



# **The Aboriginal Women For Tomorrow Program**

## **Follow-up Evaluation Review**



**Pilot Project**

**May 2007**

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## **1.0 Outcome Evaluation**

### **1.1 Focus on capacity building**

CESO's focus through the AWFT program is on individual capacity development for Aboriginal women in Canada. This refers to individuals and the way their skills and abilities are strengthened to contribute to community development objectives. Capacity development at this level helps these individuals to realize their development objectives in their personal and professional lives, building on existing knowledge and skills, and extending these in new directions as fresh opportunities appear. CESO recognizes that focusing on this level alone without adequate attention given to higher levels (organizational and societal) and broader processes of empowerment will yield only limited benefits and results. It is for this reason that AWFT is offered in tandem with assignments that address the unique needs of Aboriginal organizations and institutions.

Since capacity development is a process, not an end in itself, its results cannot be measured easily. The classic project cycle that implies that solutions to development problems be determined at the outset and that the project be delivered in a predictable timetable does not apply easily to capacity development that is based on long-term changes in people's behaviours and motivations. A capacity building initiative does not proceed in a linear fashion from problem identification to project preparation, implementation and appraisal. As a result, any attempt to describe results in capacity building requires a complex analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and can only represent progress in facilitating change and building on local energy.

Recognizing that measuring tangible results from individual capacity building process is an inherent challenge of all knowledge-based initiatives, CESO values both qualitative and quantitative results, and depends on the self-reflection of participants as an accurate statement of outcome. Measurable outputs for AWFT are therefore self-reported and focus on softer gains such as knowledge transferred, confidence and self-esteem built and change of outlook that may begin to value the personal skills and individual potential of Aboriginal Women.

### **1.2 Methodology**

#### **1.2.1 Data Collection Instrument**

CESO conducted phone interviews with a small sample of past AWFT participants using a semi-structured interview guide to allow for consistency, but accommodating some required flexibility. Semi-structured interviews are guided conversations where broad questions are asked, which do not constrain the conversation, and new questions are allowed to arise as a result of the discussion. This is different from questionnaires and surveys where there are very structured questions that are not deviated from. In a semi-structured interview, the set of questions are prepared but open, allowing the interviewees to express opinions through discussion. Questions are generally simple, with a logical sequence to help the discussion flow.

Interviews were kept under 15 minutes and focused on the application of new skills and knowledge gained from participating in the workshops, any resulting outcomes that may be attributed to the AWFT workshops, as well as recommendations for improvements to the workshop content/delivery and suggestions for future workshop topics.

### 1.2.2 Confidentiality/anonymity

In order to respect the privacy of participants, all individual responses are kept confidential and reported in aggregate form - respondents are identified by name only where their express permission was granted. Although anonymous, all other responses are linked to the community and province in which they participated.

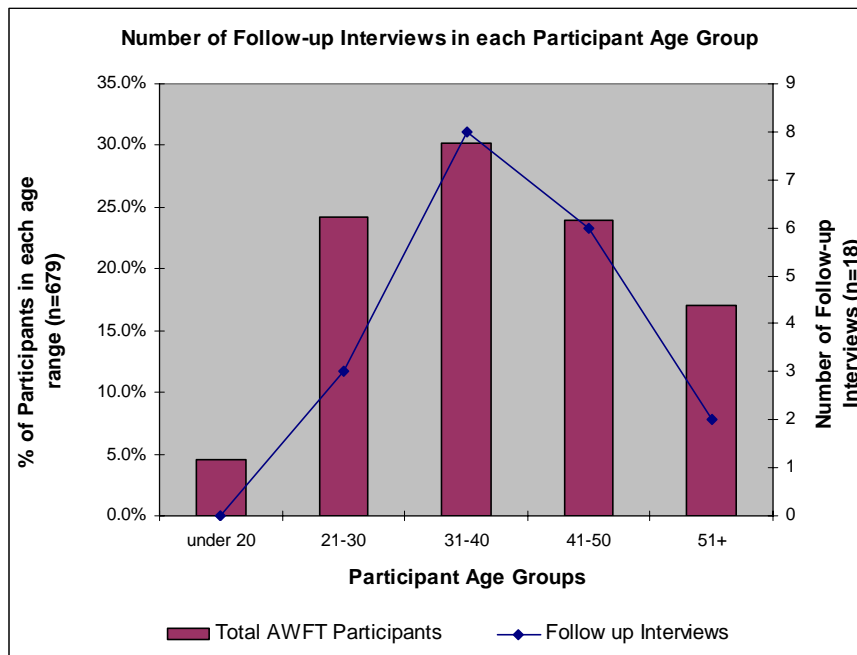
Some demographic information was asked at the end of the interview in order to provide us with generic information by which to profile the respondents. These questions were optional for participants and included the same demographic information asked on the workshop evaluation forms: age, level of education, location (on/off reserve), Aboriginal heritage, and current employment and self-employment status.

