well on their way to a stable future. For example, some clients had returned to school to further their education and were accessing financial support from other sources. Because they were accessing financial support for education, they did not yet consider themselves self-sufficient in the labour market, although indicated that the further education would help to establish their future career development.

6.3 Recommendations for Improving and/or Maintaining Program Outcomes

For the purpose of this analysis, the assumption is made that the Métis Training to Employment program is not in a position to change the mandated outcome of client self-sufficiency, and must demonstrate accountability by reporting the number of clients who find work in the labour market immediately following funded interventions. The limitations of focusing only on short-term outcomes were reported by program staff and reinforced in the literature. When the emphasis is focused on "the stat" (i.e., demonstrating short-term employment outcomes), resources are diverted from contributing toward, and potentially measuring, long-term outcomes for participating clients. This approach also excludes the process of becoming self-sufficient, and further ignores contextual influences such as the economy and availability of jobs.

6.3.1 Clarify program intent and focus

The Métis Training to Employment program should make explicit its definition of "labour market self-sufficiency" including economic, occupational, and psychological characteristics, and develop strategic priorities regarding which components will be prioritized in future work. For example, is the program intended to focus on human capital development, labour force attachment, or both? Does the program intend to meet the needs of a wide variety of Métis clients, or a more focused sub-population based on specific criteria? These operational decisions should be clearly communicated to staff and funders. Increased clarity in program intent would help to alleviate concerns regarding funding decisions and transparency in decision-making.

6.3.2 Address organizational/operational issues

Organizational issues such as communication, transparency, and staff satisfaction are interrelated with clarity of program intent. Clear and consistent policies should be developed to help deliver the program in alignment with strategic organizational direction. These policies should include specific details about what is and is not fundable within the boundaries of the program as well as client eligibility criteria (e.g., genealogy, demonstrated need for financial support, etc.).

Provide and encourage opportunities for ongoing communication between all levels of the organization (from head office to regional front-line staff). This would help to address some of the operational concerns and improve staff satisfaction and engagement.

6.3.3 Acknowledge policy limitations / advocate for change where applicable

Acknowledge policy limitations, such as the requirement to demonstrate short-term employment outcomes and the lack of provincial funding for education. Clearly acknowledging these limitations may help to articulate the specific role the Métis Training to Employment program plays in the overall social-political context.

Advocate for change where applicable, such as increased provincial attention to high school completion, reduced emphasis on immediate employment, and increased attention to human capital development, long-term career stability, and quality of life.

6.3.4 Integrate Long-Term Follow-up with Clients into Ongoing Program Monitoring

Currently, clients are assessed within 24 weeks to determine short-term employment outcomes. Program data collection mirrors limitations identified in the literature, including lack of measurement on longer-term metrics and on type and trajectory of employment beyond the first job. This research study was intended to help fill that gap by providing insight into the experiences of participating clients, as well as identifying key components of labour-market self-sufficiency for further study. Building on lessons learned from the current study, long-term follow-up with clients should be integrated as part of ongoing program monitoring and evaluation. Potential longitudinal studies of specific client groups (based, for example, on type of interventions accessed) may further strengthen the overall understanding of their experience.

Appendix 1: Literature Review

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an evidence-based conceptual foundation for the research study of the Métis Training to Employment (MTE) program. The overall goal of this study is to determine if the program is meeting its goal of achieving client self-sufficiency following a labour market intervention.

Métis labour market self-sufficiency is a very specific and narrowly defined topic. As such, an initial literature search using this term returned only grey literature specific to the MTE program. The subsequent approach used for this literature review was to review literature on key themes embedded in the question of Métis labour market self-sufficiency, and to identify examples of peer-reviewed and grey literature relevant to different aspect of this topic.

The key topics discussed in this review are: 1) perspectives on Aboriginal and Métis employment; 2) self-sufficiency in the context of labour market attachment; and 3) lessons learned from job training programs in other contexts. The review concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for the evaluation of education and training programs aimed at increasing self-sufficiency.

Methodology

The search for peer-reviewed literature began with a search of databases targeting interdisciplinary literature (Academic Search Complete and JSTOR) and business literature (CBCA Complete and Human Resources Abstracts). A search was also conducted on the Canadian Periodicals Index (CPI.Q). Search terms used included the following (searched both as separate terms and in combination): “labour market self-sufficiency”, “economic self-sufficiency”, “adult job training”, “employment success”, “jobs”, “training”, “Métis”, “Indigenous”, “First Nations” and “Aboriginal”. Typically a broad search term (e.g., economic self-sufficiency) would return a large number of hits (>500) and would be refined by adding other search terms (e.g., adult job training + Aboriginal). This search approach resulted in finding approximately 20 articles relevant to aspects of Métis labour market self-sufficiency. Other relevant articles were culled from the bibliographies of articles found during the database search process.

Given the limited time and resources available for this literature review, it is intended to be illustrative of key discussions in the research literature on issues related to Métis labour market self-sufficiency, rather than a comprehensive review.

The initial search focused on articles published in Canada (or using Canadian data) but this body of evidence is limited. Canadian material has been supplemented with articles from the United States, or focusing on US case studies. Although some of the literature identified was very recent, some older literature (from 2000 onward) was selected for its relevance.

Perspectives on Aboriginal and Métis Employment

Perspectives on Aboriginal and Métis employment in Canada range from straightforward assessments of labour market conditions and the potential future role of Aboriginal and Métis employees, through to theoretically critical analyses of attempts to increase rates of employment within Aboriginal and Métis populations.

The Conference Board of Canada warns of a lack of workers with the right skills to meet the needs of Canadian employers in the future, and posits that Canada's fast-growing Aboriginal population "could play a significant role in helping the country meet its labour market needs" (Howard, Edge, & Watt, 2012, p. i). However, this same report notes that Aboriginal workers are more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal workers and identifies challenges for the employment of the Aboriginal population, including lack of qualifications, low skill levels and lack of work experience (p. 16).

