



Connections to Action:

Report on the 2006
Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP)
Breaking Barriers Building Bridges
Conference Think Tank





Acknowledgements

The 2006 Internationally Educated Professionals Conference Think Tank Planning Committee was comprised of Rhonda Singer (Progress Career Planning Institute), Susan Brown (City of Toronto Economic Development), and Maureen (Mo) McKenna (mentoring with MOmentum Ltd.).

We acknowledge the support of the following Think Tank sponsors:

- Progress Career Planning Institute
- TD Bank Financial Group
- Toronto Community News
- City of Toronto Economic Development
- George Brown College

Heather Turnbull (Turnbull Consulting Group) and Susan Brown co-authored this report. Carol Ford (Bottomline Management Service) provided administrative support.



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May 12, 2006

Optimism, creativity, and an appetite for action infused the facilitated conversations and spontaneous networking amongst over 60 of the Toronto region's key thought leaders engaged with building bridges to meaningful employment for Canada's Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs). Progress Career Planning Institute (in partnership with TD Bank Financial Group, Toronto Community News, City of Toronto Economic Development, and George Brown College) again demonstrated its commitment to the vitality of Canada's workforce by hosting the 2006 IEP Conference Think Tank. Designed to take the three previous "Breaking Barriers Building Bridges" events to a new threshold of sustainability and relevance for IEPs, the Think Tank generated both passionate discussions and innovative proposals. Held on Friday, May 12, 2006 in the Members Lounge of Toronto City Hall, the round venue was a perfect metaphor for the kind of "thinking outside the box" that took place over the course of the day-long conference.

Progress Career Planning Institute's (PCPI's) President Rhonda Singer, who conceived the event and secured participation from leading stakeholders, set ambitious goals for the day: "From the outset, we envisioned bringing together career services professionals, business and public sector advocates, community-based groups and successful IEPs themselves to share *what's working* in immigrant job placement across the Toronto region; and furthermore, to leverage those successes into improving the myriad of processes and resources that can more effectively assist newcomers to obtain and keep better positions, faster."

Participants were equally stimulated in expressing their own "global wishes" for the session, emphasizing the need to "move from discussion to action," be better informed through "networking and establishing connections," and making meaningful progress on reducing complexity in the system, especially around credentialing.





Immigrant Success Central to the City of Toronto

Singer's intent was echoed by Toronto City Councillor Maria Augimeri, who in her welcoming remarks spoke passionately about her own experience as a second generation immigrant, as well as the employment challenges facing her culturally diverse constituents.

The General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, Donald Eastwood, observed that "accelerating the integration of immigrants into our workforce is critical for the continued success of our businesses – businesses that depend on the skills, creativity and innovative approaches immigrants bring to the City."

Although not on the formal agenda, Toronto Mayor David Miller attended part of the Think Tank, emphasizing that with a 50% immigrant population, Toronto's success depends in large part on the success of its immigrants. As an immigrant himself, he noted his personal interest and commitment to their social, civic and economic integration. He remarked to the delegates: "While past efforts have tended to focus on how best to help the immigrant adapt to the Canadian workplace, your work here today is truly innovative by virtue of approaching the issue from the other side – helping employers adapt to an increasingly immigrant workforce. By recognizing that Cultural Intelligence cuts both ways – that for both the immigrant and the Canadian born, being culturally intelligent is now a necessity for everyone in this new global world – you are completing the circle."

Diversity as a Creative Force in Business

Gérard Étienne, Vice President of Diversity Initiatives and Programs at the TD Bank Financial Group shared his insights and experiences both as a highly-skilled immigrant who successfully gained entry into Canada's business world, and as an employer who values the global perspectives immigrants bring to the workplace. Pulling no punches, Étienne eloquently challenged each and every one of us to break through our preconceptions about immigrants and urged us all to see the true worth of international experience.

The Importance of Cultural Intelligence

Rhonda Singer set the context for the Think Tank by expanding on the concept of Cultural Intelligence (CI) – a "new ingredient to managing the complexity of culture in Toronto's multicultural workforce." Using current labour and population statistics, plus extensive research in cultural values and dimensions, Singer made a compelling argument for CI's role as an essential skill and business case for driving success in Toronto's global economy.

Bringing an Appreciative Eye to the Issue

Facilitator Maureen McKenna introduced the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology as an appropriate strength-based approach to produce the collective desired outcomes. "By sharing stories and focusing on what works, we raise the potential for creativity, innovation, and positive action," McKenna noted. "It's not enough to realize we are like-minded on these issues: we must capitalize on our 'like-heartedness' to produce meaningful results."