### 1.2.3 Respondent Profile

Eighteen women from eight different communities were interviewed:

1. Paq'tnkek Atlantic
2. Constance Lake ON
3. Garden River, ON
4. New Credit ON
5. Red Lake ON
6. Sault St Marie ON
7. Seine River ON
8. Toronto ON

All of the women interviewed were of First Nation heritage, and 13 of the 18 currently live on reserve. Figure 1 illustrates that, with regard to age, the participants of the follow-up interviews represented a cross-section of the overall AWFT participant population, with the largest portion of respondents (eight of the 18) being between the ages of 31-40 years, followed by six women between 41 and 50 years of age.



**Figure 1: Average age range of AWFT Participants and age of Interview Respondents**

Similarly, the levels of education of the women interviewed paralleled those of the average AWFT participants. Of the 9 women who responded to this question, four had completed

secondary school, and three had studied at a university level, one had studied at the college level, and another had other special training. Although all respondents have at some point worked outside of the home, 11 women currently work outside of the home, and none are currently looking for a job. With regard to self employment, three respondents are currently running their own business, and two are hoping to start their own business in the near future. As is common for the majority age range, 13 of the 18 (72%) respondents have dependent children or elders in their care.

### 1.3 Workshop Outputs and Outcomes

#### 1.3.1 Objectives for Participating

The most common objective for participating in the AWFT workshop amongst the interviewed women was to improve written and verbal communication skills, followed closely by the need to improve business and financial management skills, as illustrated in Figure 2. Almost half (seven) of the women CEO spoke with reported a desire to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of Boards, Chiefs and Councils (“learn governance roles/responsibilities”). This desire on behalf of participants supports AWFT’s key objective of building civic engagement and the awareness amongst Aboriginal women of their rights and responsibilities as community members.