In their synthesis of knowledge about Métis education, employment and training, Poitras Pratt et al. (n.d.) highlight the importance of disentangling Métis issues from the broader sphere of discussion about Aboriginal employment in Canada. While recognizing that "Métis employment, training and educational policy lives within a larger ambit of Aboriginal policy" the authors note that "Aboriginal policies are not based on Métis needs; instead, they are circumscribed by First Nations realities" (Poitras Pratt et al., n.d.). In this context, they make a compelling case that the Métis population is marginalized within the Aboriginal context, as well as the Canadian context.

Two reports in particular comment on the shortage of skilled labour in the foreseeable future and discuss the increasingly important role of the Métis in Canada's labour force, especially in the Canadian prairie provinces. Capeluck and Sharpe (2009) discuss the prospects for Métis employment in the mining industry. Noting that mining activities are concentrated in rural and remote locations, they argue that this industry represents an important potential source of employment for Métis peoples, especially youth and rural dwelling Métis. They go on to state, however, that the Métis will only be able to take advantage of this opportunity if they can meet the educational requirements of the industry. The Calgary Chamber (2012) presents the business case for strengthening Métis economic and labour market outcomes and identify strategies to support this including: prioritizing high school completion; focusing on training to employment; and creating welcoming work environments and partnerships to support increased Métis labour market participation.

A recent report on the Aboriginal education gap in Alberta argues that bridging this gap would result in significant contributions to earnings for Aboriginals in Alberta. This would meet not only the social goal of improving educational outcomes in Aboriginal populations, but also the fiscal goal of increasing provincial revenue through taxation on these earnings (Howe, 2014). Another report posits that benefits of training and employment programs for Métis populations far outweigh the costs of these programs (Capeluck and Sharpe, 2009).

Taylor and Friedel (2011) provide a theoretically critical analysis of First Nation and Métis employment in the context of oil sands development in the municipality of Wood Buffalo, which is home to the Athabasca tar sands. As a starting point, the authors note the relational shifts over time between the federal government and First Nations and Métis people "…from fur trade colonialism, to welfare colonialism, to neoliberal partnerships" (p. 815) and maintain that while employment focused partnerships in the Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray) area "purport to move First Nation and Métis communities away from welfare dependency and toward self-sufficiency through greater participation in paid employment" (p. 815) the underlying tone of this project is assimilationist in nature.

This perspective contends that there is a growing disparity within and between Aboriginal communities in Wood Buffalo within a market-based (neo-liberal) model of development, and in particular, warns of the marginalization of rural Métis communities "which lack access to many of the government resources that are provided to First Nation groups" (Taylor & Friedel, 2011, p. 821). They point to 'credential competition' as an increasingly important feature of finding well-paid employment in the oil sands, with many First Nations and Métis not having the kind of education and work experience in demand by the corporate employers. (p. 825). Lower-skilled work in this sector is often contracted out, which can also affect availability of employment.

An earlier study focused on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the US (Pickering, 2000) presents a compelling argument that formal training and employment programs are fundamentally assimilationist in nature. This is discussed more fully in the following section.

Self-sufficiency

While the topic of self-sufficiency seems simple and straightforward at first glance, the research literature on this topic indicates it is anything but. This section briefly explores the emergence of the concept in human services program delivery in the US in the 1990s, and then explores its history in Canada. It concludes with an exploration of the multiple ways the term is used, particularly in relation to education and job training programs in the US and Canada.

Several American researchers trace the recent interest in the concept of self-sufficiency to US welfare reform in the 1990s, with its emphasis on "self-reliance through labour force participation" (Hong P. , 2013, p. 357) and subsequent policy changes with emphasis on labour force attachment. The passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Responsibility Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) led to a proliferation of US programs focused on getting welfare recipients into the labour force, and much of the literature on self-sufficiency noted below draws on case studies and other research exploring the impact of these programs on participants (e.g., Pickering, 2000, Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2012, Woodward, 2014).

The subsequent Workforce Investment Act of 1998 focused on improving employment, literacy and training opportunities. In response to these workforce-focused policies, and ensuing program implementation, social service agencies began responding to calls from funders and governments to monitor self-sufficiency benchmarks, in spite of the fact that many of the outcomes were outside of direct agency control (Hong et al., 2012).

A similar shift in social policy has taken place in Canada, with a transition to a set of social policies actively promoting the transition of people from welfare dependence to self-sufficiency through 'welfare-to-work' programs. "The prevailing attitude underpinning current Canadian social assistance policies is that, with a nudge in the right direction, along with support and training, welfare recipients will be able to find employment and leave welfare, thereby achieving self-sufficiency" (Breitkruz and Williamson, 2012, p. 661).

An early example of this thinking is found in the Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP), a Canadian research and demonstration project that attempted to move long-term income assistance (IA) recipients off this assistance by supplementing their earnings for up to three years "…if they took up full-time work and left the welfare rolls within 12 months of entering the project" (p. 883). This program took place in British Columbia and New Brunswick between 1992 and 1999 and offered the SSP to over 5,000 long-term social assistance recipients (Zabel, Schwartz, & Donald, 2010).

In spite of the history of welfare reform linked to increasing self-sufficiency in Canada, Breitkreuz and Williamson (2012) argue that "self-sufficiency is an oft-used yet under-analyzed concept in policy discussions about welfare reform" (p. 660), and in Canada is a relatively understudied area of research.

The following discussion highlights the contested nature of self-sufficiency as a concept, and the ways this plays out in the delivery of job training programs and subsequent evaluation of their "success".

Economic self-sufficiency

While there is no commonly agreed upon definition of self-sufficiency, Hong et al. (2012) argue that in research on the topic of workforce development, self-sufficiency has been understood to have two key dimensions – economic and psychological – and that the term has been predominantly assumed to refer to economic self-sufficiency. As such, self-sufficiency is often understood, both in theory and in practice, "…in terms of encouraging economic independence and financial achievement for individuals" (Hong P. , 2013, p. 357). This approach is often referred to as economic self-sufficiency.

Even within research on economic self-sufficiency, different meanings are ascribed to the term. For example, some organizations use it to mean that an individual or family is able to exist without requiring assistance from government or charitable organizations. Others define it as leaving welfare to participate in the labour economy, without exploring whether labour force participation enables financial independence, for example, by paying a living wage, or offering secure employment over the longer-term. The lack of clarity around the specific meaning of self-sufficiency is discussed further in the section on evaluation implications.