Building on Past Successes

Participants quickly embarked on a series of interactive paired and group exercises designed to capture and synthesize from IEPs' own stories *what constitutes employment success* in the Canadian workforce. Common themes included:

- ✦ Achieving economic independence
- ✦ Feeling a sense of belonging to community
- ✦ Being a member of a team (social integration)
- ✦ Having the ability to open doors for family immigration
- ✦ Being an initiator of change and career choices
- ✦ Contributing to professional/volunteer bodies and associations
- ✦ Developing a professional network
- ✦ Working in a chosen field or a closely related field as a first job
- ✦ Finding a job that you love and never “working” a day in your life (that is, finding your passion)
- ✦ Gaining employment in the appropriate field (and having a fit at all levels)
- ✦ Fully participating in civic and community life (coming full circle)
- ✦ Gaining respect for “difference”
- ✦ Receiving recognition of skills, experience and credentials
- ✦ Achieving material wealth; gaining appropriate profile of position
- ✦ Being a role model for children; exceeding parents' accomplishments

As importantly, *the skills and other variables attributed to achieving this success* were identified as:

- ✦ Having a strong desire to succeed and believing in yourself
- ✦ Accepting risk and not being afraid to make mistakes
- ✦ Having the willingness to start over, change, adapt
- ✦ Having highly developed communication skills (understanding Canadian communications)
- ✦ Understanding importance of people skills
- ✦ Being outgoing – able to network, leverage relationships, adapt socially and have an open attitude
- ✦ Having a great sense of humour
- ✦ Being persistent and patient
- ✦ Being in touch with feelings; managing internal turmoil and emotions
- ✦ Developing a plan and doing the necessary research
- ✦ Having global experience prior to coming to Canada
- ✦ Being able to transfer skills literally – understanding transferable skills





- ✦ Being realistic
- ✦ Having high cultural, emotional intelligence
- ✦ Demonstrating strong business acumen and entrepreneurial skills
- ✦ Navigating cultural ambiguity
- ✦ Getting a bridging job to develop confidence
- ✦ Being in the right place at the right time
- ✦ Accessing mentoring and coaching
- ✦ Making contact with the appropriate professional association
- ✦ Working for companies that have a commitment to equality and diversity
- ✦ Gaining access to global companies that support international professionals
- ✦ Staying true to oneself and not compromising values
- ✦ Learning what Canadian employers want
- ✦ Explore continuing education here in Canada; learning Canadian values
- ✦ Developing an awareness of the hierarchical nature of the business environment

Dreaming the Future

Small groups then used their collective creativity, playfulness, imagination and expertise to create an ideal future in 2009, when IEPs are extremely successful in finding and retaining work they wish to do. Then they identified *what needed to happen between now and 2009 to create this ideal future*.

Some of the themes that emerged were:

- ✦ Overhaul the immigration point system to match labour required
- ✦ Accelerate the co-operation between all three orders of government
- ✦ Create web portals with information on accreditation, licensing, personalized coaching and mentoring, language training
- ✦ Provide access to customized geographic and labour market information
- ✦ Create tighter bridging and training programs
- ✦ Develop processes through professional associations and regulatory bodies that enable certification when immigrants are still in countries of origin
- ✦ Simplify credential recognition processes so that they are easy and quick
- ✦ Make sector specific language training available to all (and available in countries of origin)
- ✦ Develop social and professional networks for IEPs
- ✦ Provide networking opportunities and orientation to Toronto – mandatory orientation before immigrants arrive (Welcome Wagon)
- ✦ Connect high school students with IEPs – students could be mentors or assist IEPs to get to know their community
- ✦ Create holistic programs
- ✦ Take a “No wrong door” approach where service providers make accurate referrals if they cannot provide relevant information themselves



- ✦ Coordinate approach to Cultural Intelligence
 - Pre-immigration support and assessment
 - Language
 - Education
 - Job readiness
 - Workplace communication
- ✦ Develop and deliver effective employer education programs
- ✦ Ensure that employers are ready with tools and understanding and are willing to work with immigrants
- ✦ Build a mentor program that is available to all interested immigrants (5,000 trained, ready to go)
- ✦ Create www.yescanada.com (as opposed to the currently existing www.notcanada.com)

Making It Happen

Finally, Think Tank delegates clustered the various actions needed to create an ideal future for the employment of IEPs, *synthesizing the feedback into Four Key Action Areas that captured the passion of the group*:

1. Mentors
2. Employer Education
3. Informed Immigrants
4. Skilled Immigrant Transition Program

Participants then indicated their preference to either moving forward on their chosen initiative, or simply being kept informed on its progress.