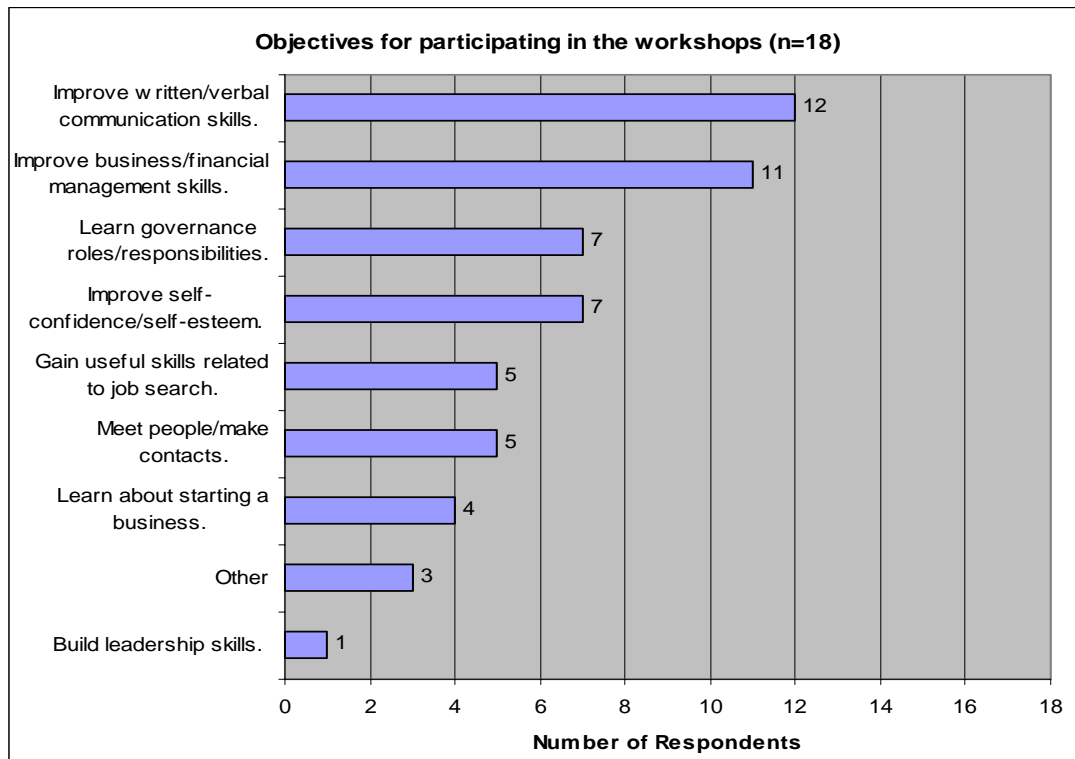


Figure 2: Objectives for Participating in AWFT

Several women added more individual detail regarding their motivation for participating. These ranged from a more passive, general interest in the topic and a desire to participate in their community, to specific and unique goals and objectives for participating, including:

- To learn about Council operations and finances
- To increase service provision skills & capacity, especially public relations / outreach to community.
- To update and refresh business knowledge (as a small business owner for the last 30 years)
- To contribute to life long learning, to enhance financial and communication skills needed to work with a variety of customers for current job
- To increase familiarity with work force of today, and more information to help with the eventual start-up of a small business
- To learn more about legal rights in family and custody law
- To learn more about marketing of handicrafts, small enterprise start up and job search skills.

The accessibility of the workshops, in that it was local, geared to women and free of cost, was an important condition in attending for many women.

### 1.3.2 Challenges and Barriers faced by Participants

In an effort to continue to design programs that meet the needs of, and work towards dismantling the barriers faced by Aboriginal women, our interviewers discussed with respondents the types of regular challenges they face that may prevent or limit their full engagement in the community and/or economy. The most common responses amongst the eighteen women were:

**Table 1: Types of Challenges and Barriers faced by participants**

Type of Challenge	Number of Respondents (n=18)
Child/elder care obligation	4
Lack of transportation	1
Lack of jobs in community	3
Lack of job training	3
Lack of education	4
Lack of computer skills	3
Changing life circumstances or personal issues	3
Literacy	1
Lack of access to a computer	1
Other	11

Other challenges identified by respondents include:

- “Lack of formal education, plus the small size of community/small mindedness/ needs “outsidy” input”
- “The workshops helped with learning that significant differences exist between government and Aboriginal organizations and approaches - this can be a barrier if it not recognized. She has learned how important policies are and how they have to be adhered to”

- “She identifies the low wages in community for basic jobs as a significant challenge, as well as a lack of jobs in the community, and changing life circumstances or personal issues. She was widowed 7 months ago and is still "learning to be alone"
- “Personal challenges and high functioning literacy, a lack of computer skills and formal education, as well as a lack of transportation in the community are all challenges”
- “She identifies the reality that local folks like to shop elsewhere & are not always aware of or supportive of local businesses (lots of advertising needed)”
- “No overwhelming challenges, but identifies a lack of jobs in community, few opportunities for job training and formal education, and a lack of computer skills amongst women as key challenges. She notes that the women in her community have overcome many of these barriers, and describes her peers as "magnificent””

### 1.3.3 Immediate Benefits for Participants

When asked to identify which aspects of the workshops proved to be most helpful to the respondents, three key areas stood out.

- 12 of the 18 women identified **communication skill development** as being the most helpful aspect of the workshop, including both the opportunity for public speaking practice, and telephone communication skills.
- nine women found the **budgeting** and financial management aspects of the workshops to be particularly helpful.
- seven women found the overall assistance in **job searching** and personal marketing strategies as particular benefits (included resume writing and interview practice)

All women interviewed said that they had benefited from participating in the workshops, in varying degrees:

“I am able to put budgeting knowledge gradually into practice, and am building self confidence in using computers”.

*Participant, Seine River ON*

“The public speaking exercise gave me confidence to enroll in and speak up in university classes” - *Nancy Rowe Henry, New Credit ON*

“[The workshops] helped me meet up with other adults, especially other parents” - *Barb Clarke, Garden River, ON*

#### Success Story 1: Improved immediate and long term earning potential

Twenty eight year old Deni, mother and craftsperson, attended four of the CESO/AWFT workshops in her home community of Garden River in 2006, with the double intent of exploring how better to market her products and also to improve her job search skills. In an interview with a CESO In House VA, she reported that she improved her knowledge and skills in both areas and has thus added to both her immediate and long term earning potential. It was interesting that she told the CESO volunteer interviewer that the hands-on practice section of the Communication Workshop was key to improving her self-marketing and telephone skills. She was certainly articulate and enthusiastic on the phone, a big achievement for someone who self described as someone who used to “mutter” into the receiver. She has already expanded the marketing of her crafts, both locally and in Wawa. She has also expanded her part time support worker hours to provide better income in the meanwhile. She hopes the AWFT workshops will continue to be available to a broad spectrum of First Nations women, including those like herself who are not full band members so are sometimes excluded from equal opportunity. Her long term goal is to open her own store which may include an educational component for children.