In the U.S., federal policy contributed to the entrenchment of an economic understanding of self-sufficiency. For example, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 "endorsed this economic definition based on the combined function of employment, retention, independence and earnings of low-income individuals" (Hong P. , 2013, p. 358) and consequently programs offered by social service agencies were evaluated against these indicators of success. The impact of evaluating education and job-training programs through a lens of economic self-sufficiency is discussed more fully in the final section of this literature review.

In Canada, Breitkreuz and Williamson (2012) write about the ideological shift in recent years towards active social policy, which is "…premised on the assumption that the primary role of social policy is to facilitate human capital development for the purposes of cultivating autonomous citizens who are adaptable to the changing demands of the current labour market" (p. 660). This is a shift from the earlier notion of social policy as a safety net that provides protection from the inherent risks of the labour market. In this context "…achieving self-sufficiency is central to current thinking in Canada about how to create policies that address the needs of those dependent on the state for social assistance" (p. 660).

Alternative views of self-sufficiency

While the understanding of self-sufficiency as primarily economic in nature has been the dominant narrative in the research literature, alternative narratives are also discussed. These narratives tend to take a holistic, person-centered approach and focus on the empowerment of individuals as a necessary first step for creating self-sufficiency.

For example, Hong (2013) identifies psychological self-sufficiency - comprised of features such as self-worth, perceived capabilities, self-motivation and goal orientation - as a critical pre-cursor to successful economic self-sufficiency. In this conceptualization, psychological self-sufficiency is posited as having two key components – psychological empowerment and a process of moving toward future goals, both of which are understood as critical factors in enabling an individual to move from reliance on state support to a more independent existence. "From a policy standpoint, psychological self-sufficiency is a concept that directly responds to welfare reform's key concern – the so called debilitating psychological dependency of the poor on the welfare system that creates a culture of public dependency" (Hong et al., 2012, p. 324).

Woodward (2014) employs different language, but echoes Hong's message about the importance of psychological self-sufficiency and empowerment of welfare clients prior to seeking employment. "To be empowered means to believe that one can be an agent in one's own life – to be hopeful and confident in one's ability to improve one's life circumstances. Personal empowerment and self-efficacy are key to making positive life changes, just as community empowerment is crucial for positive social change." (p. 30).

Competing paradigms

Discussion in the research literature on welfare-to-work programs can be understood, in part, as a clash between differing paradigms that is played out at the program level. On one hand there are policies and programs that emphasize labour force attachment – a 'work first' type of approach. These programs "…follow a "quick labour force attachment" philosophy that assumes that the fastest and cheapest way to move families off welfare is to push [people] into the first possible job" (Woodward, 2014, p. 4). Hong et al. (2012) argue that work first approaches start from the belief that "work-limiting psychological dependency would be overcome by way of labour force participation without addressing the psychological concerns" (p. 324). From this perspective, any job that can be obtained by a program participant is viewed as "appropriate" – regardless of whether it provides a living wage or benefits – "because of the belief that participants will gain the necessary skills for employability through actual work" (Loomis, et al., 2003, p. 29).

In contrast, a human capital development, or psychological self-sufficiency, approach emphasizes skill building and basic education in advance of job placement, as well as psychological and counseling services. Lifelong investment in education and the ongoing development of skills to ensure employability are also key tenets of this approach (Loomis, et al., 2003; Breitkreuz & Williamson, 2012). This approach argues for focusing first on client empowerment, through the development of education and training programs providing participants with economic, social and cultural capital (Woodward, 2014) or the development of psychological empowerment and hope for the future (Hong P. , 2013). Hong et al. (2012) contend that this is a critical element as "…psychological self-sufficiency or empowerment of welfare recipients would lead to economic self-sufficiency" (p. 324).

Both approaches share the goal of reducing poverty and unemployment and both have mixed levels of success in doing so, depending on how success if measured, and over what time frame (Loomis, et al., 2003). The work-first model has been the predominant approach in the US and the UK, while a human capital development approach is more common in northern European countries. Canada's policy approach has been a hybrid of the two. Income support programs in Ontario and Alberta (Ontario Works and Alberta Works) tilt towards a work-first approach, but also provide other supports aimed at human capital development (e.g., job search assistance, academic upgrading) (Breitkreuz & Williamson, 2012).

There are critics of both approaches. With respect to work-first approaches, Woodward concludes that many of these programs ignore "many important dimensions of welfare programs, especially welfare-reliant women's experiences within a program and their long-term prospects in the labour market" (p. 6, italics added). Critics of the human capital development approach argue that employability skills are best learned in the context of employment, rather than extensive and lengthy training programs. One empirical study, while small in scope, and with many limitations, showed no statistically relevant difference in outcomes between participants randomly assigned to 1) watch a 40 minute video on how to interview for a job and 2) receive 3 job search training sessions (12 hours in total) (Foley, et al., 2010).

While there is clear evidence that formal education and training is linked to higher incomes and better job prospects (e.g., Loomis, et al., 2003; Riddell and Riddell, 2006; Woodward, 2014; Howe, 2014;), there is less clarity about how to support the diverse personal and employment-related needs of these populations. This is particularly true in light of the 'credentials competition' in current labour markets (Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Howard, Edge, & Watt, 2012), which require those entering current labour markets to possess higher levels of literacy, numeracy, and employability than in previous times. The impact of this was recognized more than a decade ago, and there is evidence that the demand for skills continues to increase. "In addition to attributes that employers have always looked for – reliability, positive attitude and willingness to work hard – employers now look for hard skills (e.g., reading, writing, math, and computer skills) and soft skills (e.g., ability to work in groups of various backgrounds, and to communicate effectively) that entry-level applicants might not have needed 20 years ago" (Johnson & Corcoran, 2003, p. 617).

A different level of critique comes from Pickering (2000) who challenges the definition of 'work', and argues that while within a capitalist paradigm work is equated with 'labour force attachment', there are other ways to understand work in the context of community and social relations. Livermore and Neustrom (2003) note that discourse around welfare reform focuses primarily on a client's responsibility to work, "while the specific responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by the state in the welfare-to-work era eludes most inquiry" (p. 88).