This Think Tank was designed to gather innovative ideas from like-minded thought leaders; and from a systems perspective, facilitate these ideas into concrete, sustainable action – *ultimately securing better jobs, faster for Canada's Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs)*.





The following participants have indicated their level of commitment to the *Four Key Action Areas*:

Mentors

Active involvement:

Laurie McVittie

Keep informed:

Lauri Asikanen
Josephine Greyson
Margarida Almeida
Dave Lovelock
Charles Creppy
Malcolm Steven



Employer Education

Active involvement:

Lauri Asikainen
Patrick Chartrand
Sharon Leonard
Louise Gorby
Margarida Almeid
Nancy Millward
Dave Lovelock
Kevin McLellan
Bernadette Beaupre

Keep informed:

Charles Creppy
Wendy Molotkow
Mark Venning
Malcolm Steven
Eric Liu
Santha Tsang



Informed Immigrants

Active involvement:

Sharon Leonard
Margarida Almeida
Iona Mitchell
Linda Genesi-Williams
Malcolm Gabriel

Keep informed:

Nadeen Murray
Santha Tsang



Skilled Immigrant Transition Program

Active involvement:

Linda Genesi-Williams
Margarida Almeida
Dave Lovelock
Iona Mitchell
Minerva Hui
Jey Dharmaraj
Laurie McVittie
Eunice Greyson
Malcolm Gabriel
Hira Hahuja

Keep informed:

Kevin McLellan
Eric Liu
Charles Creppy
Patrick Chartrand
Louise Gorby





Wrap Up

The Think Tank concluded with Rhonda Singer acknowledging with great pride the energy and creativity of the group in envisioning a better future for Toronto region immigrants as they seek to enter the workforce. She noted that the Think Tank was the culmination of five years of hard work and effort: “While it was initially very difficult getting support for a conference specifically aimed at IEPs, it is so gratifying now to see from today’s attendance that the concept has clearly gained enough traction to inspire your participation today. Thank you for finding time out of your busy schedules to lend your commitment, wisdom and enthusiasm to this vital issue in our community. To keep the discussion alive, I encourage you to share the upcoming report of today’s event with as many individuals you know who are as equally passionate about securing better work, faster for our newcomers.”

Singer promised that Progress Career Planning Institute, in partnership with City of Toronto Economic Development, would facilitate follow up/next steps on the **Four Key Action Areas** - Mentors; Employer Education; Informed Immigrants; and Skilled Immigrant Transition Program – to advance the cause of *co-creating a future that really works* for both IEPs and employers alike.

Appendix I: Evaluation Survey Summary

Total of 24 responses.

1. I feel that:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
The Think Tank was well organized.	14	9	0	0	1
The Cultural Intelligence presentation was valuable.	12	11	0	0	1
I had the opportunity to make a contribution.	15	8	0	0	1
I had sufficient opportunities to network.	10	14	0	0	0
Attending this Think Tank was a good use of my time.	15	9	0	0	0

2. What did you value most about the Think Tank?

Networking with Like-Hearted People

- ✦ Networking with others in the IEP industry (9)
- ✦ Sharing ideas (5); seeing issues from different perspectives (2)
- ✦ Integrated vision from participants (2)
- ✦ Diverse group – many new to me
- ✦ Thought leaders in one room, with actionable items at the end
- ✦ Seeing the picture from non-employee side
- ✦ Mayor Miller legitimizing the work we are involved in

Focusing on Success

- ✦ Developing list of success factors for IEPs
- ✦ Positive attitudes/energy (3); solutions with momentum
- ✦ Hearing success stories
- ✦ Best practices from organization representatives

Creating Solutions through Passionate Engagement

- ✦ Creating innovative ideas / creative exercises
- ✦ Troubleshooting
- ✦ Opportunity to brainstorm; stimulation
- ✦ Awareness, information (2), passion
- ✦ Revitalized my interest in doing things I do best – will seek out opportunities to “push the agenda”
- ✦ Facilitator’s energy – she brought focus, fun, and guidance
- ✦ Confirmed I’m not missing out on an existing solution

3. Should we have another Think Tank?

Yes:18

No:1

No Comment:5



If so, what changes would you suggest for the next Think Tank?