“I gained a greater understanding of myself and my potential, gained knowledge; would have benefited from it before selecting courses at college as the band financials were too complicated for me.” – Participant, Paq’tnkek, Nova Scotia

### 1.3.4 Outputs of AWFT’s Capacity Building Efforts

As discussed in Section 1.1, the types of outputs anticipated for the AWFT program included new skills and knowledge, support networks established, increased confidence and self-esteem and a changed of outlook. These are summarized in Figure 3. The majority of women interviewed (12 of 18) indicated that the AWFT program gave them new knowledge and new skills (11 of 18). Almost half indicated that the program had improved their self confidence.

### Success Story 2: Reinforcing and Building on Existing Skills

Cheryl Betker lives and runs a store in Red Lake Ontario, a retail clothing outlet she started last November (2007). Initially she used the skills and knowledge she learned at the CESO AWFT workshops to expand her work as an employment counselor, then to launch her own venture. She thought the hands-on exercises in the workshop curriculum were very effective ways of approaching participant skill development, particularly the career game and the telephone practice. On reflection, she thinks that more content on the topic of time management would be helpful, as she finds juggling the many demands of small business ownership alongside being a mom and an active community member quite the challenge. She followed up her learning about boards, councils and committees at that workshop, by joining a local Board of Directors. Cheryl also said she found it inspiring to hear about CESO being a volunteer organization where individuals shared their knowledge and skills with others both nationally and internationally. She could see herself being a CESO volunteer in the future, though for the time being she has to apply all her attention to her business and her family.

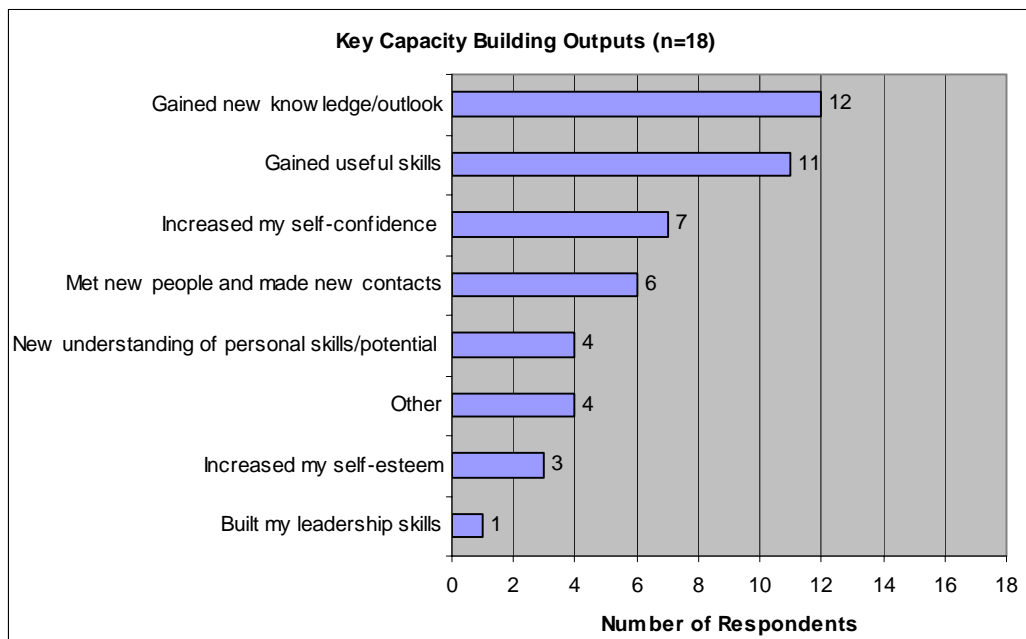


Figure 3: Key Capacity Building Outputs

### 1.3.5 Longer-term Outcomes

With outputs such as increased knowledge, confidence, skills and improved outlooks in hand, many of the interviewed women translated these into tangible outcomes in both their professional and personal lives. Thirteen of the 18 women agreed that they had used or built on the knowledge they had gained from the workshops. Table 2 summarizes the wide range of outcomes that the participants have attributed, at least in part, to participation in the AWFT workshops.