Self-sufficiency and Aboriginal populations

While there is very little research on the topic of self-sufficiency specific to Aboriginal populations, a small number of studies provide an entry point into some intriguing research questions for future study. For example, Pickering (2000) challenges two key tenets of the U.S. self-sufficiency discourse: first, that jobs are available in the region and that welfare dependency is a result of underdeveloped human capital and second, that unemployment can be equated to a lack of economic activity.

In her case study of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Pickering (2000) reframes the problem from one of a failure of individuals to secure jobs in the formal wage labour economy to that of a failure to develop an economy that provides an adequate number of jobs for residents. She goes on to note the "dynamic mix of subsistence production, home-based enterprise, and socially based exchanges of goods and services" (p. 149) taking place in Pine Ridge and discusses these co-exist with welfare and paid work in the community. Welfare-to-work policies, with their emphasis on individual earners and their responsibility to participate in the market economy "appears to be the latest in a line of recurring policies promoting cultural assimilation as the hidden solution to poverty" (p. 149).

In their 2010 study of job seeking behaviours of American Indians in a substance abuse treatment program, Foley et al. found that "…for may individuals living on a reservation, the need to maintain support networks such as family, home and community were greater than the need to secure employment" (p. 182). This statement speaks to the challenges in providing training to employment for some Aboriginal populations, and the conflicts inherent in fostering a market economy approach to 'self-sufficiency'.

Research findings from a case study of an Alberta welfare-to-work program highlight this challenge. Breitkreuz & Williamson (2012) argue that self-sufficiency dichotomizes dependence and independence and suggest instead "…reorienting policy toward interdependence, rather than the labour market attachment of welfare recipients" (p. 683).

Lessons Learned from Other Job Training Programs

There is evidence that comprehensive programs, which focus on both human capital development and labour force attachment, are effective ways of addressing some of the challenges of creating and supporting self-sufficiency in marginalized populations. Two federal studies commissioned in the US "…sought to answer definitively the question of which approach is more successful: education or work. A "mixed strategy" program produced the greatest earnings gain for participants, while work first programs came in second" (Woodward, 2014, p. 6). Tango and Kolodinsky (2004) conclude that comprehensive programs are crucial for addressing long-term unemployment "…because career counselors now consider employability skills to be as important as technical skills in job retention" (Tango & Kolodinsky, 2004, p. 83).

Loomis, et al. (2003) present case study research showing the benefits of a comprehensive program which "combines job skill training with basic education and also attends to psychosocial well-being, removing many barriers to work" (p. 29) and conclude that overall this approach was beneficial for the participants in their study. In their extensive evaluation of the elements of successful workforce development programs, Weigensberg et al. (2012) highlight the value of comprehensive approaches to training that acknowledge psychosocial challenges "such as conflict and time management and professionalism" (p. 3) and address "basic needs such as clothing, transportation and medical assistance" (p. 4).

Comprehensive programs are sometimes understood in terms of sequential processes, such as in Hong's (2012) conceptualization of psychological self-sufficiency as a necessary precursor to economic self-sufficiency. Loomis, et al. (2003) argue for the effectiveness of a parallel process, emphasizing the importance of both labour force attachment and human capital development, and demonstrate this through the use of a detailed case study.

Along with other researchers, Weigensberg et al. (2012) note the complex and interconnected nature of job training and education programs, and the nested nature of factors influencing program outcomes and success rates: characteristics of individuals within the program; the orientation of the program within a larger organization; organization; the relationship of the organization with external stakeholders; and the role of exogenous factors such as labour market demand.

Factors noted as impacting the overall 'success' rates of programs include participant characteristics, program characteristics and other factors. Participant factors include level of educational attainment and job-related experience at entry into the program (Hong, 2013), and access to relevant economic, social and cultural capital (Woodward, 2014). In this context social capital in defined as social contacts and connections, some of which could be turned into economic capital. Cultural capital refers to cultural knowledge, education, and skills. Personality characteristics matter as well. Tango and Kolodinsky (2004) examined worker traits of chronically unemployed individuals and found a correlation between two traits - independence and objectivity, as measured on a personality factor questionnaire – and successful job search processes.

Program characteristics include program orientation (e.g., work first, human capital development, comprehensive), and whether career guidance is offered at a single point-in-time or recognized as something that might be required at different stages of a life (as needed) (Tango & Kolodinsky, 2004).

Factors external to programs and participants but identified as affecting employment success (and related self-sufficiency, however defined) include access to affordable childcare, access to adequate transportation, and availability of affordable housing (Hong P. Y., 2013; Loomis, et al., 2003, Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2013). A living wage accruing from employment is also noted as an important feature of program success. Exogenous factors include labour market demand for services (de Silva et al., 2011; Pickering, 2000).

Johnson and Corcoran (2003) write extensively about the importance of evaluating job quality and the whether opportunities exist for labour market entrants to eventually transition from 'bad' jobs, (dead-end jobs with low-wage, no benefits, few opportunities for growth and skill development) to 'good' jobs, defined as those that "…allow individuals to develop job skills and offer on-the-job training opportunities that enable them to get better wage offers in future" (p. 618). Other factors of 'good' jobs include secure and stable full-time work, benefits, and paying above minimum wage. Part-time jobs can also be considered 'good' if held voluntarily.

Johnson and Corcoran (2003) highlight the different employment trajectories between jobs requiring soft skills only and those requiring hard skills (defined as reading and writing, math, and computer skills). The latter "…were more likely to offer potential wage increases for merit and greater chances for promotion (with good performance), and were more likely to offer formal job training opportunities" (p. 628).

Challenges to Evaluating "Self-Sufficiency" in a Labour Market Context

The challenges of evaluating the effectiveness and success of education and job training programs, and resulting progress towards participant self-sufficiency are noted throughout the research literature. For the purposes of this review, these evaluation challenges fall into two broad categories: 1) a lack of clarity around what self-sufficiency means in the context of education and training programs, and subsequent fuzziness around expected project and program outcomes; and 2) benchmarking challenges in programs where measures of success vary (and sometimes conflict) between and among different program stakeholders.