Strategically Engage Employers

- ✦ Bring in “more business” employers (12) and have them voice their opinion and concerns about Cultural Intelligence
- ✦ Have employers share their successes (3), present their issues, hear their ideas on an ideal process
- ✦ Bring in employers and new IEP arrivals (4) to each small group

Increase IEP Representation

- ✦ Bring in new IEP arrivals (4) to each small group

Highlight Best Practices

- ✦ Get US IEPs and US government models
- ✦ Showcase how clients went through processes (successful accreditation to employment)
- ✦ Create a case study on Cultural Intelligence for each of the major industry sectors and present at the next Think Tank
- ✦ Showcase examples that progressive employers use in recruitment of IEPs in a range of different sectors

Broaden Scope

- ✦ More speakers
- ✦ Increase scope – other provinces?
- ✦ More policy-oriented work

Ensure Action is Undertaken

- ✦ Not another Think Tank, but a follow up in 6 months on the actionable areas
- ✦ Perhaps a follow-up in a year to determine the progress in each area we’ve agreed to pursue
- ✦ Follow up – revisit work indicated, future direction and adjustments
- ✦ Create small working groups on some specific themes to drill down ideas

Learn from Past Experience and Existing Work

- ✦ Ensure that when ideas are presented, if the concept/program already exists or there is work currently in progress, that info is provided by someone so as not to take the ‘ideas’ as new and focus work where it not valued





4. What is the simplest change that you feel you personally can make that will have the biggest positive impact on bringing the wishes we shared today to life?

- ✦ Work on employee education
- ✦ Attend the working group (4); participate in forums to share knowledge and experience (mentor programs)
- ✦ Continue to work in the IEP support world and mentor newcomers
- ✦ Stay connected with the topic; become an advocate in every conversation / spread the word (3)
- ✦ Keep the fire burning; maintain momentum, keep positive
- ✦ Share information / Cultural Intelligence message with colleagues/management (4)
- ✦ Share the “success factors” list with IEPs in all my presentations to encourage IEPs to be more proactive in their job search
- ✦ Continue with positive energy to network and bring initiatives to fruition
- ✦ Have more specific and personalized involvement with clients
- ✦ Continue my research on employers’ attitudes and practices
- ✦ Talk to executives on how to get involved – within my circle of influence (2)

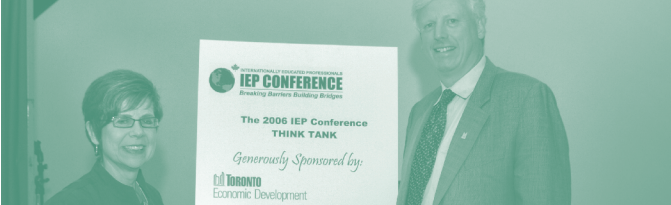
5. General Comments

- ✦ Add a social event at the end (wine and cheese?)
- ✦ Keep it up – this is strategic to Canada (you need to understand that employers do have a desire to hire talent!)
- ✦ Congrats on your fourth year!
- ✦ Not conducive to “thinking”; chairs uncomfortable (2)
- ✦ Information sharing is *a must* – many participants unaware of mentorship programs or currently-funded programs for foreign trained professionals
- ✦ Enjoyed it very much – intend to contribute more
- ✦ What kind of immediate public relations and further interviews could you get quickly and (then?) develop sustainability under the theme “Cultural Intelligence for Canada”
- ✦ Well run, energetic
- ✦ In the US, IEPs settle very fast, between 6 months and 1 year; accreditation is fast, easy and uniform – let’s hear from them
- ✦ Thank you for this opportunity – as usual excellent – hope positive results will be realized
- ✦ Ideas that I (and others) expressed have enriched my growth – thank you
- ✦ Great session – loved the activities, bonus hearing from Mayor Miller live (2); great idea, Rhonda!
- ✦ Best think tank / conference I’ve attended
- ✦ Like the idea of a national/international conference; excellent! Everyone should be congratulated
- ✦ Well organized – needs more employer buy-in
- ✦ Good location and facilitator (2)
- ✦ Thanks for an inspiring day!