**Table 2: Types of Capacity Building Outcomes**

<b>Types of Capacity Building Outcomes</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
Created a resume	1
Updated resume	2
Set a goal for starting a new job	2
Set a goal for starting a new business	2
Set a goal for increasing your roles / responsibilities in your current job	2
Set a goal for changing / improving your existing job	4
Carried out an important job related conversation	2
Applied for a new position	3
Taken on new responsibilities in an existing position	3
Increased hours in existing position	1
Researched a new business	1
Started a new position	4
Started a new business	1
Other (see below)	9

Several other examples of knowledge application include:

1. "She took out a micro loan to expand her craft business - had to write a business plan for it, prepare a budget and marketing plan"
2. "She now works part time at library , started 2 months ago"
3. "She has recently started a more senior position as a coordinator"
4. "She now has a six month trainee contract in employment program of the Band"
5. "She has used the new knowledge on the job with clients – she opened her own business last November"
6. "Her supervisor has asked her to do her own budgeting for a program"
7. "She had several job interviews and worked part-time in a store for a while although she works as respite worker more regularly "
8. "She has learned about the disability support program and has the confidence and knowledge needed to apply for disability"
9. "She is less shy than before"

In addition to these many respondents have set new personal goals since participating in the workshops. For instance, set new goals for taking on a leadership role in your community, for community involvement, or set new family related goals. One woman had gained the confidence to apply for a Master's program, and several women had set goals for becoming more active in their community. Another stated that she had "made a bigger commitment to ensuring home & family time within a busy work schedule".

### **Success Story 3: Building the confidence of mature Aboriginal women**

For Stephanie, a mature woman from the Two Rivers New Credit community, the CESO AWFT workshops came along at just the right time. She had recently moved “back home” after her children moved out and on with their adult lives, leaving her ready to get back into the work force. She says that attending the five workshops helped her apply for and obtain a trainee contract job with the Band Council. The experience and knowledge she gained over the eight workshop days boosted her confidence in her abilities and she found the hands-on exercises such as the mock interview practice especially useful. She complimented the volunteer facilitators on their knowledge and enthusiasm, and the professional yet friendly way they provided information and specific business contacts. She is now studying accounting online to round out her own business skills, with the long term goal of opening her own business. Her current work as a trainee employment counselor reinforces her belief in the need for workshops on how to think about career development, do job search and undertake specific training. Young women who attending university or college should be encouraged to attend before they complete their studies. She and her fellow Women’s Group members have a great commitment to the health and success of their community – well done!

#### **1.3.6 Participant Recommendations for CESO**

As a strong testament to client identified and expressed needs, all respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating in other CESO workshops, and offered several suggestions for workshops in their community:

- “same kind of sessions, for younger women, before they make educational decisions or drop out”
- “more on self esteem / assertive communication, more on resumes and cover letters”
- “pregnancy education, especially re. fetal alcohol, parenting workshops, for parents of teens not just little ones, help groups for youth i.e. re bullying, computer workshops”
- “CESO workshops directed to younger women 25 and under”
- “time management team building/ working better together”
- “more on vocational knowledge and self awareness”
- “how to get along better / how to work together / how to let go of past and move on into future”
- “finances – personal and business communications - of all kinds”
- “time management , stress management, handling crisis with high risk clients especially when workers are away and coverage provided by others.”
- “to help people to uncover and use their talents and motivate them to stick with using them”.
- “more on leadership, career advancement, computers, how to network”
- “these! plus more on career development and steps to take to choose and follow up on types of jobs.”
- “personal budgeting /money management / banking / saving”
- “women’s empowerment specific skills - life skills, basic computer, accounting
- “employment - including Labor Code etc”
- “small business, more information regarding re-entering workforce (resumes, communications, interviews)”
- “business planning”

#### **Success Story 4: Reinforcing and Building on Existing Skills**

Doris Hanscomb has been in business for 30 years as a craft producer and retailer on the Paq'tnkek reserve in Nova Scotia. She took all five CESO AWFT workshops because she strongly believes in "staying up to date" and is always trying to improve her business and financial skills. She expresses a strong concern that all members of her community get such an opportunity to understand their talents and to develop the skills necessary to make a living using them, by learning how to set up a business and train for then hold a job. Doris thinks that the CESO AWFT workshops provided such an opportunity, with curriculums that combine solid information and hands-on skill practice. She worked as an employee for others when younger, both in Canada and the USA, and knows that there are no easy route to success, but that seeking out the opportunity to uncover and use your best talents is an effort worth making.