Lack of clarity in program intent

The previous discussion of the contested nature of the term "self-sufficiency" highlights the key dimensions of the dominant narrative (economic self-sufficiency) and possible alternative narratives (psychological self-sufficiency or human capital development). Hong et al. (2012) succinctly state the challenge this provides for evaluators, arguing that a "…lack of clarity in the specifics of the definition makes it very difficult to effectively evaluate the success of self-sufficiency policies and programs" (p. 324).

For example, if a job training program is provided within an economic self-sufficiency framework (possibly using a 'work first' approach), then the number of clients finding jobs within a specific time period might be considered a good measure of program success. But as Tango and Kolondinsky (2004) point out, this provides little data as to whether participants found a job (of any sort) or whether the job found matched an intended or desired job (thus offering longer-term career potential). Johnson & Corcoran (2003) note that many factors affect the ability of training participants to obtain a 'good job' or transition into one from a 'bad job', including job skills and occupation-specific experience.

While it is harder to evaluate the 'quality' of jobs obtained in addition to the 'quantity', this is noted as an important factor of program evaluation. They go on to note that "…because most welfare-to-work programs have focused narrowly on job placement, knowledge is unfortunately limited about how to design and implement programs that promote job retention and job advancement. Analyses that inform and evaluate the likely effects of various post-employment services is an important topic for future research" (p. 635).

Evaluating program success on the basis of the numbers of jobs found by program participants also raises other challenges. Taylor and Friedel (2011) note the challenges incurred in working with ‘multi-barriered clients’ who may require extensive program support prior to becoming employable. Further, in these types of programs there is often a conflict between providing services to those with ‘greatest need’ and those most likely to become employed, especially if the evaluation period is relatively short and the program is held accountable for employment results (p. 828).

The lack of clarity about program intent has resulted in confusing evaluation findings. As Loomis et al. (2003) point out, “Comparing outcomes of labour force attachment (LFA) programs to human capital development (HCD) programs has led to inconsistent and contradictory findings, however. Inconsistencies in findings may be related to difference in participants’ baseline characteristics (e.g., level of education and job experience) and program models, as well as the lack of capacity of a program’s local economy to support increased employment rates” (p. 30).

Hong et al (2012) suggest evaluating self-sufficiency as a process, rather than an outcome, “which starts from overcoming unrealistic financial goals, building inner strength and future outlook, acquiring skills and resources, and then moving forward toward realistic financial goals” (p. 324).

Several authors questioned whether self-sufficiency was even a realistic goal for many program participants (e.g., Taylor & Friedel, 2011; Woodward, 2014) and note that for many participants moving from unemployment to employment does not equate with moving out of poverty. For example, one study of 17 participants in an Alberta welfare-to-work program found that at the end of 1 year, only 9 of the participants had employment and of those, only 4 had secured full-time employment. The top salary in this group was $18,000/year. The other 5 had secured part-time employment, with relatively low rates of pay ($6-$13/hour), while the other 8 were not employed at that time. The majority of participants did not surpass the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). The authors note these employment rates mirror data from the Alberta government regarding the provincial Skills to Work program, and also note that findings from the SSP found that after the income subsidy ended, 80% of participants were living below the LICOs (Breitkreuz & Williamson, 2012).

Measurement issues

The challenges inherent in measuring ‘success’ in the context of self-sufficiency are implicit in the above discussion. However, it should be noted that even with clarity as to the expected outcome of education and job training for self-sufficiency, numerous other evaluation challenges exist.

One of the most significant challenges is that of different stakeholders valuing different benchmarks of program success. For program funders, common benchmarks of success include getting a job; reduction in welfare payments to program participants; increasing income from earnings (Loomis et al., 2003) and similar measures demonstrating the effectiveness of programs aimed at moving participants off welfare and other forms of state support. This may be a typical evaluation approach, but it discounts the fact that many of the outcomes lay well outside of direct program control, including participant characteristics, external supports such as childcare and housing that enable participation in the labour force, and state of the labour market, and whether demand for labour exceeds existing supply.

This results in a situation in which local agencies are “…doomed if they follow their mission to empower the most vulnerable and disconnected workers to become motivated and work ready without an immediate work outcome. They also are doomed if they allow themselves to become employer dependent and celebrate their short-term success by placing people in employment only to find a large turnover problem among them. (Hong 2013, p. 357)

There can be significant variation in evaluation measures valued by program participants and caseworkers in contrast to those valued by program managers and funders. The latter may be more inclined towards a measure of economic self-sufficiency approach, while the former may give priority to measuring human capital development and participant empowerment (e.g., see Woodward, 2014 and Hong, 2013). When this happens, the evaluation challenge is that "…for non-profit organizations, it becomes problematic when services are rendered based upon their mission to address psychological conceptualizations of self-sufficiency but program performance is evaluated based on economic self-sufficiency outcomes" (Hong, 2013, pp. 358-359).

While there are many gaps in the self-sufficiency literature, one notable one is the lack of information from the perspective of education and job-training program participants and subsequent lack of related measurement tools to capture the various dimensions of their experience. One study which did examine the promise of self-sufficiency from a client perspective found that while program participants "…accepted the discourse of self-sufficiency and wanted to be part of the mainstream" (p. 670), structural barriers such as access to transportation, child care, and low-wage jobs without benefits presented challenges that were difficult to overcome. As Breitkreuz and Williamson (2012) note, "…the everyday organization of participants' lives, in particular the actualities of their limited employment opportunities and complex child care requirements, did not fit with the prevailing discourse that employment leads to self-sufficiency" (p. 672). This speaks to the importance of ensuring that program evaluation includes data collection on the actual experiences of program participants in order to fully understand the challenges they face.

For many evaluations, economic self-sufficiency remains the dominant benchmark of success. Hong (2013) suggests benchmarking psychological self-sufficiency to monitor how the process of change in individuals contributes to program completion and job retention outcomes. In this way "psychological self-sufficiency can serve as a tool for evaluating the process of community practice as an interim benchmark for outputs that can translate to long-term labour market outcomes, particularly employment retention" (p. 375). This approach aligns with Weigensberg et al.'s (2012) suggestion to measure program processes and outcomes for individual clients through the lens of subpopulations, characteristics and employment barriers to develop "risk-adjusted performance expectations" (p. 374).