Appendix II: Think Tank Participants

Margarida Almeida, Coordinator, Community ICT Innovation, LEF The Learning Enrichment Foundation
Lauri Asikainen, Consultant, Klingborg Group
Yves Beaudin, National Coordinator, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
Bernadette Beaupre, Executive Director, Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects (ONESTEP)
Elisete Bettencourt, Regional Program Advisor, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Debbie Briggs, Director, Toronto West, Service Canada
Susan Brown, Senior Policy Advisory, Economic Development, City of Toronto
Marg Cammidge, Consultant, DBM Canada
Patrick Chartrand, Community and Labour Market Manager, Scarborough West, Toronto Social Services
Charles Creppy, HR Specialist, Employee Diversity, TD Bank Financial Group
Teresa Damaso, Manager, External Relations, Toronto West, Service Canada
Jey Dharmaraj, Coordinator, Ontario National Public Service Week, Ontario Federal Council
Trish Dryden, Coordinator, Centre for Applied Research in Health, Technology and Education
Myles Dwyer, Secondary Staffing Officer, Toronto District School Board
Dan Eng, President, Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS) Toronto
Gérard Étienne, VP, Diversity Initiatives and Programs, TD Bank Financial Group
Malcolm Gabriel, Associate Director, Human Resources, Bell Canada – Bell Systems & Technology (BST)
Linda Genesi-Williams, Manager, Evaluation Unit, Membership Services Department, Ontario College of Teachers
Karen Goldenberg, President and CEO, JVS Toronto
Louise Gorby, Senior HR Consultant, Organization Development and Strategic HR Planning, Human Resources, City of Toronto
Eunice Grayson, Executive Director, LEF The Learning Enrichment Foundation
Josephine Grayson, Manager, Employee Diversity, TD Bank Financial Group
Mariana Grinblat-Bingham, Labour Relations Officer, Human Resources and Social Development Canada
Minerva Hui, Executive Director, Working Skills Centre
Dianne Hunnam-Jones, Vice President, Robert Half Finance
Dr. Carl James, Faculty of Education, York University
Sara Katz, Dean, School of Academic Studies and Access Programs, Centennial College
Dr. Abraham King, Sagewise Canada Inc.
Kevin King, Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Geeta Kissoon, Director, Strategic Policy and Planning, Ontario Federal Council
Linda Koehler-Moore, Diversity Management/Community Engagement Consultant, City Manager's Office, City of Toronto
Robert LaChance, Manager of Client Services, Ontario College of Teachers
Wendy Lack, Associate Recruitment Coordinator, Shoppers Drug Mart



Rose Lee, Coordinator, Diversity Management, City Manager's Office, City of Toronto

Sharon Leonard, Director, Professional Affairs and Services, Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT)

Eric Liu, Graduate Student, Immigration and Settlement Studies, Ryerson University

Dave Lovelock, Manager, Resource and Business Development, Skills for Change

Marilyn Massie, Client Liaison Coordinator, Accreditation Assistance Access Centre for Internationally Trained Individuals and Trades People

David McCormick, Co-op Teacher (Engineers), Toronto District School Board

Kevin McLellan, Project Manager, hireimmigrants.ca, The Maytree Foundation

Laurie McVittie, Project Manager, Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (OACETT)

Marg Middleton, General Manager, Toronto Community News

Nancy Millward, Business Development Manager, World Education Services

Iona Mitchell, Manager, Records Unit, Ontario College of Teachers

Wendy Molotkow, Community and Labour Market Manager, Toronto Social Services

Nadeen Murray, Primary Staffing Officer, Toronto District School Board

Rick Payne, Senior HR Consultant, Human Resources, City of Toronto

Allison Pond, Executive Director, ACCES

Bill Radford, Executive Director, Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment (CITE)

Eleanor Sam, Senior Program and Policy Consultant, Citizenship and Immigration

Judy Sawhney, Director of Business Services, Accreditation Assistance Access Centre for Internationally Trained Individuals and Trades People

Rakesh Shreewastav, Project Engineer, Ontario Ministry of Transport

Rhonda Singer, President, Progress Career Planning Institute

Stephen Smith, Director, Marketing, Pivotal Integrated HR Solutions

Malcolm Smith, Vice President, Business Development, DBM Canada

Lorraine Trotter, Director, Access Centre, George Brown College

Santha Tsang, Regional Director of Marketing and Communications - GTA Certified Management Accountants of Ontario

Heather Turnbull, Principal, Turnbull Consulting Group

Mark Venning, International President, Association of Career Professionals International

John Vernon, Director, Business Development, Progress Career Planning Institute

Anat Wertheim, VP, Program Development, JVS Toronto

Carla Wittes, Manager, Program Development, CCCJ – Canadian Council of Christians and Jews

Facilitated by Maureen (Mo) McKenna, mentoring with MOMentum Ltd.