LePage et al. (2011) speak to the importance of using a multi-definitional view of employment, including days missed, time on job, and changes in employment, rather than just a simple metric of 'employed' or 'unemployed'. Johnson and Corcoran (2003) note the importance of distinguishing between three possible post-training states – unemployment, employment in a 'bad' job, and employment in a 'good' job, and learning more about the post-training trajectory of program participants, for example, whether entry into the labour force leads participants to better and more secure employment in future.

Other evaluation challenges noted in the literature:

- Due to the marginalized nature of program participants, many studies do not include data on those who 'opted-out' or otherwise failed to complete training (Woodward, 2014);
- Evaluation findings varied by whether short or long-term outcomes were measured (Loomis, et al., 2003) and often failed to assess beyond basic metrics;

- The programs focus heavily on the responsibility of program participants to find employment but do not measure the impact of exogenous variables, such as a lack of local employment options, on program success (Pickering, 2000).

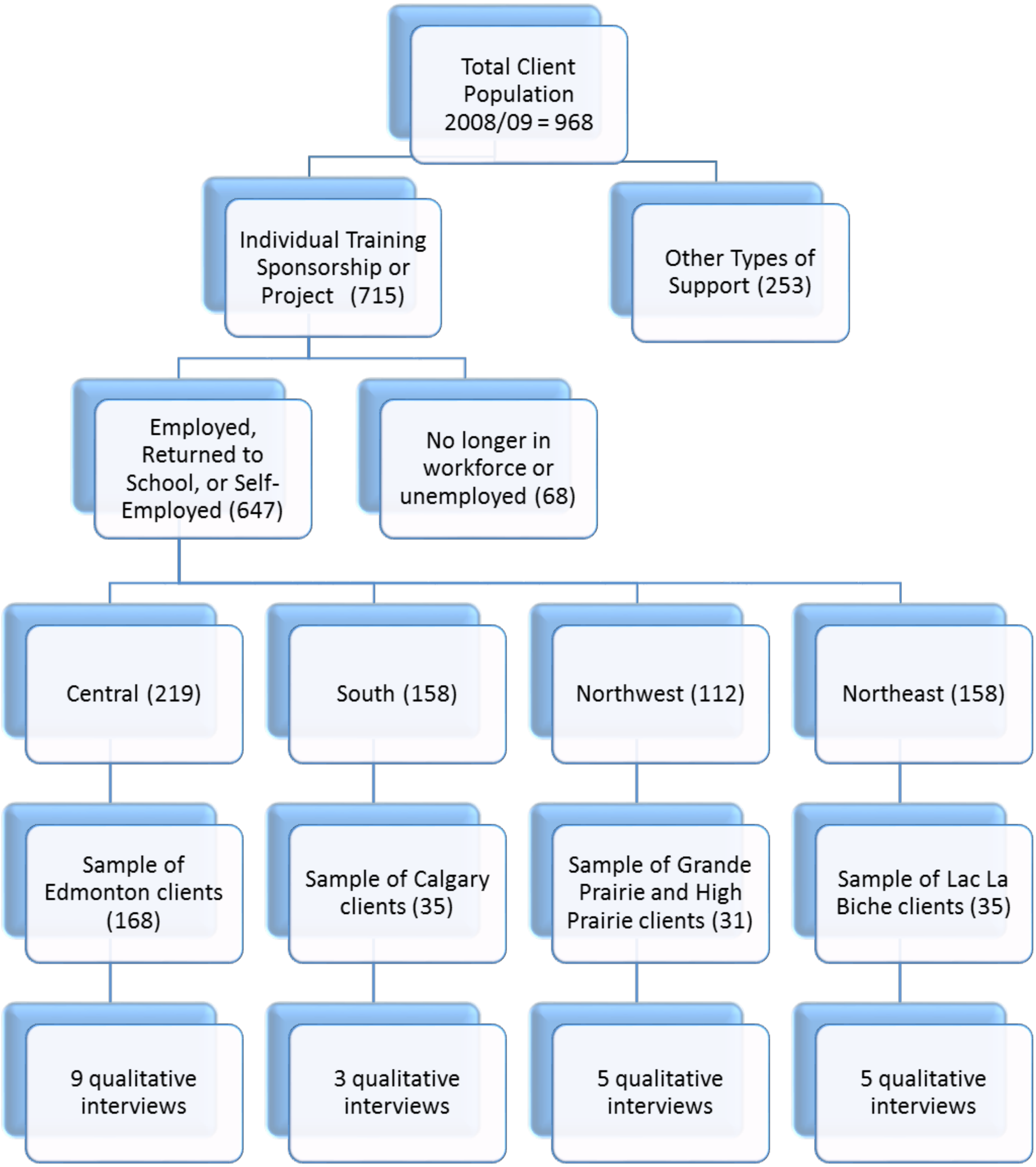
Finally, Weigensberg et al.'s (2012) thoughtful analysis of successful workforce development programs provide a set of recommendations for future program evaluation:

1. Develop a common set of measures across programs;
2. Develop longitudinal measures on individuals to assess outcomes over time;
3. Analyze outcomes by sub-populations, including participants characteristics and barriers to employment, in order to develop risk-adjusted performance expectations; and
4. Expand measures of program process and outcomes, including factors related to the individual client, program, organization and external context.

Literature Review Conclusion

In conclusion, while there is no literature specifically focusing on the topic of Métis labour market self-sufficiency, there is research on the 3 key elements of this topic: Aboriginal and Métis employment; self-sufficiency; and lessons learned from other employment and job training programs. An exploration of research literature in these areas shows the complexity inherent in evaluating the Métis training-to-employment program and raises many questions for future exploration.

Appendix 2: Client Population and Sample Sizes



Appendix 3: Client Recruitment Script

Telephone Script for MTE Staff

Hi. This is (NAME of MTE STAFF MEMBER) from the Métis Training to Employment Office, (SPECIFY WHICH OFFICE OR REGION).

I'm calling you today because of your previous involvement (from 2008/09) with the Labour Market Development program offered by the Métis Nation of Alberta. This program is now called Métis Training to Employment (MTE) and is delivered by the Rupertsland Institute.

I've been asked to let you know that the University of Alberta is conducting a qualitative research study about the impact of the MTE (formerly Labour Market Development) program on labour market self-sufficiency for Métis clients. The purpose of the study is to assess labour market self-sufficiency among MTE clients.

Would you be interested in hearing more about this study?

(IF NO, ACCEPT WITH NO FURTHER QUESTIONS AND POLITELY SAY GOODBYE. IF YES, PROCEED TO NEXT SECTION.)

The research team would like to conduct individual interviews with clients who have accessed MTE (formerly Labour Market Development) programs in the past to find out what difference the program has made for them.

This is an opportunity for you to speak openly about how your participation in this project has impacted you. Your thoughts and ideas are an important part of ensuring that both the program and its funders understand exactly how your participation with MTE (formerly Labour Market Development) has made a difference (if any) in your life. The results of this study may influence future funding and program decisions for MTE.

As you are a previous MTE (Labour Market Development) client, the research team would like to interview you as part of the research study. If you are interested, and only with your explicit consent, I will ask you if it's okay to share your contact information (name and phone number) with the researcher team so that they may contact you independently to schedule an interview with you.

The interview would take place at a mutually agreeable time and location between the dates of April 7 – April 18th. The interview can be conducted in-person here at the MTE office, or at another location such as a coffee shop or restaurant, or by phone, whichever you prefer. As a token of appreciation, the research team will be offering $25 grocery cards (such as Safeway, IGA, or other major retailer in your city) to thank you for your participation. The cards will be given at the beginning of your interview (or mailed for phone interviews), so that if you decide to stop the interview at any time you will still be able to keep the gift card.

Consent to Share Information with the Research Team

To summarize, the purpose of my call is to ask if it's okay to share your name and phone number with the research team. You may choose to say yes or no to this request, and you do not have to give a reason. Furthermore, if you say yes, you can still later decide whether or not you want to be interviewed.

1. Do you have any questions about this request? (If yes, address the questions / refer to additional information below)

2. Do you provide consent to sharing your name and contact information with the research team? How would you prefer the researchers contact you (phone, email, text)?

Questions About the Study:

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to speak to the primary investigator for any reason, please call or email Chris Andersen at 780.492.4814 or chris.andersen@ualberta.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, call the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta, 780-492-0459. The Research Ethics Office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies. These people are not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

Appendix 4: Client Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title:	Métis Training to Employment: Labour Market Self-Sufficiency Study
Investigator:	Chris Andersen
Researcher:	Laurie McCaffrey
Contact:	Chris Andersen (780.492.4814) or chris.andersen@ualberta.ca, Faculty of Native Studies, 2-31 Pembina Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6J 2R8
Sponsor	Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this explanation about the study and its risks and benefits before you decide if you would like to take part. You should take as much time as you need to make your decision. You should ask the researcher to explain anything that you don't understand and make sure that all of your questions have been answered before signing this consent form. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Background and Purpose:

The purpose of the research study is to determine whether the Métis Training to Employment (MTE) program delivered by the Rupertsland Institute (RLI) (formerly the Labour Market Development program delivered by the Métis Nation of Alberta) is meeting the mandated goal of achieving client self-sufficiency following a labour market intervention. To answer this question, our research team will review academic literature regarding labour market self-sufficiency within a Métis context; conduct a secondary analysis of existing client database information and program employment outcomes; and conduct qualitative interviews with program clients and staff regarding the impact of the program and recommendations for improvement.

Study Design & Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in an interview that should normally take no longer than one hour. Once you provide consent, the interview process will begin. Interviews will be recorded with audio equipment. The investigator will provide you with a list of discussion questions. You may choose to stick to the interview guidelines, or engage in free conversation, suggesting other questions and directions of discussion. Should you feel uncomfortable at any point, the researcher will stop the interviewing process. You may continue with the interview at your discretion. You have until April 30 to change your mind about your participation. If you change your mind before then, simply contact us at chris.andersen@ualberta.ca and we will remove your interview from the project.

Risks:

There are minimal risks in this study. You will be asked questions about the MTE program and how it has impacted your participation in the labour market, and more specifically, the extent to which it has contributed to labour market self-sufficiency. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer, and your comments will never be linked to you as an individual.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study, or to be in the study now and then change your mind later. You may leave the study at any time without affecting your standing or relationship with the MTE program. You many refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer, or not answer an interview question by saying “pass.”

Confidentiality:

If you agree to join this study, the investigator will interview you and collect only the information needed for this study. Personal information is any information that could be used to identify you and includes your name, address, date of birth, position in community.

All information will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study and for a period of five years after completion. Records will be destroyed after five years.

Your responses in the interview will be anonymous. We may use quotations to illustrate themes, labeled as “Comment from previous MTE client”, but your name or identifying personal information will not be linked to your comments.

Expenses Associated with Participating in the Study:

There are no expenses associated with participating in the study.

Honorariums:

As a token of appreciation, the interviewer would like to offer you a $25 gift card to a local retail/grocery chain located in the city where you live (e.g., Safeway, IGA). The cards will be given at the beginning of your interview (or mailed for phone interviews), so that if you decide to stop the interview at any time you will still be able to keep the gift card.

Questions About the Study:

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to speak to the primary investigator for any reason, please call or email Chris Andersen at 780.492.4814 or chris.andersen@ualberta.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, call the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta, 780-492-0459. The Research Ethics Office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies. These people are not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

Consent:

This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I know that I may leave the study at any time. I agree to take part in this study.

____________________________ ______________________ ________________

Print Participant’s Name Participant’s Signature Date

You will be given a copy of this signed consent form or you may have the option of consenting orally, which will be recorded.

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

____________________________ ___________________________ __________________

Print Researcher Name Researcher Signature Date

Appendix 5: Client Interview Guide

Hi. My name is (INTERVIEWER NAME) and I'm part of an independent research team contracted by the University of Alberta to assess the effectiveness of the Métis-Training-to-Employment (MTE) Program (formerly known as the Labour Market Development program, Métis Nation of Alberta).

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the comments you make will be anonymous. That means we will not link your name to your comments in any report. We may use quotes, indicating that the following comments were made by former Labour Market Development clients, to provide examples of how the program is working and what difference it has made.

You do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you are free to withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason and it will not affect the services you receive from the MTE program or any other organization in the future.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you tell me how you first heard about the Labour Market Development program?

2. What kind of support/program did you access (Refer to List of Program Areas if necessary)?

3. One of the current goals of the MTE (formerly Labour Market Development) program is "Labour Market Self-Sufficiency for Métis clients". What does labour market self-sufficiency mean to you?

4. (Based on some of our research/literature review findings/other interviews): We have also heard that labour market self-sufficiency means:
   - earning a living wage
   - sustained/long-term employment
   - finding a meaningful career path
   - finding work in your intended field of employment

   To what extent has the Labour Market Development program helped you to achieve (the identified categories of) labour market self-sufficiency?

   (Further explore what this means from the perception of the client. For example: What is your current job? Does it relate to the training/support you received from the program? To what extent are you satisfied with your career development? Do you feel that you have achieved labour market self-sufficiency? Why or why not? What additional supports would be helpful? Identified barriers to labour market self-sufficiency?)

5. Overall, what aspects of the Labour Market Development program were most helpful to you? How were they helpful?

6. What aspects of the Labour Market Development program could be improved? Please provide an example or suggestions for how it could be improved.

7. Do you have any other comments or questions?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 6: Staff Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title:	Métis Training to Employment: Labour Market Self-Sufficiency Study
Investigator:	Chris Andersen
Researcher:	Laurie McCaffrey
Contact:	Chris Andersen (780.492.4814) or chris.andersen@ualberta.ca, Faculty of Native Studies, 2-31 Pembina Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6J 2R8
Sponsor	Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this explanation about the study and its risks and benefits before you decide if you would like to take part. You should take as much time as you need to make your decision. You should ask the researcher to explain anything that you don't understand and make sure that all of your questions have been answered before signing this consent form. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Background and Purpose:

The purpose of the research study is to determine whether the Métis Training to Employment (MTE) program, delivered by the Rupertsland Institute (RLI), is meeting the mandated goal of achieving client self-sufficiency following a labour market intervention. To answer this question, our research team will review academic literature regarding labour market self-sufficiency within a Métis context; conduct a secondary analysis of existing client database information and program employment outcomes; and conduct qualitative interviews with MTE clients and staff regarding the impact of the program and recommendations for improvement.

Study Design & Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in a one on one interview with the researcher or a focus group with your colleagues that should normally take no longer than an hour and a half. Once you provide consent, the interview process will begin. Interviews will be recorded with audio equipment. The investigator will provide you with a list of discussion questions. You may choose to stick to the interview guidelines, or engage in free conversation, suggesting other questions and directions of discussion. Should you feel uncomfortable at any point, the researcher will stop the interviewing process. You may continue with the interview at your discretion. You have until April 30 to change your mind about your participation. If you change your mind before then, simply contact us at chris.andersen@ualberta.ca and we will remove your interview from the project.

Risks:

There are minimal risks in this study. You will be asked questions about the MTE program and how you believe it impacts your clients' participation in the labour market, and more specifically, the extent to which it has contributed to labour market self-sufficiency for them. During the focus group confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as you will be participating and answering questions alongside your colleagues. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer, and your comments will never be linked to you as an individual.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study, or to be in the study now and then change your mind later. You may leave the study at any time without affecting your standing or relationship with the MTE program. You many refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer, or not answer an interview question by saying “pass.”

Confidentiality:

If you agree to join this study, the investigator will interview you and collect only the information needed for this study. Personal information is any information that could be used to identify you and includes your name, address, date of birth, position in community.

All information will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study and for a period of five years after completion. Records will be destroyed after five years.

Your responses in the interview will be anonymous. We may use quotations to illustrate themes, labeled as “Comment from MTE Staff”, but your name or identifying personal information will not be linked to your comments.

Expenses Associated with Participating in the Study:

There are no expenses associated with participating in the study. We will arrange a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview or focus group during your regular paid hours of work.

Questions About the Study:

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to speak to the primary investigator for any reason, please call or email Chris Andersen at 780.492.4814 or chris.andersen@ualberta.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or have concerns about this study, call the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta, 780-492-0459. The Research Ethics Office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies. These people are not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

Consent:

This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I know that I may leave the study at any time. I agree to take part in this study.

Print Participant's Name	Participant's Signature	Date

You will be given a copy of this signed consent form or you may have the option of consenting orally, which will be recorded.

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Print Researcher Name	Researcher Signature	Date

Appendix 7: Staff Interview Guide

Hi. My name is (INTERVIEWER NAME) and I'm part of an independent research team contracted by the University of Alberta to assess the effectiveness of the Métis-Training-to-Employment (MTE) Program.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and the comments you make will be anonymous. That means we will not link your name to your comments in any report. We may use quotes, indicating that the following comments were made by MTE staff, to provide examples of how the program is working and what difference it has made.

You do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you are free to withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason and it will not affect the services you receive from MTE or any other organization in the future.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you tell me about your history with the MTE program?

2. What do you think is the most important support that you provide to your clients? What are the key barriers/challenges that this support is intended to help overcome?

3. One of the goals of the MTE program is "Labour Market Self-Sufficiency for Métis clients". What does labour market self-sufficiency mean to you?

4. Based on some of our research/literature review findings/other interviews, we have also heard that labour market self-sufficiency means:

    - earning a living wage
    - sustained/long-term employment
    - supporting clients to identify a meaningful career path
    - finding work in the clients' intended field of employment

    To what extent does the MTE program help clients achieve (the identified categories of) labour market self-sufficiency? How does it help? What additional supports are necessary?

5. In your opinion what aspects of the MTE program are most helpful for clients? How are they helpful?

6. What aspects of the MTE program do you think could be improved? Please provide an example or suggestions for how it could be improved.

7. Do you have any other comments or questions?

Thank you very much for your time.

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